

# DEVIANT

the renegades

## Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #5



# Deviant: The Renegades Manuscript Preview #5

## Chapter Six: Settings and Sample Conspiracies

*Situational forces can work to transform even some of the best of us into Mr. Hyde monsters, without the benefit of Dr. Jekyll's chemical elixir.*

— Philip Zimbardo, lead researcher on the Stanford Prison Experiment

The conspiracies writhing through society's flesh dwell in an intertwined existence of different cultures and occult biomes. From this medium springs forth Divergence, in all its manifold expressions and deviations. The Remade scramble through the shadows of innumerable places and peoples, reflections of their societies' sins.

This chapter presents four sample locations around the world, featuring existing conspiracies and situations that challenge the Broken who dwell there.

### Anchored Realities

#### Ankara, Turkey

In Ankara, the Remade look around at the concrete and brick flesh of their city and see themselves reflected through a dozen different metaphors. Ankara is an ancient settlement swept to prominence in the aftermath of the First World War's tumult and transformed into the capital of the Republic. Its masters tried to clip its wings through careful urban planning, but the city slipped the leash and erupted into sprawling, riotous growth. The meat of the urban landscape overgrows itself like a wild cancer, as crumbling *gecekond* slums burst up then are remade into gleaming manufactories and rigid complexes. It is a battleground for conflicting politics and cultural flash-points and governmental paranoia; the streets flood like capillaries with protests and riots when the pressure in the nation's heart grows too great. It is a great, groaning beast at conflict with itself, somehow held in a cycle of self-renewing constancy.

The conspiracies that covet Ankara prize the raw material of the city itself — a unique creature of urban evolution, a well of strange energies that they will give anything to possess and pry into. It sits as a nexus of the unexpected, a point of stable disruption in the fabric of reality. For four millennia, and maybe even longer than that, it has been a place of pilgrimage for Progenitors and a point of intrusion by alien forces into this world. Now, it is the battleground between two powerful conspiracies: the terrifying and ancient Onachus, and the shadow-government of the *Uyanıklık Cemiyeti*, the Vigilance Society.

#### Liminal Tides

For the Remade, Ankara is a place of inexplicable phenomena and underlying threat. It is a city, yes, and a place of human conspirators who would twist and pervert the minds and bodies of their victims, much like anywhere else. Ankara is subtly *wrong*, though, to the wary eye. Little glitches are everywhere in the urban sprawl. Streets that don't join together quite right, stairways leading up to nothing, park benches contorted into an isolating closed circle amid a copse of utility poles. A Baseline might shrug it off as the result of Ankara's explosion beyond its original planned layout. Remade know better.

Ankara is a place where reality's many layers are pressed close together. Energy membranes, folded dimensions of raw power, or information tucked alongside the world, are crushed that little bit nearer and are more prone to bleeding out into the space that humans can perceive. Alien realms of ephemera and capering jinn are but a breath away. Strange echoes of the city, stillborn versions that never were, and tumbled Escher nightmares hidden behind rarely-trod alleys, push and gnaw at the corners of its urban landscape.

Most Remade are in no position to explain the city's phantasmal permeability. The Onachus apostate Kelebek likely knows a great deal, but demands a high price for her counsel. Other Renegades spend their time and energy on avoiding the prying eyes of the conspiracies and planning avenues of counterattack. For their day-to-day survival, it is more important to understand the effects of Ankara than its causes. Never climb the stairways-to-nowhere under a new moon. Don't cross covered parts of the Ankara Çayı waterway if you can hear strange whispers. Steer clear of the power substations when the evening sky is red. A body of superstitions and taboos, shared among Remade and their allies, builds a little further whenever a Deviant takes a wrong turning and ends up lost in hungry, alien streets for one frightful night.

Still, some Broken refuse to sit down and just accept that Ankara is a bleeding wound of eldritch energy. Driven by an obsessive need to understand the urban arcana of the city, or intending to turn Ankara against their enemies, such Remade record, plot and calculate patterns of intrusions into the world. An irregular storm of interference dips out of unseen dimensions to drench electricians in static and blow fuses across several blocks, so figure out the pattern behind its appearance, and the Renegade can launch an attack when a conspiracy's agents will be deprived of modern surveillance and communications. With a Vigilance Society cadre in hot pursuit, a desperate Deviant takes the forbidden left-right-left turn into the *gecekondu* shanty, preferring to risk running the dusty streets of the 'other city' where the psychic Devoted will refuse to follow.

If the Remade are largely in the dark as to the causes of Ankara's state, Progenitors have an overabundance of theories. Attempts to explain the liminal nature of the region include a claim that it was the test site for a reality-distorting bomb detonated by some ancient civilization — the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great is a popular choice of culprit — or that a meteoric impact involving exotic elements had a similar effect. One Turkish researcher notoriously disappeared after briefly making a big splash in the internet conspiracy-theory community. He claimed to have scientific measurements indicating a catastrophic *future* event, its effects so intense as to ripple backwards through the fabric of space-time.

Others point to the Tree of Life on Republic Coins and claim Ankara is one of the places where the roots of the Tree writhe through the world. Midas is another common theme, as the transmutative powers and bestial traits ascribed to the Phrygian king might indicate he was a Deviant, a Progenitor, or both. There's at least one contorted theory that the Gordian knot was in Ankara, not nearby Gordium, and that it was no simple bundle of string but rather a thread of dimensional stability that Alexander's sword split apart.

Some would-be Progenitors come to Ankara following old leads — myths of Midas, the Onachus, or the recovered texts of now-dead Ottoman-era conspiracies. More arrive due to modern inquiries. Anomalous results at a research foundation's lab attracts a top scientist, or enough urban legends about jinn in the electricians catch the attention of a petty sorcerer. Certain methodologies of Divergence are much easier and safer to undertake in Ankara's malleable reality than elsewhere. The city is like a honey-trap for Progenitors.

Those who work independently or as part of a minor conspiracy usually don't realize their danger until it's too late. The Onachus and the Vigilance Society guard against mere dabblers in the secret side of the world, and they consider Progenitors operating outside their remit as pests or threats. The lucky ones are driven off. A rare few are given offers they cannot refuse. The conspiracies murder most who fall into their spotlight, and whisk their projects away for analysis. Most Ankaran Renegades are the Remade of these minor Progenitors caught in the city's web.

Coactives are the most common Deviants in Ankara, born from a fusion of the strange energies or mutated by ephemeral influences. Other Clades are uncommon, apart from the Cephalists of the Vigilance Society.

A substantial minority, however, are the victims of accidental Divergence. A hapless human takes a wrong turning one day and ends up in a weird echo of a residential area, where the hollow-eyed inhabitants report to punishment-factories for daily mutilation; when he emerges, his body has mutated from exposure to the other city's malign nature. Before the river was cleaned up, its noxious filth spread sickness and disease; one outbreak of spores from a membrane of corrosive reality infected several poor government workers living in the vicinity of the riverbanks, and now, fifteen years later, the creeping Divergence has bloomed through their meat and their minds.

These accidents rarely have any idea of what has happened to them or who their Progenitor might be. As angry as any Deviant, and even more confused, Ankara's accidental Renegades tend to have short lives. They flare up and burn out fast. Their funeral pyres pass under the guise of another minor terrorist attack, or an act of sectarian violence. The conspiracies swoop in like vultures as, dead or alive, any Remade is a potential resource. The Midas Club, a seemingly benign organization, does its best to find and offer succor to Ankara's lost Broken, but they're often too late.

And what of the Baselines who dwell in Ankara, who bustle along its streets, crowd into its offices and ministries and factories, and play in its parks? For the most part, they blithely pass the oddities of their city without a moment's hesitation. They assume the odd, patchwork glitches in the urban fabric are a natural result of Ankara's overflowing and chaotic growth. They shrug off problems with the infrastructure as expected — for many, it's a surprise the *gecekond* areas have electricity and running water at all. Just as in the rest of the world, people train themselves not to see the darker edges of daily life. They block out the strange whispers, instinctively avoid particular streets, and tell themselves that the low crime rates surely mean a disappearance has a benign explanation behind it. Terrorism and government crackdowns are frequent enough to make more esoteric conspiracy theories unnecessary.

And yet, almost reflexively, they hang their nests of concrete and brick with eyes of staring white and blue — the *nazar boncugu*, talismans of the evil eye. Naïve tourists assume the dangling trinkets are a quaint superstition aimed at their wallets, the cheap debasement of a local tradition into mass market appeal. But Ankara's true nature nags at the subconscious, and the people of Ankara lean a little more heavily on the old Anatolian practices than they might otherwise. Better to take the evil eye seriously, just in case. Better the dubious protection of an old cultural tradition than no protection at all.

## Fracture Lines

As the thriving capital city of a large nation, Ankara seems an odd place for a Deviant to hide. The major hubs of governance and high-end industries mean a heightened security presence. Terrorism and tension with other regional powers aggravates the authorities' paranoia. People are everywhere, and even the ingrained instinct to ignore unsettling evidence of the world's darker facets will only go so far. The presence of the major conspiracies looms large over all other considerations, too. This city is their laboratory. A Renegade can all too easily feel like a rat, running free only because the overseers of Ankara have not yet deigned to crush them underfoot.

Yet, these same features give Ankara some advantages as a battleground for the Remade. Over five million are packed into this place, so a Remade who *can* pass for a Baseline will melt into the crowd. The disorganized, technically-illegal houses of the *gecekondü* areas are a warren that a Deviant can vanish into, while the spreading suburbia on the city's flanks can hide all manner of sins in peaceful streets and behind quiet facades. The conspiracies may be powerful, but they are far from absolute rulers. Even as they worm through the fabric of society and the machinery of state, they must conceal themselves or be dragged out into the light and expunged. Ankara is a city of paranoid ministries and high-value targets. When a conspiracy moves outside of its carefully-cultivated bastion of influence, it deals with choking bureaucracy and ever-wary security services.

At the heart of Ankara is the **Ulus** district, the old town. While the Ulus is by no means made up entirely of old buildings, it does feature its fair share of ancient architecture. Its crowded nature, winding streets, and steady stream of tourists might seem an appealing hiding place to some Remade, but the Onachus maintain a strong presence here. While they carry out few significant operations in Ulus, and their actual headquarters are no longer in Ankara at all, the conspiracy has mapped the strange phenomena of the city most extensively here and its response teams react rapidly to potential breaches. Onachus agents watch the district through surveillance networks, and while their coverage is far from perfect, a Renegade who decides to set up shop in Ulus is asking for trouble.

One major hole exists in the conspiracy's web of influence. As far as Baseline humanity knows, **Hamamönü** is just another tourist trap: a tangle of old streets restored to Ottoman style. As far as Onachus are concerned, it's a huge and disturbing breach they still have no answer to. Several years ago, the Hamamönü neighborhood was just another run-down, dilapidated piece of Ulus, dim and quiet. Overnight, the Hamamönü that everyone knows today aggressively overwrote the old version. The new streets follow different paths. The old, crumbling buildings vanished in favor of bright, appealing restaurants and souvenir shops. An entire cast of inhabitants came with the buildings, people who suddenly burst into existence, complete with names and histories in the governmental records. And *no-one noticed*; the original residents were forgotten, even by family and friends.

The new ones have smiles a little too plastic, voices slightly grating as they eagerly peddle tourist tat to the enthralled crowds. Bad things happen to people who cause trouble in Hamamönü — a flash of teeth in a back-alley, a flurry of garments into a back room, and they're gone. The district occasionally spits out their bones into the sewer system. The Onachus sent in a Devoted to examine the phenomenon, but the district tried to take a bite out of her, so she bit back with fire and radiation. That's when they found the *other* problem with Hamamönü — something about its warped, parasitic presence aggravates Instability in Deviants. Even the slightest slip can result in Scars bubbling up and running wild. The conspiracy cannot

functionally quarantine a highly successful tourist spot, and they're paranoid that the Vigilance Society doesn't seem to have noticed what happened either.

The Renegade **Kelebek** is a reclusive Onachus apostate. She's feared and revered by the occult underworld of Ankara, a witch-queen entirely wrapped in saffron-yellow but for her ulcerated eyes and a brief impression of radiation-scarred flesh around them. Kelebek is a wellspring of esoteric knowledge and possesses a massive collection of occult objects, particularly artifacts that have been spat out of Ankaran breaches or were changed by exposure to its strange energies. Her help comes at a high price, but she has a particular taste for archaeological finds from Anatolia and the Levant. Her hunger for such would strip the museums of their troves, if she could get away with it, and some Remade are desperate or arrogant enough to hit a private collection for a bauble to sweeten her disposition.

Kelebek is deeply paranoid and highly secretive. She evades the Onachus through an almost instinctive understanding of the city's patchwork breaches, and rumors swirl that she spends the months between her appearances walking the echoes of other cities that overlap with Ankara. What has become clear in recent months, though, is that she's planning something. Her agents, armed with her considerable fortune, have been hunting for cutting-edge medical practitioners who have flexible ethics and ambitious theories. Some Deviants wonder if she's looking to become a Progenitor herself, to build her own Remade as weapons against the Onachus. A few spout a wilder supposition: Kelebek wants to try the impossible, and reverse her own Divergence.

The **Midas Club** is a conspiracy that doesn't realize its own nature. A loose network of interested parties who have stumbled upon awareness of Divergence and its victims, the Midas Club thinks it is a humanitarian mission — a benevolent force helping the Broken rather than exploiting them. With several wealthy patrons and a network of safe-houses, it does its best to map the worst excesses of Ankara's strange phenomena and to identify new Renegades. Where it finds a Deviant, the Club's members swoop in to present themselves as a hidden force of righteousness and succor.

Make no mistake, the Midas Club *is* a conspiracy. As an institution that's now some seventy years old, founded by a cabal of military officers who discovered the Vigilance Society during the early years of the Republic, it has survived the intervening decades through cunning, bribery and influence. Presenting a friendly face to Deviants helps usher them into its embrace where they can be examined, questioned, and studied for a greater understanding of their Divergences. **Orhan Tilkici**, the current head of the Club, tries to convince Deviants to keep a low profile, not rock the boat, and be eventually transported out of Ankara to remote areas of the Turkish countryside. There, Club researchers can examine and attempt to 'treat' them under less pressured circumstances where other conspiracies aren't close on their trail. This clashes with the drive for vengeance and action in most Deviants. Often, Orhan lets uncooperative Remade leave with an air of sad resignation. Sometimes, though, he can't find it in him to see a particularly interesting set of Variations walk away like that. More than one Renegade has been tasered, gassed, or anesthetized, then whisked away out of Ankara. Any other Remade guests of the Club at the time are fed a story that the vanished Deviant was seized by the Vigilance Society.

## Shadow War

Two mighty conspiracies dominate in Ankara. The Onachus wield tremendous occult power, while the Vigilance Society draw on the darkest recesses of the military-industrial complex.

## The Onachus

The Onachus are an old and powerful conspiracy whose talons reach far across Europe and the Middle East. Their right hand is a cascade of foundations and corporations, powerful business interests producing tides of wealth and overt influence. Their left hand is a tangle of religious groups, cultural organizations and petty social conspiracies through which they tug at the puppet strings of their catspaws. They watch for the same phenomena that birthed their conspiracy in Ankara — breaches into interstitial spaces, and places where the fabric of reality wears thin. At the conspiracy's heart are the Onachus Devoted, following a path of spiritual self-mutilation with the goal of enlightenment.

The Onachus believe they are inheritors of a legacy reaching back four millennia, although the conspiracy only truly came into being in the latter years of the Roman Empire. To conspirators in the know, Ankara has been hiding its secret in plain sight for a very long time indeed. Its name literally means 'anchor' in ancient Greek, despite lacking a port and, indeed, being over a hundred miles from the nearest coastline. The Onachus see evidence that philosopher-Progenitors have worked their art in Ankara's strange embrace for long eons, but that it was only with *the* Onachus herself that the site's true potential was realized.

Onachus is an Anatolian myth: a fiend of poison and fire, a mother of monsters. Where she strode, the earth sickened and burned. Sometimes she is depicted as a bison or a dragon, the mate of Biblical nightmares, and her loins the source of a litany of horrors. But to the conspiracy, she was both Progenitor and Remade. What made her special was not her Variations and Scars of monstrous intensity, but a methodology focused on understanding of the soul itself. By approaching Divergence unclouded by misunderstandings as to its true nature, the conspirators interpret her approach as being pure in a way that other Deviants are not. The Onachus believe the most important part of any human being, Baseline or otherwise, is the soul itself. Flesh is transitory, but the spirit houses humanity's true potential for evolution.

The conspiracy keeps a carefully tiered structure to compartmentalize information, and runs its core like a company despite being more of a cult. At the top is a small board of leaders, half Onachus Devoted and half Baseline. Outside of this cabal, no member has a full picture of the conspiracy's activities, even other Devoted. A second tier of loyal organizations run by trusted conspirators form the main body of the Onachus — a hydra with many heads coordinated towards the same goals. These groups, like the powerful Rassiter Foundation or the Nar Alhaqqa, are in the loop and can directly call on the rest of the organization for support. The third tier are minor conspiracies that dance to the tune of the Onachus, controlled through money or blackmail or special interests, uninitiated into the greater mysteries.

The Onachus see themselves as heroes and guardians protecting Baseline humanity from a world filled with unseen horrors. Remade, other than their own Devoted, are a threat, a sign of sickness — of attempts at human evolution that have gone off the rails and threaten to infect more of the species. Reality suppurates and frays at the edges. The Onachus are self-appointed surgeons, excising the rot of imperfect Divergence and sterilizing the world's wounds. Where the conspiracy encounters a breach or a Remade run wild, it draws on what regional resources it has — and these are often considerable. Onachus companies push every edge of the corporate abuse stereotype, with independent security teams prone to activity well beyond their jurisdiction, and a willingness to bribe and influence government apparatus to cover up their operations. Ironically, Ankara is a weak spot for the conspiracy as the Vigilance Society has a stronger hold

on government channels than the Onachus do. In the capital, the conspiracy leans more heavily on its other arm of operations, using local community organizers, Islamic faith groups, and informal influence networks among the judiciary.

Where a threat is too great to overcome with corporate black-bag squads or the crushing weight of society's hostility, the conspiracy must rely on its Devoted. The Onachus are hesitant to do so, as their Devoted are not just tools, but living examples of a potential future for all humanity. Due to the extensive Scars that the Onachus Divergence inflicts, extended operations can also quickly result in the Devoted suffering colossal damage to their physical bodies. Instability risks a catastrophic event of lethal flame and radiation.

Onachus Divergence is administered to carefully vetted volunteers in the conspiracy's most guarded facilities. A potential Devoted does not need to be a high-ranking conspirator. More important is a level of spiritual resilience that the Onachus purposefully hunt for in the human population. The conspiracy tells potentials they are the next step for humanity, that the soul is the true legacy of the species and the greatest source of power available, and that as Devoted they will help change the world for the better.

The Divergence bathes the subject in frequencies of strange energies that resonate with the human soul. During this process, surgeons implant carefully-crafted artifacts of tangled, angular brass and steel into the subject's abdomen — objects of occult engineering that serve as nodes and amplifiers. The first Onachus changed herself without these devices. They are the handiwork of centuries of examining and measuring breaches in reality and the strange worlds beyond, and are the true reason for the conspiracy's hungry pursuit of such phenomena. At the culmination of the process, the soul cracks through the direct application of energy like a hammer, and the raw power floods out to be harnessed as light, heat, and information. The implanted nodes set up a feedback loop that wrenches the crack even wider, reinforces it, and catalyzes even greater power within. The soul becomes a reactor, burning bright as a nuclear flame. Few survive the process.

Onachus Devoted are fanatical in their zeal. Each is the potential chrysalis of what the conspiracy believes humanity's future may be — casting off physical frailty in favor of the raw power of the soul. Combined with the immense power of the Variations that course through their bodies and nodes, most Devoted believe the body is a vessel of little import — a fleshy channel that holds them back. They are trained to ignore the pain that comes as their skin blisters and meat boils when unleashing the fire and radiation of the soul.

Onachus activities in Ankara continue apace, even to the modern day. The controlling board is headquartered in Europe, now, but its members regularly visit the city. The upper echelons of the conspiracy swirl with rumors that there is another layer of leadership above the board — a single ruler hidden from sight. Agents also suffer a growing sense of unease at what seems to be a rising intensity in otherworldly phenomena. Many conspirators fear Ankara is finally starting to come apart at the seams, and that extreme events like Hamamönü will soon be commonplace.

While the Onachus feud with the Vigilance Society now, they have faced other enemies in the past, including powerful conspiracies that wormed through the Ottoman Empire during its heyday. The Onachus seek to expunge all knowledge of one particular foe from the earliest days of their existence, a conspiracy or cult of Ascalon. Whoever the Ascalon cult were, they had knowledge of occult science that could interfere with the Onachus Divergence — weapons shredding a Devoted's soul with Instability and resonators sending Variations lashing wildly out



of control. The cult is long gone, lost to the passage of time, but occasionally their handiwork surfaces from old tombs or archaeological digs.

The defection of Kelebek shook the organization's core. Unlike many conspiracies, the Onachus had a near-absolute trust in the loyalty of their Devoted, seeing them as the spine of the organization. Following her departure, lower-ranking Devoted have found themselves more isolated from the chain of command, now treated more as powerful assets than holy exemplars, until such a time as they prove their long-term stability and trustworthiness. This breeds frustration and resentment. Worse, the stories about *why* Kelebek fled are still passed in quiet whispers between worried conspirators. She became paranoid that Onachus — the *original* one, founder of the conspiracy — is after her, having become a predator of Devoted souls. The Remade reassure themselves that Kelebek must be mad, that Onachus could not have survived two millennia, and that the notion the Devoted are created purely to feed her hunger is nonsensical. The conspiracy actively suppresses any discussion of Kelebek's claims, and has flagged her for termination by any means necessary.

## The Vigilance Society

The *Uyanıklık Cemiyeti* is a conspiracy of rogue military and state agents, a black ops department buried in the squirming guts of governance. Answering to no one but themselves, members of the Vigilance Society believe they are still the torchbearers of the vigorously secular, rational, nationalist movement through which Kemal Ataturk birthed the Turkish Republic. The conspirators imagine themselves hard men making hard decisions, protecting the people of Turkey from a world full of threats. They thrive in the modern environment of tension, terrorism, and sectarian violence.

The Vigilance Society emerged in the aftermath of the First World War, initially just another tendril of the nascent nationalist movement that also created Kemal Ataturk's Sentinel Society. The latter is a matter of proud public record: how the nationalists responded in the face of the circling, hungry Western Powers not by folding to the Ottoman Sultan's instructions for disarmament issued from Istanbul, but instead by cleverly gathering troops and resources from across the region to serve a new government in Ankara. The Vigilance Society appears in none of these histories, because its founders stumbled on something entirely unexpected when smuggling munitions out of western Anatolia. They found the remnants of the *Eiraf*, one of the earliest psychic research programs.

As the Ottoman empire collapsed upon itself, the many conspiracies that had dwelt within it for generations writhed in panic. Most fell apart and perished. Some were set upon by conspiracies among the Western powers, hungry to loot the occult secrets of a dying power. The *Eiraf* was a clandestine, sinister legacy of a long line of Imperial court astrologers delving into the esoteric arts of prognostication.

The Vigilance Society played no major part in the War of Independence, too busy trying to gather resources and implement the *Eiraf* procedures they had discovered. By the time the founders consolidated their conspiracy in the halls of power in Ankara, attempts at Divergence produced the first *Eiraf*-class Cephalist Remade, and at this point they encountered the Onachus. Surprised at the existence of a surviving Ottoman conspiracy, the Society immediately judged the Onachus as a threat to the nationalist vision. The eighty years that have since passed have borne witness to a shadow war played out across the city and beyond.

The Society dwells within the hollow spaces of the state. It lurks in warehouses and facilities that every ministry believes are the property of another. It recruits veteran soldiers quietly filtered out of the mainstream military due to their encounters with the supernatural and offered excellent pay in return for the utmost confidentiality. It draws revenue streams siphoned from bloated budgetary commitments. Agents of the conspiracy pepper the Turkish intelligence services, military, and scientific divisions. They have proxies and catspaws in the major defense industries. When pushed, the Vigilance Society can bring all the power of the state to bear on enemies — wiretaps, surveillance, police brutality, extraordinary rendition and imprisonment into modern oubliettes. They even have literal black helicopters.

However, the Society's primary strength is their Divergence program. The procedures have come a long way since the early days. Long gone are the occult sigils and mystical drug-induced trances. Today, the Society's facilities feature humming screens that monitor psychic equilibrium, sensory deprivation tanks, and chemical cocktails piped directly into the spine and cranium. Society Progenitors experiment with new refinements, attempt to instigate new Variations, and promote greater stability in their subjects. Remote viewing, mental influence, and telekinesis are all features that the *Eiraf* inducement chambers can reliably trigger in suitable candidates.

Volunteers drawn from special forces or covert training regimens are deployed in intelligence operations beyond the Republic, sent hunting terrorist and insurgent groups within the country's borders. Most, though, are unwilling — latent psychics sourced from medical screening of an unwitting populace, taken into custody and subjected to horrific procedures with no expectation they will ever leave a Society facility even if Remade. Used as candidates for remote and far-reaching Variations, survivors are brainwashed or kept in semi-comatose states, rigged up to Instability-monitoring machinery and used as a living surveillance system to keep the Society apprised of threats and opportunities.

The conspiracy sees other Remade as potential terrorist weapons or tools against the establishment. The Society tries to capture rather than terminate, as it can gain more information from a live vivisection than from an autopsy. It brings promising Progenitors in-house if possible. The psychic capabilities of Cephalist Devoted means the Society can be *very* convincing when it wants to be.

Ankara is a problem. The Society only realized the nature of the new capital site some time after embedding themselves in the corridors of power, and it is a constant source of frustration and fear that the heart of the nation is a literal sieve. Paranoid theories of terrorists hiding in alternate realities or religious fanatics tapping into membranes of infinite energy run through the highest offices of the conspiracy. The Onachus are bad enough, but at least they are a *known* enemy — monstrous and a threat to the nation, yes, but foes willing to play along in a cold war rather than going hot. It's the unknown that terrifies the Vigilance Society, and so they seek to know everything.

The Vigilance Society are sitting on a metaphorical bomb due to having lost a literal one. Conspiracy members managed to get their hands on a nuclear weapon, a warhead present on Turkish soil through the NATO weapons-sharing agreement. Cephalists were supposed to extract the authorization codes via psychometry — a back-up plan in case the Republic suddenly found it could not rely on the United States when its back was to the wall — then return the bomb to its official store. The warhead is gone, though, and so is one of the Remade. It's only a small

payload, but this fiasco has pushed the paranoid Society heads to fresh heights of panic. The best guess that slaved Remade prognosticators can come up with is that the bomb is somewhere in Ankara. The Cephalist Renegade's powers are strong enough to interfere with their clairvoyance, though, and no-one is entirely sure what he is planning. Rumor is he's looking to offload the weapon to a buyer, and Kelebek is in the market. It's against the Society's instincts to warn the Onachus of a problem coming their way, but there's no foreseeable outcome where a loose tactical nuclear weapon works out well for the Society, no matter who it is targeted at.

## Conspiracies of Ankara

### Onachus

**Standing:** 7

**Principles:** The soul is the path to true human evolution; breaches in the world are both threat and opportunity; benevolence towards humanity through hidden guidance.

**Virtue:** Zeal

**Vice:** Arrogance

**Attributes:** Power 8, Finesse 7, Resistance 5

**Conspiracy Actions:** 4

**Association:** 8

**Hierarchal Node:** The Board

**Temporal Nodes:** Altin Finance Global, The Assessors, Breach Response Unit, Rassiter Foundation, Onachus Devoted

**Exploitative Nodes:** Bektashi Materials Research, IMINT/SIGINT Analysts, Legal Retainer Team, Nar Alhaqqa, Suborned Judges

**Structural Nodes:** Galatia Transport International, Rassiter Holdings, Ulus Information & Insight, Yıldırım Security

**Icons:** Alarum, Breach Suppression Technologies, Location Isolator, Onachus Divergence, Rassiter Analysis Protocols

**Rassiter Foundation:** This is a sprawling private foundation of laboratories, scientific research projects, and some associated charitable fronts.

*Rassiter Analysis Protocols: The Rassiter Foundation's occult scientists have refined the Protocols over the decades. Agents of the Node enjoy the rote quality on Academics, Occult, and Science rolls when locating and investigating interstitial breaches and breakdowns in reality.*

**Breach Response Unit:** This network of highly trained agents equipped to deal with breach incidents and Deviants.

*Breach Suppression Technologies: As an automatic conspiracy action, the Node can equip up to six Baseline agents with barely-understood occult devices that replicate the effects of seven Scar-free Magnitude of Variations. Each agent may have only one Variation at a time, although any number of agents can share the same Variation. For example, three agents could have*

*Otherworldly Connection (Escherfolk) 4, while two others have Precognition 1, and the sixth has Hypercompetence (Occult) 1. This equipment lasts until the end of the chapter.*

**IMINT/SIGINT Analysts:** Onachus have their tendrils in several European intelligence agencies, which they use to track down those of interest to the Onachus who have made it especially difficult to find them

*Location Isolator: As a Complexity 10 downtime action Onachus can pinpoint the location of anyone one of the Onachus Devoted has encountered to within ten miles, anywhere in the world.*

**Yıldırım Security:** This ethically-flexible but ever-vigilant Node protects the conspiracy's holdings.

*Alarum: Calling upon additional security, the Node reinforces the conspiracy against enemy attacks. Once per chapter, armed agents of the conspiracy arrive to deal with an attack or intrusion on another Node, or armed agents already present gain the Informed Condition regarding the attackers during the current scene. If a rival conspiracy attempts the sabotage or war action against Onachus, reduce the damage it deals in the current chapter by one.*

**Others:** The **Board** runs the conspiracy. **Altin Finance Global**, a major international company, supplies the funds needed to keep the whole operation functioning. **The Assessors** serve as both emissaries and recruiters, seeking out those with the qualities required of the **Onachus Devoted**. The Exploitative Nodes of the Onachus include **Bektashi Materials Research**, the exotic materials laboratory that performs the actual Onachus Divergence itself — a unique Divergence methodology that produces incredibly potent Deviants. The other Nodes are the conspiracy's fearsome **Legal Retainer Team**, the old-boys-network of **Suborned Judges** and other legal professionals, and the faith group organizers of **Nar Alhaqıqa**. Finally, the Structural Nodes that provide the conspiracy with a backbone of organization include a series of companies who move Onachus personnel and goods around (**Galatia Transport International**), serve as a front for property ownership (**Rassiter Holdings**), and maintain its grip on surveillance and oversight in areas of Ankara (**Ulus Information & Insight**).

## Vigilance Society

**Standing:** 7

**Principles:** Protect the Turkish Republic against all threats; knowledge is power; only we know enough to judge what is truly a threat.

**Virtue:** Vigilant

**Vice:** Paranoid

**Attributes:** Power 6, Finesse 8, Resistance 6

**Conspiracy Actions:** 4

**Association:** 9

**Hierarchal Node:** Special Security Response Council

**Temporal Nodes:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Army 4<sup>th</sup> Corps Secondments, Eiraf Archive, Eiraf Devoted, Emergency Operations Task Force, Vigilance Threat Analysis

**Exploitative Nodes:** Explosives Response Team, General Directorate of Security, Ministry of Finance, MIT Surveillance Operations

**Structural Nodes:** Black Helicopters, Eiraf Research Program, Quartermasters, Special Assignments Recruitment Program, Vigilance Threat Analysis Security Corps

**Icons:** Eiraf Surveillance Network, Noah Reactor, Sensory Augmentation Tank, Watcher Protocol

**Eiraf Archive:** This provides a growing body of research and lore that fuels the Society's efforts.

*The Watcher Protocol: Via the elaborate calculations of the Watcher Protocol, an advanced predictive A.I. created by the communal efforts of conspiracy Cephalists, all Society agents (not just those attached to the MIT) gain the 8-again quality on all Investigation and Streetwise rolls and achieve an exceptional success on three successes instead of five.*

**Eiraf Devoted:** Operating closely with the Archive, the Society assigns its most trusted Psychics to this Node.

*Eiraf Surveillance Network: Society Devoted can network themselves together in conspiracy laboratories. Devoted of this Node can use teamwork to bolster each other's Scar Finesse rolls for Cephalist Variations.*

**The Emergency Operations Task Force:** Tasked, on paper, with monitoring emergencies and notifying the public of them, this Node's agents guard and operate the Noah Reactor.

*The Noah Reactor: This device can generate a large-scale but seemingly natural cataclysm anywhere in the world, which the Society uses to trigger an emergency declaration in Turkey or to attack the nation's enemies abroad, requiring a Complexity 10 downtime action.*

**Vigilance Threat Analysis:** This counterterrorism analysis and response group is an official organ of the Turkish government wholly under the Society's direction.

*Sensory Augmentation Tank: The Node's agents enjoy a Scar-free Magnitude 1 Variation that enhances their senses, grants some form of remote viewing, or provides prophetic powers. All agents receive the same benefit during a given chapter, but the Society can change this Variation as a Complexity 1 downtime action.*

**Others:** The Hierarchical Node atop the Vigilance Society appears on official paperwork only as the **Special Security Response Council**, an overlooked governmental committee with surprisingly broad, sweeping powers in emergency situations. The conspiracy has direct command over the **2<sup>nd</sup> Army 4<sup>th</sup> Corps Secondments** stationed in Ankara. It draws on the **MIT Surveillance Operations**, and the **Ministry of Finance** for additional resources in a less official capacity, and conspiracy infiltration into the **General Directorate of Security** gives the conspiracy significant influence over the civilian police force. The **Explosives Response Team** has infiltrated law enforcement bomb squads, using their authority to evacuate areas under the guise of a bomb threat or set off explosions either as tools of assassination or in order to blame a desired scapegoat. The **Eiraf Research Program** serves as an intermediary between the Special Security Response Council and its research Nodes. Other Structural Nodes include a transport fleet of military vehicles and **Black Helicopters**, the various suborned **Quartermasters** in the Turkish Land Forces and MIT (who keep the flow of supplies going), and the **Vigilance Threat Analysis Security Detachment** that protects Society holdings. The **Special Assignments Recruitment Program** is the backbone of the conspiracy, sifting through military and civilian records in search of suitable candidates for membership—either patriotic and paranoid soldiers

who might find a place in the conspiracy's hierarchy, or those expressing the signs of psychic potential and the possibility of surviving Divergence.

## Midas Club

**Standing:** 3

**Principles:** Map the everchanging city; catch more flies with honey; doing it for their own good

**Virtue:** Altruistic

**Vice:** Deceptive

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse, 6, Resistance 3

**Conspiracy Actions:** 2

**Association:** 6

**Hierarchal Node:** Remote Treatment Center

**Temporal Nodes:** Ankaran Spatial Cartographers, Rescue Squads

**Exploitative Nodes:** Bought Hospital Orderlies, Dirty Cops

**Structural Nodes:** Mysterious Patrons, Safe Houses

**Icons:** Liberated Remade, Righteous Resilience Propaganda

**Remote Treatment Center:** What direction the Club wields over its Nodes flows from here.

*Righteous Resilience Propaganda: This keeps up morale, allowing the conspiracy to downgrade damage to its Association at the end of each chapter even if it took damage during the chapter; if it took no such damage, it instead downgrades additional two damage.*

**Rescue Squads:** This Node's agents rescue and recruit Renegades.

*Liberated Remade: The Rescue Squads include a large population of Remade who have chosen to work for the Midas Club to free other Deviants and bring them into the fold. Once per chapter, when the Conspiracy recruits a Devoted as a Complexity 1 downtime action, this Node recruits one additional Devoted.*

**Others:** The Club's **Ankaran Spatial Cartographers** chart Ankara's occult phenomena. Most Renegades who end up in the hospital or in jail make easy targets for other conspiracies, but the Club arranges for many such Broken to be released through its **Bought Hospital Orderlies** and **Dirty Cops**. The conspiracy's cash flow through **Mysterious Patrons** and the volunteers at its **Safe Houses** are the lifeblood of the organization. The Midas Club is accustomed to suffering losses, and the Remote Treatment Center uses Its Rescue Squads also

## Ankara and Beyond

Within Ankara, the dueling conspiracies of the Onachus and the Vigilance Society dominate the occult landscape. Lesser conspiracies are either crushed underfoot or scurry for cover as the two giants struggle for influence and control over the city's bizarre phenomena. Still, it's a restrained conflict. Neither can afford to be revealed to the wider world. Both are peripherally aware of the Midas Club, but find the loose organization troubling to track down and suppress, and given its actions are largely limited to taking troublesome Deviants out of their battleground, they've had little incentive to push more aggressively.

Beyond the city, the Onachus are already an international conspiracy, and they tangle with other heavyweights on the global scene as they hunt down and attempt to suppress or seal similar breaches in reality. Their greatest rivals are the Fafnir Collective, a conspiracy based in northern Europe who use a very similar form of Divergence to the Onachus — albeit with a far more self-centered, avaricious ideology. Similarly, the Yelbeghen of Russia provide an even darker mirror to the Onachus, defiling their own souls through a grotesque Divergence to achieve monstrous power. The Vigilance Society deals with the governmental and nationalist conspiracies with all the paranoia and rivalry one might expect. However, it does cautiously involve itself in limited trade of less promising Eiraf Deviants to secular, political conspiracies in some other Middle Eastern states in return for influence and favor, such as the New Future Vanguard in Iran who pursue radical visions of a posthuman nation of Remade.

The Onachus recruit promising researchers into the Rassiter Foundation from all over the world. They've recently been contacted by the surviving descendants of Hiram Ellicott from Connellsville, Pennsylvania, who have formed a small conspiracy of their own to feud with the company that now owns the Ellicott Caves and the strange phenomena at play there. In Darwin, Australia, a Cephalist Renegade from the Vigilance Society called Beyza Ceylan seeks to create a new conspiracy among the free Remade of the city; she's a rogue element run far beyond the easy reach of the Uyanıklık Cemiyeti, and appeals to her former comrades by email or phone to flee and join her.

## Jungle Warfare

### Darwin, Australia

In Australia's far north, Darwin's ecosystem is aggressive and voracious, killing and devouring the ignorant and unwary. Plant life grows at almost visible speeds, requiring constant battle to keep from overrunning the areas humans believe they control. The crystal-clear ocean tempts people away from the heat and into its cool relief, but the beauty hides hungry predators ready to eat those who give in to the temptation. Inland is just as dangerous; lush vegetation camouflages the land-locked killers who murder for trespass into their territory just as readily as for a meal. The harsh heat quickly saps moisture, leading the unwary to waterholes where still more predators watch and wait. Survival is difficult, but not impossible. For many Remade, the savage paradise represents freedom, and a chance for vengeance.

Conspiracies war against this deadly backdrop in a perfect reflection of nature's laws. Two powerful predators maneuver to get their jaws around their competitor's throat while smaller hunters snipe at their flanks, hoping to tear free and secure a larger portion of the spoils for themselves. Beneath these, the smallest, most desperate and hungry conspiracies pillage for scraps and try to expand their power bases to avoid falling victim to the expansionistic hunger of everyone above them.

As the war grinds on, the powerful try unorthodox tactics, turning loose those Broken they deem too unruly or weak, hoping to obfuscate and confuse the battleground. Deviants spill onto the streets and take territories across the city and surrounds. With their own stake in the war, these Renegades fight for survival and against recapture. They never forget the conspiracies that hurt them. Revenge may not be their primary focus now, but eventually, they will collect on all debts.

One airport, one train station, one port, and one main road south. The exits are few and easily watched. Remade stay in Darwin because dying is the alternative, and being devoured in the wilderness is barely a choice at all.

## Controlled Chaos

Australia's northernmost (and smallest) capital city sprawls across the Northern Territory's northwestern shoreline. Darwin's business district — the seat of government and office headquarters — squats on a low bluff overlooking its harbor and back towards the residential and commercial areas, giving an impression of arrogantly ensuring everyone follows its lead.

The city stands apart from the rest of the nation, being closer to the capitals of five other nations than Australia's own. This proximity to other cultures conditions Darwin residents into an easy acceptance of the unusual. Every Darwinian has a story of why they came to the city and never left. Whether running away from some horror, or just having no other place to go, Darwin is a wonderful place to lose and reinvent oneself.

The wild landscape around the city is hostile to the ignorant and unwary. Crocodiles, sharks, and venomous predators patrol the beguilingly blue, clear ocean, always on the lookout for an easy meal. More crocodiles, snakes, and ferocious wild boars roam the wilderness to the east and south. On land or sea, these natural predators inadvertently take the blame for the actions of Ferals and wild Manticores venting their rage on whomever comes their way. Survival in this land is possible, but it requires knowledge, skill, and more than a little luck.

The clear skies and perfect warm weather of the winter dry season belie the savagery of the oppressive humidity, heat, and tropical storms that batter the city during the summer wet season. Thousands of tourists flood the place during the dry, leaving before the madness-inducing humidity "build-up" announces that the wet is on its way. The flow of tourists makes an easy source of new recruits for conspiracies, and Darwin's no-questions-asked approach to those who come here is perfect cover for conspiracies to bring specialists in unnoticed.

As Baselines struggle to control the natural wilds around Darwin, countless conspiracies skirmish to control the city and surrounds for themselves. Their maneuvers give rise to opportunities for Broken to slip free of their shackles and escape. The two largest conspiracies experiment with tactics of confusion and misdirection, proactively releasing Deviants into the world for their own purposes. Smaller conspiracies move quickly to acquire these loose assets and reassign them to their own holdings, sometimes giving them a powerful tool in the wars but more often opening themselves to more trouble than these Remade are worth.

## Broken Dreams

Darwin's transformed live in a time of opportunity and danger. Far more Deviants live free than ever before, thanks to the war's shifting tactics. The old guard Renegades regard these newcomers with a fair degree of suspicion, and some contempt. They haven't earned their freedom with the blood and lives of those who kept them prisoner. To Renegades who have lived revenge for years, these latecomers are poor successors.

Adding to this suspicion is the fact that not all Remade released to the wild are genuine Renegades. A not insignificant number of Devoted also roam free, playing their part with hopes of reward. They appear no different to their Renegade siblings, and know survival requires them to blend with the others. This makes Renegades more paranoid, fearful of exposing their secret



havens to the enemy via these traitors. Renegades live with the daily fear that when the conflict dies down, the conspiracies will know exactly where to look to recapture their ‘assets’.

## Night Life

Much of Darwin’s after-hours business occurs within a few blocks of the city’s business district. The small but vibrant club and bar scene is also home to many budget accommodation options to cater to the backpacking tourists. Most establishments have cheap rooms situated at the back or on the upper floors.

During the dry season, every room is jam packed with international tourists looking to experience Australian culture and sunshine. These modern-day explorers wander the city or tour the surrounding national parks during the day, but at night young adults pack the area, fatigued by the day’s activities yet filled with youthful refusal to rest and sleep. Looking to eat, drink, and fuck, these inebriated and incautious fools are prime targets for conspiracies ever hungry for new recruits. This energy appeals to the youthful membership of Gudamiya and the Pantheon of Gaia, both of whom pluck new recruits from the masses with unfortunate regularity.

As the humidity builds and the rains threaten, the density of travelers eases, but never completely dies off. Though the opportunities ebb and flow with the changing seasons, this strip is always a prime hunting ground for nearly every conspiracy looking to draft employees. The presence of so many conspiracy recruiters in such a small location inevitably leads to conflict, often obfuscated by the frequent, alcohol-fueled fistfights on the streets and nearby alleyways. The Society for Cultural Preservation benefits most from these incidents — between genuine drunks or careless recruiters — as the police responders are firmly but unknowingly in the Society’s service, for now.

## Games of Chance

Where the nightclubs benefit the Society, Darwin’s casino is an Augmentec stronghold. Only a short distance from the club district, here the rich come to forget their troubles, and the poor try to find respite from debt and despair. For both sides, it’s easy to forget that the house always wins, and nothing comes for free. Some learn too late that all debts must be paid, whether through money, influence, or flesh.

Augmentec plays a careful game with the casino’s clientele. The conspiracy’s American backers have deep pockets that can outlast the funds of most opponents. However, Augmentec has no desire to simply fleece all rich opponents into its debt. The conspiracy prefers the long game, letting its rich prey run with money in their pockets, sometimes more than they began with, sometimes a little less. They come back voluntarily, engage with Augmentec from a perceived position of equals, slowly surrendering their power and influence to the conspiracy while enjoying every minute of falling victim to the trap, until it closes around them and they can’t escape. Augmentec’s smooth-talking representatives know how to play their captured prey even as the victims struggle for freedom. It takes considerable time for these wealthy new associates of the conspiracy to realize that all they have is the illusion of freedom, and they can never escape the web.

The casino’s less wealthy losers often face a more dramatic fate. A rare few possess skills and abilities that Augmentec is happy for them to trade as part payment of their debts. Most owe service to the conspiracy — dangerous, unethical, and illegal activities performed to benefit Augmentec, but hidden behind layers of deniability that bury the victim if caught but never lead

back to the conspiracy. The poorest, those least likely for anyone important to miss, find that their bodies are the only thing of value that the conspiracy will accept as payment.

## The Rat's Nest

As a small city with many hostile interests competing for Remade, some wonder how Deviants manage to not only hide, but appear without notice to interfere with conspiracy plans. The tangled network of tunnels beneath the city and surrounds is the answer. Originally constructed with government backing and purpose — to protect fuel supplies from Japanese bombing attack during the Second World War — the tunnels saw little use during the war and were already officially obsolete when completed.

The tunnels lay quiet and officially unused for decades but were never completely silent. Unknown to the ignorant masses above, conspiracies and other interests expanded the network. These add-ons and renovations were uncoordinated, growing the network as a labyrinth of unmapped chambers and passageways that cross over and double back on each other.

Not even the canniest Renegade claims to know the network's full extent. They cross beneath the entire city, with access points hidden away in alleys, beneath office buildings, and spilling out into storm drains near homes.

Everyone in the Web of Pain uses the tunnels. Several Renegades call hidden chambers home. The conspiracies usually stick to the portions they built or have under their control; the cost of exploring the unknown is often great as organizations clash in the darkness, anointing the tunnels in blood. The expanse and chaotic layout mean groups mostly avoid running across others unless they're looking for trouble.

Like most of Darwin's environment, the tunnels aren't exactly safe. Many are in danger of collapsing from decades of plant invasion and surface development. Predators, both natural and unnatural, also make homes and hunting grounds in the dark, taking victims trying to navigate the confusion.

## Beyond the City Lights

Darwin's outskirts are no safer than the city itself. Conspiracies value the remoteness for the privacy and control they gain. Isolation and danger from the natural world outside compounds make it easier to keep a short leash on their Remade. With vast space available away from hostile competitors, many smaller organizations base themselves in the wilderness and engage in guerrilla warfare against the larger conspiracies. The Pantheon of Gaia thrives in the wilderness in a way the other conspiracies can't match. Augmentec and the Society have been largely unsuccessful in establishing their power outside the city. Both have built small compounds barely beyond Darwin's limits, which suffer dogged attacks and sabotage from many enemies. The cost of maintaining these properties is nearly prohibitive to the larger two conspiracies but pride and stubbornness so far prevent them from abandoning the attempts.

Despite the dangers, some Remade find the courage and opportunity to escape compounds. They invariably find themselves in unfamiliar territory where everything wants them dead. The heat makes finding fresh water a priority, but every waterhole and stream could be home to creatures just waiting to make a meal of the unwary Deviant. These creatures sometimes include the Remade's predecessors, who managed to not only escape, but to survive.

## Come One, Come All

Darwin teems with conspiracies vying for dominance in the isolated city. The biggest are the well-entrenched Society for Cultural Preservation and the aggressively expansionist Augmentec, but many smaller, hungrier conspiracies fight for scraps and fever-dream of something better. Gudamiya knows well the weaknesses of the other conspiracies and protects its people and sacred sites from everyone. Phoenix Power Explorations covertly runs mining interests throughout the region in the search for energy resources, sweeping aside local opposition, some of whom find themselves forcefully recruited into Phoenix's 'human' resources. This desecration of the natural world enrages the Pantheon of Gaia into action against the miners. Meanwhile, the Sixth Number maintains a low profile and hopes the others don't pay close attention to its globally destructive goals. So far, they haven't.

## The Society for Cultural Preservation

Every culture has its stories, and the Society for Cultural Preservation is very good at listening. The cultural initiations and hidden practices that open a world of possibility. The men and women of potential beyond the lesser humans around them. Demigods who lead nations and armies. Shamans, healers, spirit-talkers. Accidents of birth, payments in blood, sacrifices of the flesh. Stories of pain, and suffering, and power. Stories of Divergence.

The Society was always at the forefront of the British Empire's desire for conquest and expansion. Where the pathfinders travelled, when explorers encountered new cultures, the Society was there. When Britain introduced civilization to the far reaches of the world, the Society preserved everything of value within its vaults.

The Society's approach to triggering Divergence is egalitarian — the conspiracy will try anything to see what works. The Society's preservation of cultures is genuine, but it inevitably discards the unique qualities of any culture in favor of homogenizing the elements leading to power. The Society is also pragmatic enough to find use for any Broken but has a preference for Coactives and focuses its synthetic rituals to tap into sacred sites of spiritual power and merge whatever is there with the human victim.

## Augmentec

*Augmented development, national prosperity.* Augmentec's mission statement promises clients what they need to strengthen their interests. Most of Augmentec's customers are national governments or the powerful corporations who pull their strings. Backed by powerful lobbying interests within the United States of America, Augmentec officially exists within the myriad contractors and technology companies, existing to feed the U.S. military-industrial complex that keeps the right individuals wealthy and powerful.

Augmentec's business is ostensibly the continuation and propagation of conflict for the sake of profit, but the fighting is only a means to an end. Augmentec is more interested in perfecting the Divergence, in advancing the technology required to meld human and machine. Augmentec doesn't offer its special services outside American clients yet. The conspiracy's stakeholders provide Augmentec with bountiful resources it uses to ensure carefully selected clients get everything they need. The company prides itself on results, and the way of achieving this is to ensure it only takes on the projects where it can succeed in making a difference. The bean-counters figure Darwin and the synergy between US and Australian military interests to be one such project.

Augmentec favors Invasives that merge next-generation military hardware within the human body, but its exposure to other transformed in Darwin have expanded the conspiracy's interests, especially into the Chimeric field. Augmentec's development laboratories now specialize in harvesting the more unusual organs from any Remade it captures, preparing them for grafting into more pliable and loyal volunteers.

## Phoenix Power Explorations

A conspiracy expanding its control of energy and mining interests into the metaphysical space for control of humanity. Like its namesake, Phoenix reinvents itself to keep with the times, dying behind asset-less shell corporations and bankrupt figurehead company directors. The conspiracy takes no pleasure in the ruins it leaves behind as it understands that business is impersonal. All that exists in succeeding is the willingness to take whatever it can and the foresight to cut losses and run before facing consequences.

Phoenix has a high rate of turnover for the people in power compared to many conspiracies. Few of Phoenix's controlling board and ambitious corporate climbers can maintain the company's dispassionate façade for long, inevitably falling prey to their baser human impulses, maneuvering against rivals and accepting a greater than necessary loss in pursuit of an individual goal. Phoenix tolerates a certain level of emotion and loss of control, but when individuals overstep what is good for the conspiracy the Divinatrix speaks out. When that occurs, the board has little choice but to eliminate the dangerously emotional weakness growing within.

## Gudamiya

Younger generations across the world feel isolated and alienated from politics of destruction and greed that appear to only serve to make the mega-wealthy even richer. These feelings intensify among those forced to watch their ancestral lands taken and exploited by people with no care for their deeper spiritual meaning. Gudamiya is a response to this generational disconnect and feelings of uselessness. This conspiracy is also a direct challenge to the evils that created it, fighting fire with fire.

The seeds for Gudamiya came from the discarded transformed across Darwin. Released back into the world without care that their lives were ruined and they could never return home, various young Deviants came together beyond simple cohorts for their own purposes. The cult of personality formed around Anna "Awarraan" Stone, a young indigenous woman snatched from the streets and forced into the Divergence. Her rage is almost unmatched among the Broken, fueled by the assault upon her body and soul, and her enslaved participation in destroying families and forcing people from land the conspiracies wanted. Awarraan formed Gudamiya around piecemeal fragments of lore and culture she picked up from her upbringing, and those of other Deviants drawn to her cause.

Unfortunately, the nature of conspiracies is to pursue their goals with little regard to how their actions impact others, and Gudamiya is no exception. The group's cause is superficially admirable, but the members' rage leaves a trail of destruction in its wake as they take back from other conspiracies what they believe is theirs.

## Pantheon of Gaia

The Pantheon of Gaia believes that Gaia — as the personification of the living Earth — is sick and dying from human development and expansion. Humanity is a cancer that needs treatment. Much like cancer therapies, the Pantheon combines surgical precision for eliminating discretely

harmful populations, and expansive toxic therapies for the broader population. The Remade are the scalpel and the chemotherapy in the Pantheon's metaphor, sometimes sent to eliminate specific problems, other times unleashed for widespread destruction as they see fit.

The Pantheon knows it is at risk of elimination by other conspiracies and survives by primarily keeping to the wilds outside the city and arranging itself in a loose cell structure. Most individuals within each nodule usually only know their immediate peers and maybe some faithful from a nodule further down from them. Some senior members know one or two people from nodules closer to the central Mother Temple. The disorganized arrangement increases the difficulty of coordinating conspiracy activities, but ensures no one part of the group can compromise the whole.

The Pantheon doesn't believe in destroying all humanity and has a growing list of people who can return to a more natural balance and should survive the eradication. The members of the Pantheon, and some of their families and friends, are, of course, on this list.

## The Sixth Number

This newcomer has little to do with others in the Web of Pain, with goals shrouded in mystery. The Sixth Number wishes to keep it this way. Other conspiracies are often looking to crush or exploit their competitors, and the Sixth Number believe that its enemies would move faster to eliminate it if they knew its true purpose.

## Gears, Levers and Pulleys — The Conspiracies

This section covers the six most prominent and enduring conspiracies currently operating in the Darwin area, detailing their key Nodes and Icons and giving an overview of around half their remaining Nodes. Individual Storyteller's can detail the rest to tailor the Web of Pain to their chronicle's needs.

Numerous small conspiracies beyond the six below appear or move into the region every year, as do local offshoots of larger national or international interests. These are rarely higher than Standing 1 and most disappear quickly, overwhelmed and consumed by the established powers.

## The Society for Cultural Preservation

**Standing:** 6

**Principles:** The secrets of the past inform our future; take what is useful, discard what is not; we don't have to be the first, but we will be the last.

**Virtue:** Thorough

**Vice:** Destructive

**Attributes:** Power 4, Finesse 6, Resistance 8

**Conspiracy Actions:** 3

**Association:** 11

**Key Nodes:** As a well-entrenched conspiracy, the Society has many Nodes, some openly connected to the group's public image, others hidden in plain sight, and more locked away in the shadows. Those detailed below are the most well-known to the Web of Pain.

**Hierarchal Node:** The Home Office, The Society Club

**Temporal Nodes:** Devon Warehouses Ltd, The Maritime Vessel *Old Frontiers*

**Exploitative Nodes:** Harlow and Rendell

**Structural Nodes:** Community Assistance Logistics, Cultural Outreach Social Media, SCP Regional Corporate Headquarters

**Icons:** London Backing, Healing Pools, All Modes Transport Fleet

**The Home Office:** The Society is headquartered in London, which carefully monitors the Darwin offshoot's progress and stands ready to replace its management in the event of catastrophic loss.

*London Backing: If another of the conspiracy's Hierarchical Nodes is destroyed, the conspiracy may replace it as a Complexity 3 downtime action (instead of Complexity 7).*

**Devon Warehouses Ltd:** A warehouse complex appearing like any other in the city's industrial outskirts, Devon Warehouses boast a larger footprint and more security than its competitors. Arranged in a layered grid, mundane businesses rent the outer sheds while the Society keeps its treasures hidden and safe towards the center. Among these, carefully geomantically arranged in an otherwise empty warehouse, are the *Healing Pools*. John Bell leads security around the area and knows — in general terms — the occupants and contents of every lot in the facility.

*Healing Pools: Painstakingly recreated stone by stone stolen from sacred locations across the Pacific, the Healing Pools allow the Society to revitalize injured forces with remarkable speed and maintain their dominance over other conspiracies. The pools replicate the effects of the Healing Touch 5 Variation (p. XX), but shut down for replenishment once used. The pools become inactive for one or two hours at Magnitude 1 or 2, are unusable for a day at Magnitude 3, for a week at Magnitude 4, and a month at Magnitude 5. The subject immersed in the pool enjoys the benefits of the Variation until the end of the chapter.*

**Community Assistance Logistics:** CAL's resources provide the Society with a mobility and response capacity to rival professional militaries. CAL maintains vehicles to rapidly move field teams to promising finds wherever they may be in the southern hemisphere and has the connections and funds to access anything bigger for larger deployments. Cameron Allan worked logistics in the military before discharging to start his own trucking company. Thanks to the Society's business, CAL grew and expanded rapidly. A micromanager, Allan doesn't trust his subordinates to reveal all his contacts and connections. The managers of each of his transport streams would likely fall to infighting for control of the company if Allan were to disappear.

*All Modes Transport Fleet: CAL can get conspiracy members almost anywhere in short order. Individuals can move anywhere in the Darwin region without requiring permits or leaving a paper trail within an hour, and anywhere across the world in less than a day. CAL can also arrange the loan of almost any kind of vehicle to characters, depending on their standing in the Society and whether their actions meet conspiracy needs.*

**Others:** Sebastian Irvine currently holds the most sway over **The Society Club**, which is the ever-changing location where the Society's movers and shakers meet, the time and place of each meeting communicated via cyphers. The **Maritime Vessel *Old Frontiers*** is the Society's flagship bringing aid and cultural researchers to islands throughout the Pacific Ocean. Its hidden holds carry away more than most know. The law firm **Harlow and Rendell** are on constant retainer, ready to challenge any competitors who make the mistake of engaging the Society

through civilized channels. **Cultural Outreach Social Media** is the first point of contact for many interested in understanding or joining the Society's public mission. The professionally managed websites and social media profiles give the ignorant a strongly sympathetic view of the Society. The **SCP Regional Corporate Headquarters** is another public facade for the Society in Darwin's heart, employing dozens of unknowing pawns and filtering messages between Nodes and to other conspiracies.

## Augmentec

**Standing:** 5

**Principles:** Money talks; let nothing stand in our way; exploit every weakness.

**Virtue:** Largess

**Vice:** Ruthless

**Attributes:** Power 7, Finesse 4, Resistance 5

**Conspiracy Actions:** 3

**Association:** 8

**Key Nodes:** As a powerfully aggressive and expansionist conspiracy, Augmentec has many Nodes that its competitors haven't unearthed. Below are those identified with the conspiracy, or which the organization relies upon most heavily.

**Hierarchal Node:** The Casino

**Temporal Nodes:** U.S. Marine Training, Testing, and Development Regiment; Precision Robotics Australia

**Exploitative Node:** Darwin Airport,

**Structural Node:** Augmentec Corporation Offices

**Icons:** Endless Funds, Weapons Development, Cutting Edge Gear

**The Casino:** The money flowing to and from the casino's vaults is central to Augmentec's influence in Darwin, as is the leverage given over those who lose more than they can afford. Carla da Costa is Director of Operations and knows almost everything that occurs in her casino. She passes on nearly everything but withholds some secrets for her own personal use.

*Endless Funds: The money pouring into the Casino's coffers gives Augmentec disposable cash to purchase almost anything it needs. Once per chapter, agents of this Node can procure items as if they had Resources 5, and all Augmentec agents receive a free dot of Resources.*

**U.S. Marine Training, Testing and Development Regiment:** When the U.S. military proposed an ongoing presence in Darwin, Augmentec's backers ensured it was a detachment compatible with the conspiracy's methods and goals. The conspiracy has great influence over the local detachment — officially listed as rotating training deployments — with Colonel William Perry in command of the US presence and ensuring Augmentec receives extreme cooperation in its weapons research and equipment development programs.

*Weapons Development: Augmentec's subsidiaries design and build the next generation of weaponry to sell around the world. Augmentec weapons add one to Damage, reduce Initiative*

*penalties by one, and double range. However, the weapons break beyond repair the first time a wielder suffers a dramatic failure on an attack.*

**Precision Robotics Australia:** Augmentec favors Divergences triggered through implantation of cutting-edge equipment. It needs someone to make that equipment. The Australian branch of the multinational Precision Robotics is a typical example of the industry partners linked in Augmentec's supply chain. Dr Fiona Weist runs the design and manufacture elements of the company. She's a world leader in human-machine interface technology in the public media, with a similar reputation within Augmentec's more shadowy circles.

*Cutting Edge Gear: The systems installed within Augmentec's Remade are better than their competitors. Once per chapter, a transformed originating from Augmentec enjoys two Scar-free dots of Invasive Variations until the end of the scene. Adaptations cannot overcome this per-chapter limit.*

**Others:** Augmentec moves many supplies — including live cargo — through **Darwin Airport** on their way to the conspiracy's secure facilities. The **Augmentec Corporation Offices** in Darwin's business district serves the same function of the public facade put up by the Society, managing the overt elements of Augmentec's business model and unknowingly moving covert messages for the conspiracy.

## Phoenix Power Explorations

**Standing:** 3

**Principles:** Power is wherever you look; explore until you find what you need; control the market, set the price

**Virtue:** Frugal

**Vice:** Negotiable

**Attributes:** Power 6, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

**Conspiracy Actions:** 2

**Association:** 6

**Key Nodes:** Less powerful than some other conspiracies warring in Darwin, Phoenix has a knack for securing resources the bigger players want, giving it bargaining power but also frequently bringing the conspiracy into direct confrontation with the larger competitors.

**Hierarchal Node:** Phoenix Investments and Returns

**Temporal Node:** Energy Exploration Group

**Exploitative Node:** Territory Times

**Structural Node:** EEG Building

**Icons:** The Divinatrix, Investigative Exposé

**Phoenix Investments and Returns:** Phoenix Investments is a privately-held investment group with interests in major corporations across the globe, most of which give a generous return for the group's investment. The Divinatrix is the key to the conspiracy's success and wealth, a



prognosticating Devoted Cephalist passing predictions and instructions to the group in return for comfort and protection.

*The Divinatrix: Hidden away from the world and sustained through complex life support systems and a bewildering cocktail of drugs, the Divinatrix is Phoenix's greatest advantage and biggest weakness. The Divinatrix wields the Precognition 5 Variation, which the conspiracy uses to plan its moves and disadvantage its competitors.*

**Territory Times:** Phoenix only recently gained control of Darwin's largest media organization. The conspiracy took controlling financial interest through dummy corporations and coopted private investors over a year ago, and has spent the intervening time discovering and eliminating the tendrils of other conspiracies from within the company's different branches. PPE installed Dinithi Prasanna as Editor-in-Chief, and she rules with deceptive friendliness that overlays her ruthless ambition. Prasanna and Phoenix aren't interested in nonstop smearing of their competitors and are willing to run favorable articles for an agreeable return. However, just because the Territory Times chooses to not run devastating — or simply embarrassing — stories about other conspiracies doesn't mean that it doesn't keep detailed archives of whatever secrets they uncover.

*Investigative Exposé: Phoenix uses its media domination to secure embarrassing and disruptive information on other conspiracies. Once per story, Phoenix may increase the damage it inflicts with a sabotage or war action against another conspiracy (p. XX) by one without requiring additional Effort. This journalistic reach exposes and confounds Remade's hidden actions as well — once per chapter, the Storyteller can direct a character working against Phoenix's interests to convert a failed dice roll into a dramatic failure. If the dramatic failure would normally earn a Beat for the character, it still does.*

**Others:** Phoenix's mineralogy, oil, and gas explorations via the **Energy Exploration Group** give it easy access across the country and within Australia's territorial waters with few questions asked. The **EEG Building** occupies the same conceptual space as the Society's and Augmentec's offices but provides a separation from Phoenix and the more public face of the conspiracy.

## Gudamiya

**Standing:** 2

**Principles:** Take back what is ours; power is our heritage; destroy all invaders

**Virtue:** Patient

**Vice:** Vindictive

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

**Conspiracy Actions:** 1

**Association:** 7

**Key Nodes:** Small but determined, Gudamiya lacks the resources of the larger conspiracies, but compensates with extreme focus on its narrow areas of interest and an uncanny ability to hit other conspiracies where they hurt.

**Hierarchal Node:** Communal Council

**Exploitative Node:** Dungalaba Youth Drop-in Centre

**Icons:** Hidden Secrets

**Communal Council:** The disaffected youth who make up Gudamiya build a haphazard structure where everyone's voice has value, though not always equal. They bring together fractured lessons they've taken from various cultures, mashing them to give the conspiracy its unique identity. Anna "Awarpan" Stone brought the Gudamiya together and continues to have the greatest sway in guiding its actions. The conspiracy opens its arms to any Remade who can prove their loyalty, with an emphasis on giving individuals opportunities to demonstrate commitment. The varied nature of its membership and the desire of the transformed to prove themselves and belong means Gudamiya has information on the strengths and weaknesses of nearly every other conspiracy.

*Hidden Secrets: The Broken who come together in Gudamiya contribute much fragmented knowledge about the conspiracies from which they escaped. Characters undertaking action against other conspiracies on behalf of the Communal Council gain the Informed Condition regarding a conspiracy of their choice, once per chapter.*

**Others:** Young people with nowhere else to turn drop into the **Dungalaba Youth Drop-in Centre**, inadvertently exposing themselves to Gudamiya's awareness.

## Pantheon of Gaia

**Standing:** 1

**Principles:** Humanity is a cancer; destroy modernity, return the balance; Nature reclaims!

**Virtue:** Wild

**Vice:** Predatory

**Attributes:** Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 2

**Conspiracy Actions:** 1

**Association:** 5

**Key Nodes:** The Pantheon survives by basing itself outside the city, surrounded by harsh bushland where other conspiracies quite rightly fear to venture. It works through a loosely-affiliated cell network, which makes coordination difficult, but eradication harder still.

**Hierarchal Node:** The Mother Temple

**Temporal Node:** Albie's Access Adventurers

**Icons:** Gaia's Boon

**The Mother Temple:** Worshipping outside the city in the wilds that other conspiracies fear, the Pantheon's central clergy name themselves for Gaia's mythical children and descendants, hiding their own identities and keeping the names and locations of the broader church secret even from each other. The leader of the Pantheon — Uranus, Gaia's constant companion — decreed that each one is responsible for the lesser nodules they nurture, a decree that has cascaded throughout the conspiracy's entire structure. The nature of this arrangement means that many members of the cult belong to multiple cells and know more members of the Pantheon than they think. This internal tangle could prove to be the conspiracies undoing.

*Gaia's Boon: The mysticism of the Pantheon yields some tangible power. The wilds surrounding Darwin are always dangerous for anyone who chances them, but those serving Gaia's purpose are somewhat protected. Agents of this conspiracy may reroll a failed roll once per chapter that relates to Survival or avoiding or overcoming dangers in the wilderness.*

**Others: Albie's Access Adventures** leads thrill-seekers to harsh landscapes to see dangerous predators first-hand. The conspiracy members send reports of promising candidates up the chain for processing. Sometimes it takes the initiative and arranges 'accidents' in the worst areas. This thrill of real danger only adds to Albie's success, and each adventurer signed a waiver indemnifying the tour company of blame.

## The Sixth Number

**Standing:** 1

**Principles:** Discover the Sixth Number; transcend the flesh; complete the Zero Solution.

**Virtue:** Measured

**Vice:** Fanatical

**Attributes:** Power 2, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

**Conspiracy Actions:** 1

**Association:** 6

**Key Nodes:** The Sixth Number is new to the region with goals and resources largely unknown to other conspiracies.

**Hierarchal Node:** The Five

**Exploitative Node:** Quantum Mathematics Department

**Icons:** The Zero Solution

**The Five:** Five individuals run the Sixth Number, searching for their lost mathematical peer. One initiated the foundation of the conspiracy by seeding near-impossible equations in hidden places around the world. Two and Three provided their solutions within weeks and joined the growing conspiracy, whereas Four took close to a year to join the ranks. Five has only recently joined the group and they now debate how much they should influence locating Six. According to the group's calculations, the Six will transcend into pure mathematical constants and rule alongside the quantum computational demons unleashed into the world. However, if they resolve the Zero Solution before discovering Six, they face subjugation and breaking like every other physical being.

*The Zero Solution: An apocalyptic trigger intended to spread throughout computer networks and infect devices everywhere, synchronizing their calculations towards quantum dissolving the physical world into one of mathematical purity. Quantum demons will destroy and enslave every physical creature and force them to descend. Only the chosen few such as the Six will ascend into states of constancy. At least, this is what the conspiracy believes it will unleash. The Sixth Number has a standing Complexity 10 action which, if uninterrupted, unleashes disaster on the world.*

**Others:** Graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from the university's **Quantum Mathematics Department** work constantly to solve the Zero equation, ignorant of what its completion will mean.

## The Hydra's Heads — The Web of Pain

The many conspiracies in Darwin make it difficult for Deviants — or even Baselines — to go about their business without tripping over the interconnected filaments of the web. The Society, Augmentec, and Phoenix Energy Explorations maintain official corporate offices and workforces within city boundaries, while keeping their deniable holdings far from official prying eyes. The conspiracies use these offices as communications channels between them and any smaller groups who care to make themselves known and officially join the game. The conspiracies frequently hide carefully worded demands, counter-demands, and threats among the countless routine letters and emails that pass through the offices every day. These communications inevitably find their way to the right people, who pore over the content, trying to discover clues about weakness or strategy against their opponents. While these offices aren't 'off-limits' to the shadow activities of competing conspiracies, they're usually left alone because interfering with them attracts too much attention, and the ordinary wage earners staffing them have no idea of the layers that exist beyond their awareness. While they officially despise the bigger players and each other, even Gudamiya, the Pantheon of Gaia and the Sixth Number maintain connections to public entities and organizations in the city to facilitate contact via this network when needed.

The Web of Pain extends beyond the Darwin region, stretching across oceans to connect around the world. The Sixth Number has links with the University of Delaware as its tendrils in Darwin University extend through the academic network and share data in mathematical circles to crack the answer to the Zero equation. The Society communicates with the Onachus in Ankara via the London head office, as old conspiracies keep themselves updated on the strength and continued existence of their largest regional competitors. Conversely, Augmentec enjoys lucrative business dealings with Ankara's Vigilance Society through deniable cutouts and freelance arms dealers. Weapons and technology aren't the only things exchanged between the conspiracies — each has made cautious enquiries about sharing Divergence information to improve the armamentariums of both.

## Progenitor University

Newark, Delaware, U.S.A.

Built in 1743 and chartered as an institute of higher learning in 1833, the University of Delaware has a long and storied history. Among its alumni are signers of the Declaration of Independence, vice presidents, governors, and Nobel Prize winners. Situated in the heart of Newark, a historic small town in the second-smallest state in the U.S., the University is almost idyllic.

Despite its small size, the University's scientific research facilities are both extensive and modern. Deep-pocketed donors have gifted the school with a new cryogenics lab, a magnetic experimentation lab, and a guest lecturer program that attracts scientific luminaries from all over the world to demonstrate their discoveries. This last often provides networking opportunities to graduate students seeking prestigious internships or lucrative positions in government or corporate scientific research programs.

While the success and popularity of this unique guest lecturer program allows the school to punch well above its weight class in attracting talented students to its science programs, some of

the professors the University invites arrive with considerable baggage or advance fields of study that are outright controversial. Dr. Marvin Walk, the chairman of the committee that organizes the visiting lecturer series, insists that it is good for students to encounter such figures during their academic careers, as challenges to their deeply held assumptions offer opportunities to grow as scientists. The announcement of Dr. Lisa Gottfred as this year's guest lecturer has given even longtime supporters of the program pause. Her links to several different white supremacist and "racial intelligence" organizations threaten to turn dormitory grumbling into something explosive.

## The University of Delaware

Much of the main campus crowds around the Green, a smooth lawn crisscrossed by brickwork sidewalks. On nice days, students flock to the green to study, catch up with each other, or just relax with a picnic blanket and a ukulele. Beneath the Green, however, lies a network of steam tunnels, riot passages for police, and nuclear shelters. Built in the sixties, they connect most of the newer buildings through stretches of darkness.

### The DuPont Tunnels

So-called because they begin in DuPont Hall, the tunnels run along one side of the Green. The tunnels were built in the 60s, when the twin threats of nuclear war and counterculture riots loomed large on the horizon. There's a full mile of tunnels, twisting and turning in the darkness, and intersecting with the storm drains on campus for easy access. In the 90s, when the campus was redone in hopes of a brighter future, some of the tunnels were closed off, locked behind steel doors or sealed off with hastily-constructed cinderblock walls.

Some, however, were integrated into the design of the building. The basements of DuPont, Wolf, and Allison, shod in clean white linoleum and hung with cheerful posters, were once nuclear shelters or tunnels meant for police access. This provides a major benefit to some of the more unorthodox experiments at the University; DuPont gets much of its material science research done here, so the blast shielding that was already in place proves useful for experiments with exotic materials.

### Allison Hall

One of the newest buildings to be constructed on top of the tunnels, Allison Hall is technically two buildings, Allison Hall East and Allison Hall West, connected by outdoor walkways. Allison Hall West is the newer of the two, and does not connect to the service tunnels. Allison Hall East is home to a wildly disparate collection of majors. The spacious classrooms are ideal for hosting students of many different disciplines, and while many of the tables and desks haven't been replaced since the 70s, the other tech is cutting-edge. Each year's guest lecturer has their office in this building, and most use one of its classrooms as their main lecture hall.

### Wolf Hall

Wolf Hall is the middle child of the buildings on the DuPont tunnel system. It houses the University's College of Engineering, as well as its Physics and Biology departments. The building itself is labyrinthine, with above-ground corridors that connect to DuPont, as well as the tunnels below, and several experimental facilities in the basement. These include a fully functioning hydromagnetics laboratory and several medical biology labs full of twice-sealed chemicals and dissection equipment.

## DuPont Hall

The oldest of the halls on top of the DuPont Tunnels serves as the nexus for all the tunnels on campus. DuPont Hall hosts the electrical and computer engineering programs and is a vast technological wonderland. While the facade of the building is colonial red brick, much like the rest of the campus, the inside is updated every year with the latest tech, so the engineering students are always ahead of their peers at other schools. Computer engineering labs have taken over most of the tunnels beneath DuPont, each full of softly-glowing screens and the whir of processors. Even at night, one can find engineering students here, working frantically on projects they need to have finished by the next morning.

## Colburn Labs

Colburn Laboratory, fondly known as Colburn Labs or simple “ole Cole,” is the home of the University of Delaware’s chemical engineering and material sciences departments. Newer than Allison Hall, it sits at the end of the DuPont Tunnels, with its basements building into deeper sub-basements. Here, one can find huge tanks of liquid nitrogen, cryogenics laboratories, molten salts even hotter than lithium, and compounds of materials yet to be named.

## Morris Library

Morris library is the University’s four-story research library. Although close to the Green, it is not on the DuPont Tunnel system. In addition to a wide assortment of texts suitable for undergraduate and graduate studies, one of the sub-basements contains a small library of occult lore, including several pages of Dr. John Dee’s notes on magic and the body and a clay tablet written in a long-forgotten language that reveals the location of a lost temple of the dead Cult of Ascalon.

**ART NOTE: YOU CAN EASILY FIND PICTURES OF THE UDEL GREEN ON THE INTERNET. IT WOULD BE REALLY COOL IF WE COULD DO SOMETHING WITH THAT.**

## Student Life

Although a thriving research university on the surface, the University of Delaware has some very real problems. Among its most troubling statistics are its high rates of binge drinking, alcohol-related fatalities, and suicide. Some blame its fraternities and sororities for this, at least partially. Its Greek culture is particularly toxic, with initiation rituals turned deadly that look less like hazing incidents that got out of hand and more like occult ceremonies featuring human sacrifice.

Mental health issues are a leading cause of withdrawal from the University, especially among students in its science programs. Its graduate students are especially susceptible to the depression and anxiety that plague the department. The school attributes the high dropout rate to the heavy workloads necessary to make their students competitive in the wider world, one that a fulltime job as a research or teaching assistant can elevate to crushing levels. Many who leave the University of Delaware’s graduate programs in science or engineering abandon the field entirely, in some cases leaving behind academic pursuits forever.

The University’s board of trustees has historically supported even radical free speech. In years past, this has permitted the campus newspaper to publish articles deeply critical of school policies and trustee decisions. However, it has also allowed desktop-published newspapers like *The 1488 Times* to circulate widely, its alt-right headlines and articles sharing equal space with

*USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Newark Post* on newspaper racks throughout the university campus. It has likewise provided self-styled alt-right activists a platform for attracting new members among the student body, which it has done with alarming success.

## The DuPont Guest Lecturer Series

Although billed publicly as a way to bring important scientific minds to teach at the University of Delaware for a year, the DuPont Guest Lecturer Series seldom invites Nobel Prize winners. Rather, these guests have one thing in common — all are successful Progenitors who have learned how to reproduce their results fairly consistently. Each teaches a few classes in advanced physics, biology, chemistry, or whatever other fields brought them to the study of the Divergence, but the main purpose for which they come to the University is to provide a demonstration of the techniques they use to create Deviants. Thanks to this program, the University of Delaware has become a place where the Progenitors of tomorrow come to learn the history and current theories about the Divergence.

Every guest lecturer has his own methodology for producing Remade. Some are quite cavalier with the lives of their test subjects, while others strive to avoid any fatalities. Many espouse controversial political positions, but many others are apolitical scholars of the occult for whom the Divergence is merely an interesting phenomenon. One year's guest lecturer might be a lone professor for whom her work is a labor of love, while the next is "on loan" from another conspiracy that doesn't mind sharing some of its secrets in hopes of attracting new blood from the University's graduating students.

## The DuPont Guest Lecturer Committee

Each year, a committee of professors representing each of the six natural science departments — biological sciences, chemistry and biochemistry, linguistics and cognitive sciences, mathematical studies, physics and astronomy, and psychological and brain sciences — meets several times to select potential guest lecturers. Months of discussion lead to a few months of invitations extended, rejected, and accepted, until the Committee ultimately selects the next year's guest lecturer.

The contract each guest lecturer signs guarantees at least one successful Divergence each year, although one per semester is greatly preferred. More than that tends to attract unwelcome attention to the program, which the Committee prefers to avoid. The Committee provides access to all the university's scientific research equipment and helps the guest Progenitor find, recruit, and retain acceptable test subjects from among the student body. It ensures a supply of graduate students who serve as assistants. When necessary, it arranges for the disposal of any failed test subjects. In exchange, the guest lecturer receives a stipend that most tenured professors at the University would envy.

## Graduate Students

The Committee does not expect the guest lecturer to perform all the tedious work that goes into producing one of the Remade. An aging Progenitor, for example, cannot perform certain tests herself, or wrestle a struggling subject onto a gurney. Some lecturers bring one or two assistants with them to the university, typically Devoted or trusted colleagues, but they can hardly be expected to do the work of an entire staff. In order to carry out some of the more difficult parts of a Divergence, the Committee enlists graduate students and assigns them to the program.

Many of the graduate students fit the typical mold. They live in communal housing — usually with other students involved in the program. They drink too much coffee, stay up too late, and do unreasonable things for a small stipend and a shot at changing the world one day.

They are all complicit.

They may not enjoy pulling the lever, or using the ECT machine. They almost definitely do not enjoy administering hours of repetitive tests to subjects and recording brainwave activity. Many of them are burgeoning alcoholics and hope to forget what they've seen. The Committee pays them with money, glowing recommendations, and introductions to members of other Progenitor conspiracies. Many establish good working relationships with the guest lecturer, which they parlay into tenure track positions at other universities. At the very least, the experience makes them valuable recruits for many other conspiracies in the Web of Pain.

Those who do not comply can expect to find themselves on the outside of everything. They cannot get funding or recommendations. Departmental budget cuts mean that research assistant and adjunct jobs are difficult to come by without the Committee's say-so. If she doesn't play along with the guest lecturer, it's entirely likely that an unlucky grad student will be cast out into the cold world beyond the walls of academia altogether. And if she attempts to stop the demonstration or draw the scrutiny of the outside world to it, the Committee has the resources to ensure her silence as surely as it eliminates uncooperative or failed test subjects.

## University Administration

Although the success of the DuPont Guest Lecturer Series has granted Dr. Walk and the Committee a fair amount of pull at the University, its continuance depends on a great deal of willful blindness on the part of the school's administration. Fortunately, many of the conspiracies the Committee has befriended over the years have deep pockets, which has allowed Dr. Walk to completely corrupt the administrative staff of the University.

The Committee uses this power to secure enrollment for the children and protégés of powerful Progenitors, providing these students with unique opportunities to study other Divergence methodologies, albeit at a considerably higher price than the ordinary University tuition. This provides the Committee with the funds it needs to bribe administrators to ensure the program continues without interference.

Subverted security staff grant access to parts of the campus normally off-limits to students and professors, including the dorm rooms of recalcitrant test subjects who might otherwise wash out of the guest lecturer's demonstration. They also misdirect law enforcement concerning the sudden death or disappearance of anyone the Committee needed to eliminate. Students who die are staged as suicides or drunk-driving accidents. If they have no obvious mutations, they can be left in their dorm room with a noose around their neck, but those who have extra limbs or deformities usually end up on the evening news as a barely-identifiable body after a horrendous accident.

## Guest Lecturer: Doctor Lisa Gottfred

Dr. Lisa Gottfred is the current DuPont Guest Lecturer. While she has her doctorate in Medical Biology, she is a tenured professor of education at the University of Minnesota's St. Cloud campus. Her classroom is always decorated with plants and beautiful crystal lightcatchers in the windows. With her bright blue eyes and her blonde-grey hair, always pulled back into an old-



fashioned bun, she could be somebody's beloved aunt or grandmother. She maintains surprisingly convenient office hours. Her voice is soft, her comments gentle, and her door always open.

Prior to coming to Minnesota, Dr. Gottfred was a lead researcher for The Manifest Destiny Foundation. Created by a mill owner in the early 1900s after he lost a legal battle to his workers' union, the Manifest Destiny Foundation seeks to promote "race realism" in academia and scientific inquiry. In theory, this means treating race as a real and valid factor in people's lives. In practice, it usually manifests as angry articles in academic journals explaining why people of color are stupid and do not deserve to be educated because "they won't get it anyway." Although she officially retired from that organization five years ago, she still writes articles for the Foundation and occasionally accepts generous consulting fees from them.

In fact, she is a very successful Progenitor and one of the first to identify the effects of genetics on a candidate's suitability for Divergence. Among conspiracies that seek to create Mutants, Gottfred is a living legend — exactly the sort of guest lecturer the Committee hopes to entice. Unfortunately, she comes with the baggage of being a white supremacist, which has long encumbered her acceptance in academic circles.

Her presence at the University of Delaware is controversial, despite the city's largely homogenous white population. It has also proven disruptive in other ways, drudging up and emboldening The 1488 Club — a local alt-right organization that has long sought to expand its presence on the campus of the university. This group of neo-Nazis hopes to enlist Gottfred's support in giving them a greater voice in Newark and beyond.

## Gottfred's Secret Methodology

Although Dr. Gottfred produced her first Deviant decades ago and devoted twenty years to perfecting her techniques for triggering the Divergence, she has never fully documented the process she uses to screen potential test subjects for viability as Remade. Even The Manifest Destiny Foundation never successfully wrested her secrets from her, such that they are unable to produce new Deviants except in consultation with her. As she approaches the end of her seventh decade of life, however, Gottfred has expressed worry about her scientific legacy. She knows that she must pass on her methodology to someone who will build on her work, but it is equally important to her that any such successor share her values.

She has announced that she will choose a protégé from among those who enroll in her special lecture and who assist in her demonstration of the Divergence. Anyone with Gottfred's secret would find all the conspiracies of the Web of Pain open to him, a fact she will fully use to motivate the graduate students to perform horrific tests on experimental subjects as a test of their personal loyalty to her and their scientific resolve. The stress of this regimen of inflicting physical pain on test subjects may yet rise to a trauma sufficient to transform some of her assistants into Cephalists. It is unclear whether or not this is her true intention.

## Gottfred's Office

At first glance, Dr. Gottfred's office, tucked away in a corner of the first floor of Allison Hall, looks homey and inviting. The windows look south over a garden that blooms with dogwood and roses in the spring, and the windows are full of crystals and stained glass art. Dr. Lisa Gottfred has covered her desk in a pretty wool shawl, and there is always soft classical music playing in

the background. Whenever she is on campus and not teaching, her door is open and she can be found here.

Her office becomes more disconcerting the longer one spends in it. White supremacist symbols that can easily be explained away, like the triskelion and the clover, permeate the art in the room. Her bookshelves are full of texts on educational conditioning, racial intelligence, and medical experimentation, right next to books about how to teach preschoolers and SAT prep guides. In her desk, she keeps a battered paperback of *Mein Kampf* under copies of *Positive Thinking Every Day* and *The Secret*. First editions of *Might is Right* and *Man, The Unknown* are locked in one of her cabinets.

## Gottfred's Assistants

Dr. Gottfred has brought two Devoted with her to the University of Delaware. Both are Mutants who are ostensibly “on loan” from The Manifest Destiny Foundation, although they are loyal to Gottfred first and foremost.

**Virginia Dare** is the older of the two, and took her name after the first white child born in the New World. She helps with more physical tasks and directs the graduate students when Gottfred isn't available.

**Father Lance** checks up on the health and well-being of test subjects and ensures any Remade remain in containment. While he seems kind and gentle, his rare flares of temper are legendary among members of the Manifest Destiny Foundation.

## Conspiracies of Newark

The DuPont Guest Lecturer Series is the only conspiracy with a major presence in Newark. However, most guest lecturers have at least some connection to another conspiracy, and Dr. Lisa Gottfred is no exception.

### The DuPont Guest Lecturer Series

**Standing:** 1

**Principles:** Educating the Progenitors of tomorrow; show respect and you will receive it; let none stand in the way of scientific progress

**Virtue:** Open-Minded

**Vice:** Permissive

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

**Conspiracy Actions:** 1

**Association:** 5

**Hierarchal Node:** DuPont Guest Lecturer Committee

**Exploitative Node:** University Administration

**Structural Node:** Graduate Students

**Icon:** Alternate Lecturers

**DuPont Guest Lecturer Committee:** The committee directs the activity of the other Nodes or delegates it to the guest lecturer. The Node's Linchpin is Dr. Marvin Walk, the chairman of the Committee and the head of the Biological Sciences Department.

*Alternate Lecturers: Not every guest lecturer serves out the entire year of his contract. Conflicting priorities and pedagogical inadequacies can force an early departure. Freak accidents and the unexpected arrival of Renegade former test subjects can cut a Progenitor's life short mid-semester. The Committee keeps several alternate lecturers in reserve for just such an occasion, each one capable of accomplishing the Divergence on quite short notice, if necessary — although their methodologies can be somewhat crude, resulting in a higher failure rate. As long as the Committee remains intact, the Graduate Students Node is not destroyed if its current Linchpin is killed, although the conspiracy suffers damage to its Association normally. Instead, a new Linchpin arrives to take over the Node at the beginning of the next chapter.*

**University Administration:** The corrupt staff of the university's administrative offices provides cover for the activities of the Committee and their guest lecturers. The Node's Linchpin is James Dwyer, a campus security officer who has worked at the University of Delaware for nearly 40 years. He knows every nook and cranny of the school grounds and has the full trust of the university staff, but he is one of the Committee's most prized assets. Now approaching the age of 70, and with a wife whose chronic health issues add up to large medical expenses, Dwyer's ability to retire comfortably was in doubt until he started accepting bribes from the Committee. Now, he has staged so many suicides and covered up so many student disappearances that he is terrified that the Committee will make him disappear if he stops.

**Graduate Students:** This Node does most of the grunt work the guest lecturers require. Although some find the work distasteful and turn to drug and alcohol abuse to avoid having to consider the damage they are doing to the lecturer's test subjects, a substantial minority have an active interest in learning from the techniques and methodologies of successful Progenitors. A handful, prodded by rumors that Dr. Gottfred is looking for a worthy successor to whom she can reveal her secrets, will stop at nothing to prove themselves to her. The guest lecturer is the Node's Linchpin. Without her, the graduate students are forced into comparative idleness, and those attempting to curry favor with her will lose any progress they might have made.

## The Manifest Destiny Foundation

**Standing:** 2

**Principles:** White makes right; master race 2.0; in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god

**Virtue:** Courteous

**Vice:** Xenophobic

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse 4, Resistance: 3

**Conspiracy Actions:** 1

**Association:** 6

**Local Nodes:** The Manifest Destiny Foundation has a minimal presence in Newark. Dr. Gottfred is their main representative.

**Temporal Node:** Gottfred Consulting

## **Exploitative Node: The 1488 Club**

### **Icon: Driving While White**

**Gottfred Consulting:** Dr. Lisa Gottfred, with the assistance of her Devoted, can produce Mutants with some regularity. As long as she has the leisure to carefully screen them for genetic, physical, and psychological fitness, she can avoid fatal failures nearly 90% of the time. She has been much less successful in identifying controllable factors that will allow her to do the same with Cephalist Divergences, but she is eager to test and improve her methodology there. The Manifest Destiny Foundation would prefer Dr. Gottfred abandon her current line of inquiry, but without her continued cooperation and consultations, they would lose their ability to produce Deviants entirely, so they are not pushing the issue.

**The 1488 Club:** This Newark-based white supremacist organization is a relatively new phenomenon, but its members are hungry for more influence. The Foundation found it quite easy to subvert the Club in order to make use of its resources. The Club, coupled with Gottfred's presence at the University, affords the Foundation an opportunity to win new converts to their cause, which they do not intend to let slip by. The Club also gives the Foundation access to a couple dozen foot soldiers on the ground if it needs to come to Dr. Gottfred's aid.

*Driving While White: For the most part, local police treat Club members with kid gloves, carefully protecting their freedom of speech, even when members commit acts of violence. Members of the Node enjoy two free dots of Status when dealing with local law enforcement.*

## **In the Wider Web**

The DuPont Guest Lecturer Series is a feeder organization for at least a dozen other science-focused conspiracies in the Web of Pain. Graduate students who elect to study the methodology of a visiting Progenitor quite often join a conspiracy once they complete their studies — whether they go to work in the private sector, in government, or in academia. The ESC in Connellsville, Pennsylvania is particularly eager to attract graduate students to its internship program.

Even beyond the visiting Progenitors themselves, all the members of the Committee have connections to one or more conspiracies. For example, before coming to the University of Delaware, Dr. Walk spent two years as a research assistant at the Society of Cultural Preservation's London headquarters.

## **The Secret of Ellicott Cave**

### **Connellsville, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.**

Tales of strange creatures and unexplained disappearances have been part of Connellsville's lore since its founding in 1793. These stories all have their origin in a medium-sized limestone cave located roughly a mile from the eastern edge of town, on the fringes of the forested state land that surrounds the town to the south and east.

In addition to numerous gorgeous stalactite and stalagmite formations, yellow-green crystals ranging in size from fingernails to fists cover the walls. A small creek runs through the center of the cave, and these crystals adorn its channel. This creek ends in a small pool just outside and to the left of the cave's entrance. This pool is slightly more than 20 feet across and only a few feet deep. The water does not continue away from the pool, instead sinking into the earth through a variety of small cracks and fissures.

A local entrepreneur named Hiram Ellicott discovered the cave in 1907, and named it after himself. In an attempt to further enhance the town's growing economy, Hiram Ellicott stabilized the portion of the cave closest to the opening, put in paths, and tried to transform the cave into a tourist destination. Two years later, after several reports of mysterious illnesses, one death, and an unconfirmed report of something strange and terrible happening to one patron, local authorities closed the cave to tourists.

Investigators discovered that the cave and to a lesser extent water from the stream that flowed out of the cave was mildly toxic. Most people who spend too much time in the cave or who drink or bathe in the water suffer flu-like symptoms, which occasionally prove fatal in vulnerable populations such as the young, elderly, or immune compromised. As a result, the town gated the cave and fenced off the pool shortly after the end of WWII.

Today, Ellicott Cave remains gated, with a sturdy fence around both the cave's entrance and the pool beside it. Officially, the local government works with the Ellicott Study Center (ESC, generally rendered as "the Esk") to control access to the cave. The official reason for closing the cave and the associated pool is because the cave is unsafe, and residents worry about children getting inside. Teachers and other authorities repeatedly inform local children and teens that sneaking into the cave will make them sick, and could kill them. While the cave is dangerous, the ESC is actually in charge of it, and works to prevent locals from exposing themselves to its dangers, because too much publicity about the cave or people harmed by it risks exposing the ESC's true interest in Ellicott Cave.

## A Rusting Town

Connellsville is one of many shrinking and impoverished cities and towns in central Pennsylvania. Its population is 7,500 and has been falling for decades. However, unlike most similar communities, Connellsville occasionally draws people to it from hundreds of miles away. These people feel compelled to enter the cave, and many who do undergo a hideous metamorphosis, becoming Deviants.

The town's single remaining large employer is the ESC, a biochemical research facility that Burgess Pharmaceuticals established in the late 1980s, ostensibly to study the unusual organisms and biochemistry in Ellicott Cave. It employs more than 400 locals, but all its senior management, research, and security staff are highly trained outsiders who live and work in Connellsville. The vast majority of its local employees work as lower level administrative or maintenance staff, but their generous pay and benefits are a great help to the community.

Most residents avoid spending time with tourists, because everyone here knows that visitors occasionally vanish. Connellsville gets little tourism, most of which consists of individuals or families who need a place to stay for the night on their way to another destination. However, several times a year, travelers show up to Connellsville because they specifically wished to come there. Some are hikers. Others state that they simply "felt drawn to the town," and every year a few of them vanish mysteriously. Most seemingly check out of their rooms, taking their belongings, but no one sees them leave. However, a handful simply vanish, leaving their possessions behind. Residents of Connellsville have learned not to ask questions about these visitors. While these outsiders give many reasons for their visits, almost all either ask if there are any nearby caves or specifically come seeking to visit Ellicott Cave.

## The Lure of the Cave

The crystals in Ellicott Cave give off a strange radiation that leeches into the waters of its creek and pool. The pool is an Intensity 2 radiation hazard, while the depths of the cave where the crystals are densest are Intensity 3 (p. XX). This radiation does not fit the profile of any known form of radiation, and it is also closely tied to the cave itself. Both the water and the crystals cease to affect people more than a few hours after either have left the cave. After this time, the water appears to be ordinary water, and the crystals are equally unremarkable calcite.

Ellicott Cave also has two other, stranger properties — attraction and transformation. It regularly attracts people who possess some sort of limited supernatural perceptions or abilities, drawing them via exceptionally vivid dreams that include the person descending into the cave, touching the crystals, and watching them begin to glow with an unearthly yellow-green light. In these dreams, the cave feels exceedingly wondrous and numinously important. Most who dream of Ellicott Cave feel desperately driven to find it, when they awaken. Supernaturally attuned Baselines passing through town almost always experience these visions, as well, waking with knowledge of where to find the cave that calls to them.

Although anyone exposed to the radiation of Ellicott Cave has the potential to undergo a metamorphosis, those whom the cave attracts are far more susceptible to its transformational influence. Most quickly fall ill after a single visit, and those who recover subsequently lose all interest in the cave. The remainder suffer the soul-shattering experience of Divergence. Often, this transformation occurs after a single visit to the cave or one drink from the pool in front of the cave.

Researchers from the ESC have also discovered that while most animals seem to instinctively avoid Ellicott Cave, it attracts a few of these animals, and they also sometimes transform into Manticores.

## Burgess Pharmaceuticals

Almost 30 years ago, researchers at Burgess Pharmaceuticals began indirectly studying both the cave and the cave's effects on people and animals. Direct research on the cave has been extremely limited, since no one understands how to shield researchers from its effects. Even suits designed to protect wearers from harmful bacteria, viruses, chemicals, and dangerous levels of conventional radiation do not protect users from becoming ill or transforming. Although the director of the ESC permits employees to visit the caves and study them, she expects anyone who does to be a volunteer fully aware of the risks. Burgess Pharmaceuticals wishes to avoid losing researchers or having any of them blow the whistle on the ESC's activities or reveal the secret of Ellicott Cave to outsiders.

In addition, the ESC works to prevent any locals from visiting the cave. Their goal is both to avoid stories about the cave-produced illnesses from alerting state or federal public health officials, and to eliminate any chance that a local might transform into one of the Remade. Instead, the ESC uses the few outside volunteers that it discovers online to study human interactions with the cave. The ESC obtains additional people who feel drawn to the cave through a secret and moderately lucrative arrangement with the town's government.

In return for a variety of gifts, the mayor and the sheriff both immediately contact the ESC if anyone seeks permission from the local government to gain access to Ellicott Cave. At this point, the ESC's research division performs a background check on the person and makes certain that they are not someone who would attract too much attention if they vanished. Next, one of the

ESC's psychologists contacts the person, pretending to be a representative of the government in charge of cave safety. The psychologist interviews the individual and requests a physical, allegedly to make certain that they are healthy enough to visit the cave. When possible, the interviewer attempts to find out the reason for the visit. If the person mentioned dreams about the cave or that they possess unusual abilities, the interviewer mentions being an amateur parapsychologist who asks if the individual would be interested in parapsychological tests. At this point, the ESC refuses permission to anyone who would be missed, and gives others permission, assuming they are willing to sign an NDA.

The ESC requests that visitors wear monitoring equipment while inside the cave. Even if someone refuses to wear these, Ellicott Cave contains a wealth of surveillance equipment, as does the pool outside. In addition to being useful for observing the activities of anyone allowed into the cave, the cameras and other sensors in and around the cave also allow researchers to swiftly detect anyone attempting to sneak into the pool or cave. ESC employees monitor these intruders, and then ESC employees dressed as police apprehend the intruders when they emerge. The local authorities report anyone who dies or transforms as having snuck into an unsafe local cave and died. The ESC releases anyone who survives unchanged with a fine and a warning.

Individuals the ESC permits to visit the cave or pool can do so several times, but guards always escort them to and from the site. These escorts make certain that no one else is around the cave when anyone enters or leaves. Also, the ESC repeatedly reminds visitors that violating the NDA they signed will result in extreme financial penalties.

Although Burgess Pharmaceuticals does not understand the cause of the cave's transformative powers or why some people become ill from exposure, they have developed a variety of supportive treatments for the illness caused by the cave's radiation. These treatments greatly reduce the incidence of fatality from exposure to the cave, and the ESC gives them to anyone suspected of exposure.

Visitors who transform into one of the Remade usually do so in cave. However, transformations can occur as much as two days afterward. As a result, researchers keep everyone who visits the cave and has not transformed around, offering free medical checkups, tests of psychic ability, and other distractions until there is evidence that the individual is unlikely to transform. The ESC then keeps any new Deviants for study, allegedly for their own safety.

Researchers regularly keep these Broken for between two and six months, during which time they explore the limits of the Deviant's abilities and the details of their altered biology and psychology. After this time, the ESC offers a few Remade with particularly useful abilities employment at the facility. This offer includes housing and medical assistance, but requires the Broken to agree to keep their condition and whereabouts secret, and not to attempt to escape. However, once researchers have completed their study of Deviants that they either do not believe will be useful, or which they consider violent, likely to attempt to escape, or otherwise problematic, they sell the individual to another conspiracy.

Although a few ESC employees who that work with the transformed are unhappy with selling "surplus" Remade, and would prefer to find a way to help them return to the way they were before, or at least better-adjust to their condition. However, the director of the ESC understands that while research into the caves and the Broken it produces is fascinating, it hasn't proven to be at all lucrative. Deviants with useful abilities sell for large sums of money. Since the ESC began selling Remade almost 20 years ago, this research facility has ceased being a revenue drain on

Burgess Pharmaceuticals, and for two years in the last decade, it made a small profit. The director makes certain that all senior employees understand that before the practice of selling Deviants began, Burgess Pharmaceuticals almost closed down the ESC several times, and that selling unneeded Remade prevents this from happening. The director also takes employee morale and the feelings of employees towards particular Deviants into account when deciding which ones to keep at the facility and which ones to sell.

## Dissuasion and Erasure

Descriptions and discussions of Ellicott Cave occasionally appear on paranormal discussion boards, but the ESC does its best to keep anyone from posting the cave's location. Burgess Pharmaceuticals wishes people attracted by the cave to continue visiting it, but attempts to prevent it from becoming a site of interest to people fascinated by the paranormal. The publicity and exposure caused by such visits could risk exposing the truth about the transformations and the ESC's research.

Burgess Pharmaceuticals employees discretely contact anyone who seems to know about the cave and is too eager to talk about their theories. At first, they try to dissuade the curious by providing information about other unusual sites that they claim are far more interesting or authentic. If this fails, their next step is to employ hackers to discredit the person by making fake posts in their name and distracting them by committing identity theft. On the few occasions where these means fail, the ESC gets directly involved and uses one of the Remade they "employ" to alter the person's mind, while hackers alter their posts. These same Burgess employees occasionally post wildly incorrect locations for Ellicott cave on these discussion boards to make any attempts to determine the cave's actual location more difficult by people who don't feel drawn there.

Most of the people who have recurring dreams of the cave have little trouble finding it. If someone who seems to feel Ellicott Cave's call posts about it on one of the discussion boards that Burgess Pharmaceuticals monitors, employees observe the individual, and if they seem to be planning to travel to the cave, asks members of the ESC to contact this person. If the person who feels called to the cave is someone whose absence would be too noticeable, the research team pretends to be part of a government agency and warns the person from attempting to visit or discuss the cave, providing them with graphically dire warnings about toxic chemicals, grotesque cancers, and dissolving skin. Once again, ESC personnel use mental alteration by a Deviant as a last resort, if other efforts fail. However, if the seeker's disappearance will not be noticed, the ESC's contact personnel allow access to the cave but attempt to control the circumstances of the visit by characterizing it as participation in a geo-psychic research project.

## Power and Influence

The ESC and Burgess Pharmaceuticals possess a great deal of both official and unofficial power in Connellsville, simply because the ESC is by far the town's largest employer, and one of the few that offers good pay with full benefits. Burgess Pharmaceuticals also regularly donates to local political campaigns, and rewards the mayor and sheriff with numerous small but often quite valuable gifts, including expensive liquor and travel discounts. These bribes make certain that both officials are exceedingly loyal to the ESC, and that they are more than willing to look the other way about anything that the ESC asks them to.

To further quell any discontent, Burgess Pharmaceuticals does its best to aid the residents of Connellsville. In addition to keeping locals safe from any interaction with Deviants or exposure



to Ellicott Cave, the corporation has also donates generously to the local hospital and to the impoverished local schools. In addition, it provides college scholarships to talented local students, and allows siblings and parents of employees to buy into the excellent low-cost health plan they offer to all local employees. As a result, almost everyone in the town benefits from Burgess' generosity, and Connellsville's inhabitants are somewhat better off than the residents of most other towns in this region.

## Secrets and Surveillance

The director of the ESC understands that sometimes people sneak past or break open fences and gates, and that some Variations allow Deviants easy access to almost any location. As a result, outsiders occasionally manage to break into Ellicott Cave without permission. Also, Remade occasionally leave the cave before the ESC can capture them. In addition, over the past 35 years, eight Broken have escaped from the locked portions of the ESC's lab.

To handle these problems and to help identify the occasional Manticore produced by exposure to Ellicott Cave, the ESC keeps Connellsville and the forests around it under heavy surveillance. The laboratory maintains a network of discreet CCTV camera all over the town, as well as concealed solar-powered miniature cameras in the land around it. ESC employees have even placed cameras in the various abandoned buildings on the outskirts of Connellsville, and in the forest on the south and east sides of town.

In addition to allowing researchers to locate escaped Deviants, and to either observe or apprehend people attempting to break into the cave, these cameras provide a moderate amount of video and audio of trysts and substance abuse use by dozens of locals. On a few occasions the ESC's director, Dr. Melissa Sanders, has used this footage to threaten locals into silence. Although she greatly prefers offering rewards like jobs, scholarships for children, and occasional one-time payments, Dr. Sanders is willing to openly threaten the few people who either demand too much money for their silence or whose silence she cannot easily purchase. These threats, combined with the impressive degree of political and economic power that Burgess Pharmaceuticals holds in Connellsville, continues to protect Ellicott cave's secrets.

### The Forest

The large amount of densely forested state land that forms the town's eastern and southern borders has proven somewhat problematic to Burgess' efforts, especially since Ellicott Cave is located on the edge of this huge forest. This forest represents an obvious destination for escaped Remade. The ESC maintains surveillance cameras in the forest, but the size of the region and its wild nature mean that continuous, in-person surveillance is impractical, and cameras regularly fail due to natural causes.

On several occasions, Renegades attempting to sneak into Connellsville to return to the cave, attack the ESC, or free others of their kind from captivity have snuck in through the forest. As a result, it's a serious vulnerability. However, it also provides the ESC with several useful opportunities.

Researchers can test some Variations more easily tested outdoors, and the ESC's cryptozoologist believes that forest is currently home to at least half a dozen Manticore wild things (p. XX). Over the past 25 years, the ESC has captured five Manticores from the forest. These Manticores continue to be a source of local

legends in the campgrounds, recreation areas, and small communities located in and near this forest.

## Local Knowledge and Resistance

Few locals speak openly about the occasional disappearances or the other mysteries surrounding Ellicott Cave and the ESC. Concerned citizens remind anyone who asks too many questions, of the handful of people who did so and then either suddenly lost their jobs or experienced other problems with their finances. While few speak of what happened next, everyone in the town is aware that these problems swiftly vanished soon after the individual ceased speaking out or openly asking uncomfortable questions. However, many locals know that Connellsville is not a typical town and that both Ellicott Cave and the ESC are somehow connected to these oddities. Popular theories range from the cave containing a crashed alien spacecraft to Burgess Pharmaceuticals using the cave to store radioactive waste.

High school students, and a few of the more outspoken adults, whisper about strange experiments, monsters, and the odd visitors who periodically vanish. None of the locals has any solid evidence that anything illegal or supernatural is going on, other than the occasional reports of strange sights or sounds coming from the forest, and the fact that every year or two, a visitor vanishes from one of the town's two hotels without paying their bills or taking their belongings.

Mayor Melinda Wilder knows something is going on with the ESC, but she also knows that Burgess Pharmaceuticals has been very generous to Connellsville, and she can see how poorly nearby towns that lack such corporate largesse are faring. In addition, her son Jeremy is a teenager who feels the call of Ellicott Cave. Although Mayor Wilder has no idea what the cave does, she knows that some of the travelers and drifters who come seeking it vanish, and so she is very pleased that ESC personnel have made a special effort to keep Jeremy away from the cave. He's tried to get in twice, and they picked him up and returned him to her both times. The second time, they showed him footage of the effects of flesh-eating bacteria supposedly found in the cave, and seem to have scared him off, for now.

Mayor Wilder hopes that when Jeremy graduates from the local high school in two years, he'll go off to college and remain far from Connellsville and Ellicott Cave. Dr. Sanders of the ESC has hinted that if Jeremy can get into a college, the ESC will provide him with a scholarship, provided that he stays out of Ellicott Cave. Because of how they are helping Jeremy, Mayor Wilder is particularly well-disposed towards the ESC and is definitely willing to bend the rules a bit to help keep the press, law enforcement, and overly curious locals away from both Ellicott Cave and the ESC.

A handful of people in town know some portion of the truth. One local high school student saw people taking a Deviant into the ESC building, and three other teens saw an escaped, and somewhat inhuman-looking Remade running through the woods, but since both incidents occurred at night, none of the students was able to take useful photos. Also, in the last decade, Charlene Jackson, the town's veterinarian, met two recently transformed Broken, one of whom had snuck into the cave and was running from ESC patrols and the ESC had held the other Remade captive for two weeks before she escaped. Charlene helped both escape from Connellsville, but had heard enough stories to know that she didn't want to let anyone know what she had seen or done.

All the mid- and upper-level personnel working at the ESC know the truth, but understand their careers, and possibly their lives, might be in danger if they reveal what they know. In addition, almost all of them are loyal to Burgess Pharmaceuticals, either because of the excellent pay and benefits they receive, or because they believe in their work. However, one employee is secretly troubled by the ESC's policies, and occasionally even secretly defies the ESC.

Jason Zamora is the ESC's assistant director. He loves his work, and passionately believes in the value of the ESC's research, but objects to the fact that Burgess Pharmaceuticals sells Broken it cannot use to other organizations. Jason is unwilling to risk his reputation or income to make more than the occasional token protest against this practice, but the fact that Burgess is effectively selling slaves bothers him, and so he salves his conscience by allowing a few Remade to escape. Jason does not want anyone to discover his activities, and so he makes certain that these escapes appear to be accidents, or the fault of security personnel Jason dislikes. He never lets other captive Deviants know he is helping them, but over the last decade he's allowed three to escape by arranging seemingly accidental power failures and computer problems. Jason only does this for Remade who in some way seem to him to be especially "deserving of help," and consoles himself that the others have in some way earned their fate. However, he was quite distressed that guards apprehended one of the four Broken he attempted to help escape before they managed to get more than a few miles from Connellsville.

## Conspiracy Personnel

The following individuals are important people at the ESC.

**Dr. Melinda Sanders:** Dr. Sanders has been the director of the ESC for the last 12 years. She cares deeply about her work, because she has a secret that she has shared with no one else. She has a limited ability to read minds and when she concentrates, she can often sense the surface thoughts of anyone she is talking to. Unfortunately, Dr. Sanders also feels as strongly drawn to the caves as any of the people she has watched transform. However, she understands that if she transformed, the result would be terrible, and the fate that awaits her after her Divergence would be worse. Therefore, Dr. Sanders restrains her desire to enter Ellicott Cave, which she dreams about almost nightly.

She someday hopes to unlock the secret of Ellicott Cave and permit people, with herself first in line, to undergo an entirely beneficial transformation. Dr. Sanders regularly uses her supernatural gift when interviewing prospective employees and individuals who are seeking to visit the cave, to make certain that none of them lie to her. However, she has avoided spending too much time with the Remade after one looked at her and whispered, "I know the cave calls to you, too."

**Elizabeth Chen:** Known to the people working at the facility as Liz or LC, Liz Chen is one of two Remade currently working at the facility. She visited the cave and transformed eight years ago, and she has lived and worked at the facility ever since. LC possesses two Variations that Dr. Sanders finds to be exceedingly useful, she can track both humans and Remade exceptionally well, and she can erase memories.

Most of the time, LC appears completely human, and while she lives in an apartment maintained at the facility, the ESC permits her regular trips into Connellsville. However, she must wear a tracking anklet that instantly warns Dr. Sanders if she either attempts to go too far away or to tamper with the anklet. Knowing that disobedience would result in her swift sale, Liz has never tried either.

**Jose Perez:** Jose is head of security at the ESC. He's a decorated Marine veteran and has worked in private security for the past 12 years. He's worked at the ESC for the last five years. He believes the Remade to be both unnatural and dangerous, and is determined to prevent any of them from escaping captivity. He admires Dr. Sanders, but dislikes Jason Zamora, and Jason feels the same way about him. Jose is deeply upset that two Broken escaped during his tenure, and he will be furious if he ever learns that Jason Zamora is responsible for these two escapes.

**Senior Vice President Maxine Fink:** Maxine oversees the ESC's activities from Burgess Pharmaceuticals' home office in Pittsburgh. She recognizes that R&D is a long-term investment, and she sees the promise of profit in the ESC, but she also needs to be able to make the case to her bosses that it hasn't become a waste of company resources. She finds the sale of Remade distasteful, but allowing the ESC to turn a profit, however small, keeps the program off the chopping block, which is her main priority.

**Jason Zamora:** Jason is the assistant director of the project and is also one of the people who spends the most time working directly with the newly transformed Remade. He has worked at this facility for the last 18 years, working his way up from research assistant to assistant director. In addition to helping Dr. Sanders, Jason studies the Deviant's transformations and their new capabilities and prepares reports on their abilities that Dr. Sanders uses to decide which Broken to sell and to whom. Jason feels compassion for the Remade, but is also aware that many of them can be profoundly dangerous. The transformed both fascinate and horrify Jason, and he hopes to someday find a way to provide safe version of some of their powers to others, and to transform them back to ordinary humans.

His fascination with the Remade and his conflict about their sale has resulted in him having a savior complex towards some of them, particularly towards attractive young women. If doesn't believe he can safely arrange for them to escape Jason occasionally alters his reports about Deviants he particularly likes. He tailors these reports in the hope that organizations he believes to be more humane will purchase these Broken. However, he only makes these changes if the Remade recognize and appreciate his compassion. He swiftly decides that any Deviants who seem too angry about their captivity are aggressive brutes who deserve whatever fate they get.

## Connellsville Conspiracies

A small town in an isolated part of Pennsylvania, Connellsville is hardly a teeming hub of conspiracy activity, Ellicott Cave mysteries notwithstanding. In the absence of competition, the ESC has been able to dominate the landscape here, taking its funding from a parent company that has little real interest in its activities, as long as its bottom line remains in the black.

### Ellicott Study Center

**Standing:** 4

**Principles:** Ellicott Cave is ours alone to study; keep the locals safe to keep our investment safe; stay profitable

**Virtue:** Generous

**Vice:** Complacent

**Attributes:** Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

**Conspiracy Actions:** 2

**Association:** 7

**Hierarchal Node:** ESC Nerve Center

**Temporal Nodes:** Information Office, Security Personnel

**Exploitative Nodes:** Home Office, Local Government, Local Police

**Structural Nodes:** Containment Facilities, New Market Sales, Operations Center

**Icons:** In-Kind Favor, Local Power

**ESC Nerve Center:** Located at the heart of the ESC, this collection of executive offices directs the activity of the conspiracy. Dr. Melinda Sanders is this Node's Linchpin.

**Information Office:** The ESC maintains an information office for handling questions about their facility and about Ellicott Cave. Both signs and security personnel at Ellicott Cave direct individuals who come seeking access to the cave to the information office. Here, personnel interview individuals obsessed with entering cave, and decide whether to give them access. The information office grants access to suitable candidates after they undergo various tests. Elizabeth Chen is its Linchpin and uses the Memory Thief (Stolen Triumph) 4 Variation to dispose of the memories of any journalists or law enforcement personnel who seem undeterred by the office's dire warnings about flesh-eating bacteria and dangerous radiation.

**Security Personnel:** While security for the public-facing portions of the ESC consists of locals hired at modest wages, all security associated with the Remade and Ellicott, Cave are well-paid, highly trained, and generally ruthless security contractors. They are well-armed with both lethal and less-than-lethal weapons and observe the cavern, the area around every ESC facility, every hotel or motel in Connellsville, and portions of the nearby forest. The security contractors have recently begun experimenting with using drones armed with dart guns or tasers to patrol remote regions. Its Linchpin, Jose Perez, is the head of security and sees his job as protecting the people of Connellsville from deadly monsters.

**Home Office:** The ESC has friends in the Pittsburgh office of Burgess Pharmaceuticals, particularly those of the R&D division of which it is nominally a part. Maxine Fink is the Linchpin.

**Local Government and Local Police:** The current mayor (Melinda Wilder), like all Connellsville's mayors for the last 30 years, receives generous campaign contributions and other gifts from Burgess Pharmaceuticals, as does the current Sherriff, Jon Washington. They both understand how important the ESC is to the local economy, and as long as nothing the ESC does disturbs the town or its inhabitants. Because the ESC has kept Mayor Wilder's son Jeremy out of Ellicott Cave, she is particularly well-disposed towards the ESC.

*Local Power: ESC employees gain 8-Again to any Politics and Persuasion rolls to obtain the cooperation of local government and law enforcement and achieve an exceptional success on three successes instead of five.*

**Containment Facilities:** The labs and containment facilities for studying and housing the Deviants created by Ellicott Cave is in a sub-basement beneath the overt ESC facilities. Here, the ESC keeps the Broken until it completes studying them and sells them to another conspiracy. The attached lab contains records of every Remade created by Ellicott Cave that Burgess Pharmaceuticals has studied.

**New Market Sales:** When the ESC was over-budget and its revenue remained stubbornly below expectations, Paul Tobin hit upon the idea of selling some of the Remade in the Containment Facilities to other conspiracies. This new revenue stream saved the ESC from being shuttered during the next round of budget cuts, and it catapulted Tobin to the head of marketing for the ESC.

*In-Kind Favor:* As a Complexity 5 downtime action, the Node can call upon the aid of another conspiracy with which it has an established business relationship. This grants access to a single Node's resources until the end of the next chapter, although the ESC can renew this for another chapter at the cost of 2 Effort.

**Operations Center:** Most routine administration of the ESC takes place here — from ordering toner and opening the mail to paying invoices and organizing staff teambuilding events. This Node also plays a vital role in laundering the proceeds of selling Deviants to other conspiracies, typically masked as consulting fees for providing access to Ellicott Cave or as mineral rights purchases and sales. Pearl Diehl manages most of these schemes.

## Enmeshed in the Web of Pain

Science does not happen in a vacuum, and all the researchers who are interested in Ellicott Cave and the Broken it produces are just as interested in studying other “natural” sources of Divergence, and finding ways to control and harness them. After hearing reports of phenomena in Ankara Turkey creating spontaneous Remade, several Burgess Pharmaceuticals employees are now investigating these rumors. Scientists at Burgess Pharmaceuticals learned of the unusual events in Ankara because a small group of researchers at the University of Delaware are also studying Divergence and had previously traveled to Ankara. Sharing information about events in this city is only a small part of the regular information exchange between ESC employees and these researchers at the University of Delaware. The fact that several graduate students from the Department of Medical Biology have received internships at Burgess Pharmaceuticals has only served to strengthen this connection.

## Chapter 7: Storytelling

*“If you're going to do something that crazy, save it for when it'll make a difference, Lieutenant Skaaiat had said, and I had agreed. I still agree. The problem is knowing when what you are about to do will make a difference.”*

— *Ancillary Justice*, Ann Leckie

The Remade have fallen down a rabbit hole that only goes deeper and deeper, the chaos of their shattered lives a testament to the cruelty of the conspiracies that changed them. They can succumb to their fate, or fight it and carve out a meaningful niche that, if not their old lives, at least provides some semblance of comfort, even in a world changed nearly so radically as they themselves were. And that world is the Storyteller's responsibility — the work of the machinery moving behind the scenes, the hidden engines of the world that take everything the Remade know and twists it into hideous, terrible shapes. The conspiracies within the game are, after all, an extension of the Storyteller — they, too, are only fronts, levers for the Storyteller to build a narrative around the players' characters.

This chapter provides the tools necessary to do the Storyteller's job, from inspiration to design. First, we'll discuss themes, both how to articulate them within the game and how to draw upon

works of media that resonate with the story, using them as inspiration to fuel the world you and your players have created. Next, we'll take a look at horror in roleplaying, and how to play up the gruesome world the Remade inhabit, how to make the characters, and not the players, miserable. An examination of life in poverty — a life that virtually every Remade experiences — follows, with suggestions for playing up the little things that wear away at those subjected to it. Finally, we'll go in-depth with conspiracies, and how to use the rules provided in Chapter Five to their maximum effect.

## Theme: Isolation

At its core, *Deviant* is about the experience of isolation, both as a result of physical transformations and being outcast from society as a result of those changes. Ultimately, the Remade are the archetypal Other — the being that it's just easier to not empathize with, the person who is not normal and is therefore lesser, the marked class to end all marked classes. It's impossible to understand **Deviant**, at its core, without understanding privilege, and what it means to have that privilege taken away.

### Microaggressions

*You'd get more interviews if you changed your name to something less ethnic. What's your real gender? You should go outside and exercise, it's better for you than those medications. No, this establishment doesn't have a ramp at the entrance. You know it's not healthy to be overweight, right? You should smile more, it makes you prettier.*

Some people are able to read statements or questions like these as innocuous, perfectly reasonable advice or questions offered in the spirit of generosity. Others — the people they're directed at — feel them like a thousand little cuts. These are microaggressions, and they are a fact of life for anyone who differs from the norm — the edge of institutionalized prejudice that many people don't even realize they're actively participating in. To them, the idea that these statements or questions might hurt is fundamentally alien, and being called out for them feels like an attack out of nowhere, because they don't have the lived experience to understand why they hurt, why they marginalize, why they other.

The Remade, too, experience microaggressions, because the world around them doesn't see them, doesn't understand them, not as they are, not as they're forced to be. Some Remade just can't do the things they used to, because their bodies and minds have been toyed with and changed according to someone else's design. Maybe the Remade isolates herself for the good of those around her, or maybe she's rejected by those she goes to for help — in the end, the result is still isolation, and isolation has a way of deepening itself and encouraging others to participate in enforcing it.

Every Remade will experience this differently. Some will be more able to mainstream themselves than others. Consider how Remade who cannot "pass" feel about those who can. Individual Scars and Variations will naturally result in different treatment by others. Someone who always smells of sulfur will be treated differently in passing than someone whose touch sickens gradually, even though both result in a barrier between the Remade and the rest of the world. Storytellers should take into account not only Variations and Scars, but also the origin and the previous life of their players' Remade, and tailor the way exclusion feels to them on an individual level. Never let up on this, and never let it become normal. The characters should always feel the fishhooks, always feel the ache. Every scene in which the Remade interact with

the outside world should feature these microaggressions, these exclusions, the othering inherent in the Remade condition.

## Empathy

Rather than just a Skill, empathy is a key trait of humanity. It's our ability to place ourselves in the shoes of another, to understand their experiences as if they were our own. It is an incredibly powerful ability, with the potential to completely alter how a person sees the world. The empathy circuits in our brains are hardwired in with our social instincts, for we are at our core a gregarious species that seeks out others — others like us.

That's the problem, and that's the reason why humans are incredibly bad at empathy. We evolved in a tribal setting, and we evolved the ability to tell friend from foe right alongside our social instincts. This originally applied only to people within our familial groups, but it's slowly extended outward. That said, the idea that people who aren't from the in-group are still human is a relatively recent development in terms of human history, and there's still a frightening number of people today who haven't worked that out. Even among those who accept people of other ethnicities as human, there's a disturbing tendency to participate in a hierarchy of human-ness.

Now, imagine you've met someone whose head splits open vertically to reveal the thing that lives where the brain ought to be, that lashes out with a six-foot tongue-stinger lined with toothed suckers like a squid's. How well do you think you'd do at treating them like any other person after seeing something like that? Be honest.

Remade face extreme difficulty in connecting with other people, simply because something about them is certain to cause revulsion. The minute that difference becomes apparent, the nature of the relationship will shift, likely permanently, and even if it seems like it may be salvageable, people who have seen the Remade at their worst are never going to entirely forget it. Very few have the sort of empathy that would allow them to connect at a deep level with someone who isn't entirely human anymore. Let's not forget, too, that those who do are the ones who the conspiracy comes for first, whether as a hostage, as bait, as leverage, or even as a turncoat. "They just want to help you!" might well be the worst kind of betrayal.

## Human Reactions to Isolation

Humans are a social species. We need a support system of others to whom we can speak, engage in tasks, and generally share our lives with in one way or another. It's built into us on a genetic level, and even the highly introverted ultimately need at least some form of human contact. We don't do well in isolation.

But we isolate humans. We isolate others by imprisoning them, by shunning them, by exiling them, by turning against them en masse. We even isolate ourselves, sometimes, due to mental illness, physical disability, or a host of other reasons that just make it easier not to reach out. The worst and deepest kinds of isolation, such as solitary confinement, are widely regarded as utterly inhumane, and if allowed to persist has been known to inflict serious and lasting psychological damage.

Very few Remade have to cope with extended solitary confinement (unless subjected to it by a conspiracy), but must contend with social isolation stemming from class, circumstance, and, ultimately, their own inhumanity. While this doesn't result in the same kinds of dire psychological distress as solitary confinement, it does inflict a toll in the long term. Depression and anxiety are not uncommon in marginalized populations, for the simple reason that knowing



you're excluded is a weight that never truly lifts from your shoulders, and every moment one suffers under its burden makes it all the harder to break the cycle.

Isolation in a group (codependency)

Remade, of course, do have a built-in support network — the others that, like them, have had their lives stolen from them and their bodies twisted into something other than human. They share circumstances, if not the cause of those circumstances, and understand, at least to some extent, how the other feels. This ready-made in-group rapidly becomes a source of empathy, help, and understanding found nowhere else in the world for the Remade.

The other side of the coin, however, is that when one can only trust a carefully curated few, those few become one's whole world. Relying exclusively on one or a few others for emotional support and self-esteem, two things in short supply for Deviants, can easily lead to codependency — enabling addictions, self-destructive behavior, or other negative habits or traits out of a desire for approval. This is a dangerous thing for Renegades, who do not lead safe or stable lives.

## Mood: The Revenge Tragedy

While Loyalty gives the Remade something to hold onto, whether out of compassion, jealousy, or need, Conviction drives them to forsake everything for the chance at revenge. Conviction compels them to expiate their anger, usually on those who wronged them, sometimes indiscriminately. But revenge isn't as easy as the Remade would like to believe. They may have the power to ruin the conspiracy that birthed them, but when they stand in the wreckage of a lab or ritual space, their tormenters' remains scattered about them, it has a way of feeling hollow. Nothing has really changed. They may not be hunted, but they're still a twisted, formerly-human wreck, and without Conviction to cling to, that physical sense of *wrongness* will only grow and fester.

Even without the metaphysical danger of losing a Touchstone, real-world costs to revenge rarely enter the Remade's calculus until it's too late to mend what they've broken in their lives. A human friend who sympathizes with a Remade's desire for vengeance may feel very differently when they see her holding a severed head in her hands. Squatting may become too dangerous following a particularly vicious response to a conspiracy's prying, meaning that not only the transformed, but her neighbors, are out a safe place to stay. Revenge has a way of becoming all-consuming, and it doesn't only eat away at those who seek it.

The Storyteller shouldn't shy away from showcasing the downsides of revenge. Tragedies of vengeance are tragedies because, ultimately, the violence and hatred engender only violence and hatred in turn. The endless cycle, unbroken, perpetuates itself. A tragic revenge story where the protagonist doesn't die or otherwise lose everything at some point is not a tragedy, it's a story about a monster, and not the kind of monster Deviants are. In fact, that kind of monster is much closer to the people who transformed the Remade into what she is.

## Tone: Simmering Hate

Hatred all but defines Renegades, fueling and fueled by their Conviction in a deadly and dangerous cycle. It's more than just an abstract drive, though — the rage and hatred boiling in the heart of each and every Deviant is deeply personal. One might keep it, along with their

expressiveness and speech, firmly clamped down; another might well rant and rave, given half the opportunity, screaming because holding it in is too much effort, hurts too much.

For all it burns away at them, though, hatred is a tool for the Remade. The lives they find themselves living aren't easy to cope with, and revenge in particular isn't an easy path to tread. Hate lets the Remade dehumanize their tormenters (in a figurative sense, unlike what the conspiracy did to them), making it that much easier to harm or kill them. As a justification, it's hard to beat, and it keeps feelings of remorse or regret away. As long as you hate someone, really hate them down to the very core of their being, the costs of hurting them seem trivial. When the Deviant's revenge ends up causing collateral damage, either to their friends or to innocents, hatred is what lets them carry on, adding these deaths to the tally of sins they lay at the feet of the conspiracy.

But hatred isn't just a tool, it's way of life. When you adopt it, you adopt it at every turn, and it slowly wends its way into your thinking not just about the subject of your hatred, but about everything — because ultimately, everything can be blamed on the person or persons you hate. This is how hate consumes a person, hollowing them out inside until there's nothing left. Naked hatred alienates others who don't share it (or understand it, even if it seems obviously justified to the transformed). The obsession drives others away, or makes it easy to lose touch, as more and more of the Remade's life begins to revolve around the hatred they carry.

## Inhumanity by the Numbers

The genre represented by **Deviant: The Renegades** — that is, the body of literature and media surrounding uncontrolled and unwilling transformation of the flesh — is a wide and expansive one, with many permutations, and **Deviant** is well-equipped to venture to every corner of that genre. Stories range from the viscerally terrifying, with flesh tearing and blood spraying, to the introspective, where the focus is less on the flesh and more upon the nature of humanity. Similarly, the scale of the story can vary wildly, from the street-level battle to a truly cosmic-scale conspiracy where the fate of not just humanity but reality itself may well hang in the balance.

To facilitate quicker understanding and categorization of these subgenres, we employ a two-axis system, with each axis representing the spectrum of possibilities between the extremes noted above; the Grounded/Flying axis, which notes how far-ranging and high-concept the story is, and the Body/Mind axis, which tells us the focus of the alienation. This two-dimensional map of the genre gives us a quick and dirty estimation of what sort of story is being told by any given media. Breaking it down further, we find four quadrants, where similar stories are grouped by tendency — Bleeding, the street-level everything-is-made-of-meat sort of story where everything hurts and no punches are pulled; Catastrophic, where the transgression against humanity is so visceral and horrific that it threatens life, society, and maybe even reality; Melancholic, where the focus is on the loss of humanity, sometimes at one's own hands; and Posthuman, where the world rides so far beyond the norm that when humanity looks back, we can only just see what we've left behind.

## Body

Body stories are messy, gory, and gut-wrenching. It's unpleasant, it's not easy to look at, and it's extremely surreal — and that's the point. We so often equate our bodies with our selves that when they break down or behave in a way we don't expect, it's easy for us to read it as betrayal,

and anger is a common reaction to betrayal. Body stories are about being able to feel your heart pounding not just in your chest but in your throat, in your head; about seeing red and losing control. These kinds of stories will have high body counts, not just among Storyteller characters but player characters as well. Losing control is dangerous for the Remade, but in stories like this, it's easy for them to forget that just long enough to make a decision they may well regret.

## Examples in Media

- *Bio-Booster Armor Guyver*: Zoanoids are humans transformed and brainwashed by the Chronos Corporation, able to switch at will between their human forms and a terrible, massive, and hideous battle-form that endows them with superhuman abilities and a desire to kill. This transformation is never subtle, and across all adaptations the camera frequently lingers as a human face ripples, distorts, or even tears violently open like a chrysalis.
- *The Fly (1986)*: Seth Brundle invents a teleporter, and in the process of testing it melds his DNA with that of a common house fly. At first, he seems fine — better than fine, as he enjoys increased strength and stamina. Over time, however, the fly DNA begins to assert itself, and he slowly and painfully transforms into a horrific fly-man-hybrid. Not for the weak of stomach.

## Mind

Mind stories step outside of what we might think of as body horror, shying away from the physical disgust and moving towards a more philosophical take on self-rejection. These kinds of stories focus less on “What have I become?!” and more on “What does it mean to be human?” Inspirations for this kind of story stretch all the way back to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and are still told to this day. In a way, this reflects the opposite impulse from anger at bodily betrayal, above. Instead of anger, the primary impulse is sorrow and fear — the flight reflex overwhelming the inclination to fight. That doesn't mean that these stories can't be violent, but the violence will be much more focused, much more directed, and frequently will disproportionately affect the player characters. It's easier to throw your own life away when it doesn't even feel like your life anymore, and if that's the cost of revenge, then so be it — at least it ends the suffering.

## Examples in Media

- *Ancillary Justice*: Breg is an ancillary — a human whose identity was destroyed and whose still-living body is connected to the AI of a massive Radchaai starship. As a “corpse soldier,” one of thousands, equipped with augmentations that make her a nigh-unstoppable killing machine, she conquered dozens of worlds, until her ship was destroyed in a power play by a segment of the hive-mind dictator of the Radch. The only survivor, she identifies more as the ship than the human she once was, and is driven by a powerful thirst for revenge.
- *Annihilation (Southern Reach Book 1)*: Four explorers, stripped of the right to use their names for their own safety, venture into an alien landscape as surveyors. Over the course of the book, it slowly changes them from the inside out, tampering with their minds as they grapple with the incomprehensible world around them and their own creeping inhumanity.

## Grounded

Most Remade are on their own, and frequently so are the protagonists of the sort of fiction **Deviant** emulates. Being different isolates you, after all, and stories that trend towards this end

of the axis don't pull punches about that. Grounded stories are about being on the outside looking in, being one of the few aware of a dangerous secret, and frequently being the only one in a position to do something about it. Isolation, yes, but more than that, dehumanization. No one is coming to the protagonist's rescue, and if she reaches out, she's likely to regret what comes next.

## Examples in Media

- *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: A brilliant but weak scientist invents a potion to strengthen his will and constitution, and ends up unleashing an inner monster that slowly takes over his life. It's the archetypal gothic **Deviant** story. Jekyll is responsible for this own plight, and has absolutely no one he can depend upon to help him with his struggle — at least, not without placing them in terrible danger from Hyde's appetites.
- *Stranger Things (2016)*: It's harder to be more helpless against a conspiracy than if you're literally a child, and the few adults who actually take the children seriously in *Stranger Things* aren't much less helpless than the kids are — more, if you consider what Eleven can and does do to multiple adults and the Demogogon.

## Flying

By contrast, some stories in the Deviant wheelhouse are less about the isolation forced upon the Remade and more about the effects of transformation on the wider world. Flying stories are big, expansive, have consequences far beyond the lives of the people they focus on. While many protagonists of Flying stories volunteered or otherwise caused their own transformation, this isn't necessarily the case. Conspiracies often have lofty goals, great tasks they are willing to sacrifice human lives to carry out. High-minded ideals override empathy, and people are treated as commodities, often without anyone so much as batting an eye — and if you think this is unusual, we invite you to take a look at the modern job market. Volunteering doesn't always mean having a choice.

## Examples in Media

- *Bio-Booster Armor Guyver*: Yes, it's worth mentioning it twice. Early on in the manga, where most adaptations have lingered, *Guyver* is a relatively Grounded story — Shou against the Zoanoids, protecting his friends and his school, and occasionally destroying the odd secret Chronos base. Spoiler Alert: he can't stop the Chronos Corporation, and in the later arcs of the manga, Chronos begins processing mass populations of humans, transforming them into Zoanoids enslaved to the will of the Zoalords. They go public, and Zoanoids receive the heroic treatment. The Guyver, who still struggles on, is labeled a vile terrorist.
- *Prey (2017)*: On a space station in Lunar orbit, the TransStar Corporation has developed technology to implant memories and skills into human minds — and to remove them as well, meaning no one can be sure what they remember is the truth. When TransStar turns to using this technology on an alien species, implanting alien memories to create psionic powers in humans, this love-letter to the classic *System Shock* turns dark in a hurry.
- *Akira*: The classic manga and anime adaptation both fit this extreme of the spectrum. Tetsuo, a victim of military experiments, develops terrifying psychic powers. At first horrified at what he can do, he quickly develops a god complex and destroys Neo-Tokyo in short order. In the anime, this takes place over a relatively short period of time; the manga draws out his

degeneration and ultimate self-destruction. In either case, the consequences of the experiment redefine the world.

## Mixing and Matching

There's more to these scales than the extremities, of course, and there's the wide two-dimensional space between them. These examples of **Deviant**-like stories in extant media — far more than mentioned in this book — spread across the four quadrants these spectra create, touching on the same themes to different degree and in different ways. Some navigate around the chart over the course of their narratives, somewhat appropriate for a genre dealing with transformation. **Deviant** is no different, and a chronicle can easily start small, with a very local conspiracy, and wind up dealing with world-spanning threats. Even Superman got his start in Smallville, after all.

*Bleeding* stories — the axis of Grounded and Body themes — are the core of the **Deviant** experience. Other stories include kernels of the body horror, isolation, and hopelessness that these stories focus on. When a story trends toward this style, it revels in the twisted and the inhuman, turning up the gross-out factor and never looking back. Happy endings are few and far between, and protagonists who survive these kinds of stories may not be the lucky ones.

*Melancholic* stories — the axis of Ground and Mind themes — place special focus on relationships, or rather the lack or loss of them. Revenge is still a theme but it's a very tightly focused one, and over-the-top violence gives way to more “realistic” takes, with less blood and guts and more “what have I become?” In Melancholic media, the actual transformations aren't the center of the tale, and sometimes aren't even shown — the feeling of isolation is the heart of these stories, more so than in any other kind. That's not the case in a **Deviant** game, of course, but the emphasis on Loyalty over Conviction is clear.

*Catastrophic* stories — the axis of Flying and Body themes — are where things get big and scary. Transformation isn't always personal, and when it begins to affect the world more than the individual, themes of isolation bleed outward, with mass violence and sudden change standing in metaphorically for personal and emotional violence, though there's plenty of that too. Worlds don't survive Catastrophic stories, and what's left behind afterwards may bear the scars of the event that transformed it forevermore.

Finally, *Posthuman* stories — the axis of Flying and Mind themes — come the closest to stepping outside **Deviant**'s core themes. In stories like this, the Remade are most likely to have volunteered for the process that transformed them, or even inflicted it upon themselves, though they certainly didn't anticipate or want what came next. Posthuman stories are not *transhuman* stories, which concern themselves with what we may make ourselves capable of and what the consequences may be. Rather, Posthuman narratives are about the loss of humanity, frequently en masse, of going so far down a dark road its origin vanishes forever. Posthuman stories exist in the gap between our reach and our grasp, in the realm of the possible but poorly understood, where opportunities are clear but outcomes are not, with the Remade bearing the consequences of this sort of vision.

## The Final Act

Everyone shuffles off this mortal coil eventually, but the Remade are frequently ahead of the pack. Trapped in a cycle of violence and vengeance, their lives are far more dangerous than they once were, and serious injury and death are not surprising outcomes. But death doesn't come

with a timetable, and even when we can see it coming, its advent is unpredictable at best. Most Deviants are no more durable than a Baseline, and yet they often set themselves against organizations that employ squads of contract killers — an imbalance a few Variations cannot always make equal. Death happens.

## So, You're Dead — Now What?

Death comes in many forms, from a blaze of glory to a tragic inevitability to a noble sacrifice and back again, but ultimately the loss is the same for those left behind. While the Remade are no strangers to violence and death, losing one of their own, a comrade in arms, one of the few people in the world who truly understood what they were going through, is an incalculable loss. Ordinary people have enough trouble coping with the death of a loved one, but Remade rarely have the same kinds of support structures in place to deal with their grief. After all, it's not as though they can tell a therapist the centipede-thing that replaced a friend's spine finally hatched and ate him alive, assuming they can find a therapist they can trust to begin with.

As a result, grief often lingers among the Remade, mixing in with the grief over their lost life, lost friendships, loves, and opportunities; many Deviants develop emotional calluses around these wounds, and may express this as anger, depression, or detachment. Psychologically, the root of it is fear of repeated loss, and the drive to avoid it — unfortunately, the transformed have precious few options for this.

## Go on Without Me

This is a story, of course, and death doesn't have to be as random or meaningless as it often is in real life. Ultimately, crafting a satisfying narrative is more important than respecting the letter of the law when it comes to dice rolls, and a character's fate should be in the hands of the player rather than random chance. If a player knows their death is coming, if it fits well as a culmination of that character's narrative, play a little fast and loose with the rules. Give them that last moment, that last burst of energy, that we've all seen so many times in film and television — the heroic last stand, the suicide mission, and so on.

The death of a central character shouldn't be a quick and easy scene, however. Losing a character is emotional not just for the other characters but also for the players, particularly the player of the deceased character. The tension building up to the death and the fallout that comes after are part of the process, and just as important as the character's actual last moments. Storytellers should treat these moments with care, and always be sure that the players are holding together. Don't be surprised if there's a tear or two. Check in on players in the days following their character's death, to make sure they're coping. Grief can land extremely hard, and sometimes it takes a day or two for it to really hit.

There's logistical considerations as well. Characters are a player's primary lever on the setting and the story, and without their character present the rest of the chapter is going to be essentially an improv play put on for their benefit. The simplest solution is to try to arrange the death to come close to the end of the chapter, but that's not always possible. Sometimes, players rush through scenes you thought would take hours to play out, and sometimes they're just plain having too good a time to stop playing. The fallout of a character's death is lucrative role-playing currency for some players. If it's going to be a while, one of the best ways to include the now-characterless player is to give them a Storyteller character to portray, preferably one they're familiar with and can get into character for without too much difficulty. If they're comfortable with it, bring them on as a temporary assistant Storyteller, giving them a rotating cast of

Storyteller characters to play, though make sure there's notes for those characters ready to hand over, as it's unlikely any of players are telepaths.

## FNG Syndrome

A character died, everyone had lots of pathos, and maybe a few people cried. All well and good. Now what? Integrating new characters into established games has been a roleplaying conundrum since time immemorial, and **Deviant** is a game that presumes a certain level of character mortality. Thankfully, in the case of character death, the player has been around for the chronicle thus far, eliminating the need to play catch-up with plot, Storyteller characters, and other concerns. It also makes it easy for them to create a new character who will fit in with the group — they'll know the other Remade fairly well, unless they died early on in the chronicle. They can do this at the table with the other players, or they can do it in their own time before the next chapter.

Players will frequently use meta-knowledge to immediately recognize, approach, and adopt new characters, but this always feels a little artificial, especially in a game about conspiracies trying to ruin the characters' lives and enslave them. In real life, integrating newcomers into group chemistry can be daunting — hence the term FNG, or “Fucking New Guy,” referring to an individual who joins an established team and is mistreated or disdained because they haven't shared hardships with the others. While perhaps more believable in the context of the story, pugnacious refusal to accept the newcomer is a good way to derail a chronicle.

Thankfully, methods for avoiding both extremes abound. There's no reason a new character has to show up out of nowhere, after all. Perhaps the player is taking over a Storyteller character who ran afoul of the conspiracy, or who was already transformed to begin with. If the character died during a rescue mission, the new character could be someone brought back at a terrible cost, and in this case, that's actually a very strong impetus to keep the new character close, since their freedom was so dearly bought. The new character might well be the new model, intended to be used against the other characters, in which case the information they have might be critical to protecting themselves against the conspiracy's latest machinations.

## The End of the Beginning

Just because a character is dead doesn't mean that their role in the story is over. If nothing else, their memory lives on with the rest of the characters, and will affect them throughout their arc. Dealing with grief is never a quick or easy thing. Bereaved characters must contend with a long-term recovery, and even afterwards will be changed by the process.

Memory isn't the only way deceased characters can affect the story going forward, however. Conspiracies have no compunctions about tampering with the lives of others, violating natural law for their own ends, and nothing requires them to respect death. Perhaps, through super-science, they reanimate the deceased character, or use their body to bind a spirit or demon — or perhaps the character wasn't quite as dead as his comrades thought, and now thirsts for revenge against them for leaving him behind.

If the Storyteller intends to make a Storyteller character out of a former player character, however, be sure that the player is okay with that. Let them keep creative control, and ask them how their character would react in such a situation. Using former player characters in this way is always a sensitive issue, and not something to surprise the player with. Remember — make the characters miserable, not the players.

## Body Horror

Horror, and especially horror at the unwilling transformation of the flesh, is at the heart of **Deviant: The Renegades**, and conveying that horror at the table can be a challenging task. Anyone who has seen *The Thing* remembers the first reveal of the twisted, merging dogs in the kennel, but how do you do justice to a scene like that off-the-cuff, during play, and without pushing things too far and making your players uncomfortable?

### **INHOUSE: BIG FULL PAGE SIDEBAR, BECAUSE SAFETY TOOLS ARE IMPORTANT.**

#### Player Safety and Security

Any game in the **Chronicles of Darkness** benefits from the inclusion of the following tools for controlling comfort level in games — **Deviant** more than most. The point of the game is horror, which walks a fine line between attraction and revulsion, but it's so easy to tip too far over toward revulsion, especially since each player will have a different level of comfort. Safety tools are more often used in games with strangers, such as at conventions, but are still excellent safety options even in long-running groups with lots of trust built up over time. The following tools have been developed by veterans of roleplaying, and lengthier discussions of them can be found online.

- The X-Card system, designed by John Stavropoulos, requires an index card marked with a large, prominent X. At any point in a scene, a player (or the Storyteller) may reach out and tap or otherwise indicate the X-Card; this means that whatever just occurred pushes things too far for them or otherwise makes them uncomfortable. This is a cue to rewind and rework the scene, avoiding the critical issue. The most important part of the X-Card is that no judgement is levied at those who employ it — it's a way to quickly and without explanation signal strong no-go subjects.
- Script Change is a system developed by Brie Sheldon, used to control what subjects are aired, which are lingered over, and which require a short break to process before moving on. Rewinding, much like the X-Card, indicates a desire to revise the scene to excise something uncomfortable. Fast Forwarding, by contrast, is the time-honored tradition of the fade to black, skipping over sensitive topics that a player might not wish to have thrust to center stage. Finally, Pausing simply puts the game on hold for a moment before continuing without any changes. This system can be used with index cards, or by speaking the key words aloud.
- Lines and Veils is a system for discussing in advance what subjects the game will and will not be exploring (lines not crossed), and which will be referenced but not given detail (veils). Participants can always call for new Lines or ask to Veil the remainder of a scene during play.

## Body as Self

Able-bodied people often have a one-to-one relationship with their body. Everything is where it belongs, nothing feels out of place, nothing hurts just for the sake of hurting. If something does hurt, it's due to an injury or an illness, something to fix, cure, or heal. This makes it easy to



identify with one's own body, to the point where it's considered the default by our culture (debates about dualism aside). Our proprioceptive sense tells us where parts of our bodies are, and when we look, there they are. Simple. Easy. The norm, according to the majority who are fortunate enough to experience this.

This is the most likely starting point for any given Remade. Exceptions exist, but by sheer statistics most will belong to this category — people who don't experience any significant alienation from their own body. This makes the changes they endure all the more jarring, because they have little or no experience with such a feeling. This category also includes people with disabilities who have either lived with a disability all their life or have fully adapted and integrated mobility devices and other tools into their day to day life — these effectively become extensions of their body, and a Deviant's Scars may well interfere with their ability to use them properly.

## Body as Rebel

Not everyone is so lucky, of course. Many people suffer chronic physical or mental health issues that present serious problems when it comes to engaging in everyday life. People with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome must carefully plan out what tasks they are capable of in a given day without deeply exhausting themselves for days or even weeks on end, and even that planning can break down for little to no reason. Addicts must contend with a brain demanding a particular series of chemicals, to the detriment of its normal operation. Tremors, craving, or physical pain without any stimulus are all possible consequences of deprivation. Able-bodied people who experience a serious injury or illness from which they never entirely recover must relearn their capabilities in a body that, to them, suddenly feels wrong.

Many Remade experience these sorts of problems, and this degree of alienation, as a matter of course. Scars and Variations alike push them outside the norm, and even if they have one or more superhuman qualities, the tradeoff is unlikely to be a blessing. They must learn to exist within a body that seems to fight them, seems to monkeywrench even those things that will benefit it, let alone the person inside it.

## Body as Prison

Some experience alienation to such a degree that existing in one's body is painful, even torturous. Chronic, severe pain, sometimes without any discernible cause, can easily set one against the entire medical profession, who are loath to prescribe sufficient quantities of painkillers. Resorting to less legal methods of self-medication may put one squarely in the crosshairs of law enforcement, which does not care why you have a basement hothouse full of cannabis plants. Transgender people experience such an alienation from their body, specifically their assigned gender, that fundamentally altering their hormone constitution is the only way to ameliorate it. Even then, dysphoria is likely to be a lifelong companion, assuming one has access adequate transition care or can make the right connections to DIY the process.

Unlike people whose bodies work against the owner, people trapped within a body that seems to actively loathe them are often at odds with the medical establishment. Doctors are frequently uninformed about the kind of chronic problems that generate this degree of alienation, assuming the malady is accepted by the medical establishment to begin with, and whether one's doctor will be prepared to address them is largely luck of the draw. Remade are squarely in this position, if only because their bodies are significant departures from the human norm. Imagine going to the doctor and explaining that you have chronic heartburn because of the bile gland that lets you

spew noxious, flammable acid to a range of 30 feet. It's simply not an option. So, Deviants learn to lie to get what they need, and if doctors are getting better at anything, it's at spotting medication-seeking behavior.

## Bringing it Home

The experience of dysphoria and alienation from the body is deeply personal, and the Storyteller will need to tailor the way they evoke that experience for the player to their character. A character who had a drug problem prior to their encounter with a conspiracy will at least have some context for needing to swallow batteries to stay alive, but one who lived a milquetoast suburban life and never got high anywhere but the dentist's office will have a very different experience of what is essentially an addiction with a lethal detox.

The best way to do this is to build a profile of every character, written down and updated, not simply kept in one's head:

- *What is the worst thing your character has ever done?* Whether it was a horrific murder or shoplifting once as an adolescent, what she considers her worst misdeed is a telling indicator of character.
- *What is the worst thing your character can imagine himself doing?* Many Deviants have long since updated this question in the wake of their Divergences, but what is on the table now that may have been unthinkable before?
- *What has your character forgotten?* In the Chronicles of Darkness, nearly everyone has an encounter with the supernatural at some point, but most turn away, rationalize, and forget the experience. What did you witness and when?
- *What is your character's worst fear?* Everyone has one, a fear so deep and so all-consuming it leaves them paralyzed, sweating as their heart pounds against their chest and their stomach rolls over. Sometimes these are the result of something in a character's history, like a fear of flying born of a rough flight, or a scary movie seen as a child. Once you have the character's fear, try to connect it in any way possible to their Scars, to the conspiracy, to anything in their new and frightening life, and when those moments come up, emphasize the similarity.
- *What do you see when you look in the mirror?* There's nothing like looking in the mirror and seeing someone else staring back at you. This isn't so outlandish, as many people endure a serious disconnection between their self-conception and their perception of themselves. People with anorexia literally see themselves as overweight even when their ribs are clearly visible. Transgender people, even after hormone therapy and surgical intervention, still find it all too easy to spot those parts of the body they worked so hard to change. For the Remade, this disconnection is even more radical. Conspiracies aren't limited to the traditional human body plan. Reflections are omnipresent in our world, from mirrors, to windows, to pools of water, to selfie-cameras, and going through life without catching at least a glimpse of yourself — a glimpse of something else where you should be — is impossible. Never let the character forget the difference between what they were and what they are.

## Violent Imagery

The horror in **Deviant** doesn't simply stop at the characters' own bodies, of course. It extends outward, showcasing terrifying transformations of others and, frequently, the horrific violence

that follows. Violence is a subject that takes up a disproportionate amount of screen time in media, but this violence is almost always a sanitized version of actual violence, typically in service of chasing a PG-13 (or similar) rating. We see lots of people shot on screen. We don't often see the sucking chest wounds, brains spattered across a wall, the surgical nightmare that comes of removing bullets from organs and bones, the long and painful rehab even the good old-fashioned "flesh wound" requires.

**Deviant** isn't about sanitized violence (or at least, it doesn't have to be). Remade are the products of violence, and most often the quest for revenge (or just the hope of protecting those around them) results in ever more violence. The conspiracy, after all, cares little for the pawns it slings against Deviants as it tries to take back what it sees as its own, and even less for the innocent bystanders caught in this war in the shadows. Going easy on the violence sells short the cruelty and the callousness of the conspiracy, and what the Remade endure for the sake of survival, for freedom itself.

## When Words Fail

The aesthetic of violence is, in the modern world, nearly always a visual one. Most of us have seen at least one movie, or at least a clip from one, with violent imagery taken to ridiculous ends, with squibs overloaded with fake blood, papier-mâché heads detonated in a spray of dyed ballistic jelly, and the like. Some films and television shows, produce a higher fidelity aesthetic of violence, with carefully worked prosthetics and makeup creating a realistic illusion of fatal injury. For those of us fortunate enough to have no direct experience of this level of violence, this is what the mind's eye conjures when we talk about the violent aesthetic — the imitation of it, accurate or otherwise, in a visual medium.

Very few tabletop roleplaying groups have the advantage of professional actors and special effects artists working to perfectly recreate the action taking place within the fiction, so words will have to do. Overly detailed descriptions, ones which verge on the lurid, may seem like the best way to present a violent moment in fiction. Providing lots of detail to players to visualize allows them to construct a minutely detailed mental image of the moment in question. There's just one problem: detail takes a tremendous amount of time to articulate, and violence is so very rarely as drawn out as our language requires descriptions of it to be. In effect, descriptions like this become the former kind of aestheticized violence, the overdone ridiculous sort — the ludicrous amount of blood fountaining from Boss Tanaka's head after O-Ren Ishii cuts it off in *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, for an example, but this moment takes far less time on screen than a detailed description of it would take to articulate.

Violent moments, even the over-the-top ones, are meant to be punchy and shocking (even if they're cheap shocks). Replicating that in speech is difficult, but possible. Moments that land hard do so because they represent a break in mounting tension — for example, a hostage standoff that takes a sudden turn for the tragic after fifteen minutes of connection, building up a viewer's relationship with the hostage-taker, before he presses the shotgun to his chin and pulls the trigger in the space of half a second. You can say, "he puts the shotgun to his chin and BANG!" in a short enough amount of time to retain that suddenness, that "holy shit!" moment of realization. The most successful examples of this sort of shot cut away almost immediately, leaving just the hint of the image to linger in the viewer's mind as shock and horror plays out on the faces of other characters in the scene, mirroring the feelings the violence engenders. Keeping the actual description of the violence sudden, immediate, and without copious detail not only makes the

moment land quickly, it maintains that cut-away-quickly feel. If players really want to know the details — if, for example, they're combing the scene for clues — that's the time to give them. Actual violence should always be sudden, terrifying, and if possible completely unexpected.

## Combat

Not all violence comes like a bolt from the blue. Sometimes, the Remade have no choice but to throw down with a gang of foes sent by the conspiracy hounding them. Sometimes, an entire scene is nothing but violence, repeated and total. How does a Storyteller maintain that sharp sense of cut-away when virtually every action is an act of violence? This requires the aid of the players, in the sense that if they belabor the descriptions of what they're doing to their enemies, it'll throw the pacing off. Encourage concise descriptions rather than florid ones. As always, Storytellers should play by these rules themselves — nasty, brutish, and short.

For the Storyteller, running an engaging, shocking, and brutal combat involves careful stage-management and “camera work.” For the purposes of a tabletop game, this means guiding where the attention of the group is at all times, carefully selecting images to convey — a cracking pillar, a fire hydrant cleaved open and spraying water everywhere, a window shattering — to juxtapose them with violent actions, to pull away from the immediate and the intense to showcase the consequences of those acts, to illustrate what's happening in the context of that violence. A gunfight in an empty warehouse is one thing. A gunfight in a farmer's market, with fruit, lead, and blood flying, is something entirely different.

Storytellers should provide lots of setting to work with wherever they set a fight, not just for the above reasons but because it gives players something to play with that isn't a Storyteller character's innards (or their own, for that matter). The goal of the scene is violence, but it needs more ingredients if it's not going to be a pure gore-fest. Try to avoid empty places for fights. Most conspiracies aren't that concerned with following the niceties of a duelist's code, and will strike wherever it gives them the greatest advantage, which is usually a rather everyday location from a Deviant's perspective. Even an empty warehouse can be interesting if your players are dead-set on throwing down there. Rusting catwalks, rats, forgotten industrial waste, or a warehouse that isn't as abandoned as the players thought all add depth to a location, and therefore to the violence taking place in that location. Nowhere, not even the places we think of as empty, is truly bare of set dressing.

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Every Remade struggles with the legacy of violence, specifically the violence done to them by the conspiracy that transformed them. Every time they employ a Variation, every time a Scar makes their life more difficult, every time their status separates them from the ordinary people around them, that remembered violence wells up from inside. Trauma leaves marks on people, ones that don't easily heal, and which are all too easy to rend wide open again. Ultimately, violence isn't as quick and easy a solution as people tend to think of it as. It's merely trading convenience in the short term for lingering pain later — on both sides of the equation.

Both surviving and inflicting violence is trauma, plain and simple, and humans don't react well to it. **Deviant** is about the costs and consequences of violence, the scars layered over scars that, at times, may feel like the only thing holding one together. The physical, temporal costs of the Remade life are only one dimension of the pain they must live with. Their inner, emotional life is just as shattered. Even in their quiet moments, even if they can pretend to themselves that the pain isn't there, it's only waiting for a chance to rear back up and ruin everything with a moment

of unneeded terror, a feeling of unprovoked anxiety, the fight-or-flight instinct short-circuited into a never-silent siren in the back of their head. It's never being able to shut yourself off, because the minute you do, it might happen all over again.

### Remember, This Is A Game

The classical signs of PTSD — hyper-vigilance and anxiety for example — have been seen a hundred times and in a hundred ways in media. Most of them don't do it justice. We live in a society that is violent in a thousand-thousand different ways, not all of them obvious, and for that reason, purely statistically, you are very likely to have someone in your gaming group who is coping with some form of trauma. Making sure your players are comfortable and in control of their personal narratives within the fiction (even as you set the whole world against their characters) is perhaps the most important job you have as a Storyteller.

Obviously, all the advice in this section hinges on a single factor: are your players comfortable with portraying such an abnormally high level of violence? Violence just isn't a tool in **Deviant**, as it is in other games. It surrounds the characters, defines their lives, and walls them off from the world around them. For the Remade, it's a fact of life, inescapable and ever-present. If making it visceral, immediate, and detailed leaves your players uncomfortable, it's fine to back off. You're not doing it wrong — you're doing it right for you and your friends.

## The Personal Side

The inherent horror of **Deviant** isn't just the physical transformation and the violence, of course. Every character dragged into the Remade cycle of violence and vengeance will have personal reactions, personal trauma, and personal alienation from those around them. This horror is just as important as the physical, violent dimension, and not just to the players of those characters. The Storyteller's job is to bring this horror home to the player characters, and to drag that pain and suffering out into the light where everyone can see it.

## Violence as a Mirror

The Remade are the victims of violence, against their bodies, minds, and even their souls. This supernatural trauma will never really heal, and is what drives the Remade on their obsessive quests for vengeance. To soothe the pain of the violence done to them, they do violence to others. While that violence is usually rather straightforward by comparison to what they suffered, it nonetheless serves as a mirror to the psyche of the Remade, reflecting in the real world the tumult and terror that they have experienced and continue to experience.

It's important not to lose sight of this fact. The violence the Remade engage in is *never* random. Whether for self-preservation, vengeance, or simply to release the strain and pressure of their now-horrific lives, there is always a reason behind it, and the act itself echoes that reason. Violence for self-preservation will likely be the quickest, the most straightforward, flourishes left aside in the name of surprise and survival. Other kinds of violence, however, will probably be messy. We've talked about how to describe that, but we need to reflect upon the effects of violence on the psyche as well.

## Externalizing Grief

Humans cope with grief in different ways. Some cry, some work it out through art or other creative pursuits, and some lash out at the world that has hurt them. Whether it's putting your fist through drywall at the news that a parent has died or shattering a glass against the countertop after a romantic partner has broken it off, when the tension breaks and violence is the only solution the primitive rump of your brain stem recognizes, it rushes out in a torrent before the rest of the brain can catch up. For most of us, this means property damage with a modicum of self-harm. For some, it means assault charges.

Violence isn't the only immediate response, of course — emotional outbursts spread across the spectrum, from paralyzing fear to overwhelming sorrow — but for the Remade, the difference usually isn't so important, because losing control of emotions usually means losing control of self. When the hurt inside Deviants boils over, the consequences are certain to be far more drastic than in the human population. Instead of smashing her favorite glass, a Remade might throw a refrigerator out a sixth-story window, and only seconds later realize there's a sidewalk below. Instead of putting her hand through drywall, she puts her claws through it, followed by the rest of her body, followed by an unprovoked attack on a neighbor still gripped in her unthinking surge of anger. And then there's the transformed with more exotic Scars and Variations — what happens when a Deviant's bodily fluids are a powerful nerve toxin and he falls into a crying fit on a crowded bus?

Violence doesn't have to be outward, either. Self-harm is usually a reaction to stress, whether that stress is external (arising from school, work, family, etc.) or internal (caused by depression or anxiety). It hurts, of course, but the pain isn't the point so much as *controlling where the pain comes from*. Sometimes, violence or destructiveness directed outwards, seemingly random, serves the same purpose, lending a sense of control to an otherwise out-of-control life. The parallel to the Remade should be obvious: their lives are not only out of control, but that control was stolen from them in a violating and invasive way. Destructiveness and violence push back at a world that feels, to them, like a river carrying them towards a waterfall. It feels like a lifeline, even if it doesn't really get them out of the water, and sometimes the feeling is all they can cling to.

## Expiation of Anger

Anger is a part of grief, but outbursts don't always represent a loss of control of that grief. Sometimes the action taken is intentional, and driven by a conscious desire to satiate that lizard-brain-stem we all have that just wants to smash and tear and kill whatever has hurt us. This dimension of grief is key to the Remade — anger fuels their Conviction, which drives them to take revenge. This kind of violence is colder, more calculated, but no less brutal. Instead of rushing out in a torrent, it wraps itself around the Deviant's mind like a red-hot serpent, pulls them back from themselves as they carry out cruelties they would never have contemplated in their previous lives. For most, extinguishing rage with vengeance cools the fury, leaving only the weight of the act itself to linger; for the transformed, however, any relief from their hatred is temporary at best. Even if they've wiped out the conspiracy that destroyed their lives, there are always more conspiracies to take their place — and well enough, for that rage is the only thing keeping the Remade together.

## Cold Necessity

Violence doesn't always follow the line of vengeance absolutely. The world itself is often violent, not simply to the transformed but those forced to live in similar conditions. Perhaps a

corrupt developer threatens their erstwhile home, using thugs to forcibly evict rent-controlled tenants with steadily escalating violence, and everyone pleads with the Remade (whom everyone can tell is somehow *different*) to intervene on their behalf. Maybe the Deviant ends up on the wrong side of the law and defends themselves rather than risk arrest and imprisonment, only to call down a manhunt now they're a cop-killer. It's easy in the moment to write off such instances as unknowing arms of the conspiracy, especially if the Remade has paranoid tendencies, but many cannot help but recognize they have taken a life that had nothing to do with what happened to them.

## Bringing it Out

Grief, anger, and sorrow are all internal characterization, the part of the story-iceberg that lies beneath the surface. What we see in the action of the story is only a fraction of what's going on behind the scenes in the characters' minds. Sometimes, the Storyteller should reveal a little more of the iceberg, of the subsurface motivation, to lend additional heft to the action. Highlighting these inner feelings in moments of powerful pathos makes those feelings concrete, a thing in the open and visible narrative, and makes them all the more real to the players.

The best way to highlight these feelings is, of course, to evoke them, either by creating a situation intended for the character to react to in a particularly open way or by working with the player to develop those feelings in dialogue. This might be something as simple as meeting a child of someone the Remade has killed. Unaware of the conspiracy and the Deviant's part in their parent's death, they might well make an emotional connection. This provides a steady reminder of the costs of revenge, but also gives the transformed a chance to work through their feelings regarding vengeance, all the while dancing around the subject in conversation. These moments should be tense and meaningful, the sorts of scenes that leave viewers on the edge of their seat, paying close attention even to subtleties of word choice.

This can apply even to moments of high action — violence being quick and brutal, there should always be a prologue and an epilogue to buffer it from the rest of the narrative. A prologue might be a dramatic speech about payback, or a scene spent stalking the quarry as the Remade closes in for the kill. Epilogues to violence will generally involve a body count, and the reaction to the violence just perpetrated. *How did this make you feel?* is always a good question to ask in the aftermath of violence, because it's the central question of **Deviant**. This question can come from the Storyteller, from a Storyteller character, from the characters themselves. Sometimes, it'll emerge naturally, as a brief but blessed relief washes over the Remade.

Writers are often told "Show, don't tell," and to some extent those should be a Storyteller's watchwords as well. Written fiction is different from collaborative oral fiction (which is, ultimately, what roleplaying is), so there's more leeway. One can focus directly on a subject without it becoming ham-handed or overdone, and negotiation is an important aspect of gameplay. Don't always follow up violence with the same question. Change up the wording, or leave it off if the moment wasn't particularly tense or dramatic. Storytellers might also encourage their players to bluebook — to react outside of play in written form. Essentially, bluebooking forms outtakes of the main story, side scenes that, to use a cinematic metaphor, might not have made the final cut but were included in the special edition video release, scenes not critical to the story but which serve to illuminate parts of it. If the bluebooking takes place electronically, say in a private social media group, it makes it easy for players to react and

interact in-character outside of the actual game session. Don't be surprised if long, involved conversations start happening there!

## Down and Out — Life Without Privilege

Regardless of what one believes the cause to be — whether it's capitalism itself, an uncaring culture, or a dire lack of moral fiber and charity — we cannot deny that we, collectively as a species, are terribly and unjustifiably cruel to others whose only crime is being born in poverty, suffering debilitating mental illness or developmental problems, suffering a disabling injury, or simply being unlucky. When people slip, we exile them to the fringes of our society, offer them little or no support, and force them to survive on what we discard, to live at the mercy of the elements, more often than not. Then, adding insult to injury, we blame them for it, as if the fault were somehow theirs. We write this from an American perspective, but while some countries address the problem a little better, it is a worldwide problem. There is always an underclass, and it is always much larger than the overclass that enjoys a largesse unimaginable to them.

### The Precarious Life

Poverty is fundamentally characterized by insecurity — food insecurity, housing insecurity, medical insecurity, and so on. People living in poverty cannot rely on access to goods or services considered necessities by the rest of society. Precariousness is forever living on the edge. It means zero-hour contracts, and working three jobs just to make rent, never mind food. It means skipping meals. It means lying awake at night trying to balance your mental checkbook. It means crippling student loans if you were fortunate enough to even attend college in the first place. It means being told that somehow, somewhere, this is your fault, and that if you would just apply yourself you could dig yourself out of this hole.

But the point of the phrase “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” isn't “work harder,” it's that it's physically impossible. You can pull all you want but Newton's laws ensure your feet will stay flat on the ground. Climbing out of poverty, out of precarious living, is functionally impossible without a tremendous run of luck, a helping hand from someone with sufficient means to do so, or finding a means outside the legitimate system to make a few tax-free bucks. For some, yes, this means crime. After all, society has never given them a fair shake. Why should they play by the rules?

### How to Lose Everything

You slip on an icy sidewalk and pull something in your back — the painkillers aren't enough, your performance slips, and the next thing you know you're right-to-worked out of a job. You're involved in an accident, waking up in the emergency room to a bill with at least three zeroes at the end of it that your insurance provider weasels out of with startling finesse. Your car, your only viable means of commuting, just gives up the ghost and dies. A hurricane destroys literally everything you own. Unforeseen problems become major crises when you have no savings to fall back on. A serious illness or injury (or, sometimes, a relatively insignificant one) can result in bankruptcy and homelessness in surprisingly short order.

Bankruptcy isn't an end to debt, however, only a restructuring of it, with lenders being paid directly out of the debtor's paycheck. Few are fortunate enough to own their home outright. Renting or living with a hefty mortgage is the norm, and property prices only climb higher with time. Even if one does own a home, one may well be required to sell it to pay off one's debt. No home address means nothing to put on job applications or forms for government aid, and they



rarely take “N/A” for an answer. The system provides precious few footholds, and the line from gainful employment with a roof over one’s head and living on the streets dumpster-diving for food can be brutally thin.

## Homelessness

Living without a home doesn’t always equate to our stereotypical image of the panhandler. In fact, most homeless people work, as many as thirty hours a week (not including time spent seeking work, which is considerable), either in the job they held down before they became homeless or, more likely, doing odd jobs and day labor. Jobs typically available to homeless people rarely pay well and are even less likely to be regular, however, and are often a means of treading water more than a lifeline out of homelessness. Temp agencies routinely target homeless populations, and are notorious for underpaying or not paying at all. However, independently securing work by lining up on a well-known street corner poses many of the same risks, and may well lead to assaults or worse.

Those fortunate enough to own a car may live out of it, though this is frequently illegal. Shelters exist, though they’re increasingly threatened by redevelopment and a lack of funding, and the majority are centered around treating mental illness and addiction in the homeless population, meaning that to even have a chance at one of the limited beds, you’re expected to get with the inevitable twelve-step program that comes along with it. Even the best of these shelters are often dirty, uncomfortable, and dangerous. Random police raids are a frequent occurrence, and the tenants are ever-wary for the possibility of an undercover cop (which can result in violence directed at the suspected officer). It’s no surprise that there is a steady population of homeless people who actually prefer to live on the streets rather than submit to the shelter’s rules and environment. A roof over their head may not be worth the risk and the loss of their freedom, according to their calculus, not to mention the difficulty of holding down regular work when you’re part of a treatment program.

People living on the street are not on their own, however. Subcultures flourish among the homeless population, centered around camps that range from the immediately visible to the immaculately hidden. Hiding in plain sight is a skill that homeless people learn to master quickly, placing their camps in ditches or behind urban infrastructure that others rarely think to look past. Such camps are generally difficult to access, but that adds to their security and exclusivity. Much like neighborhoods, these camps have distinct cultures, with some being considerably higher-class than others. It’s not unusual for the more exclusive and well-hidden to have power, either from an unattended outdoor outlet or negotiated from a nearby business owner (who, among other things, essentially receives 24-hour security services from the camp’s inhabitants). In and around these camps, a complicated and fluid social network typically emerges, with seniority based upon who established a camp and who invited whom in. This seniority confers little actual authority, but a great deal of symbolic weight. These hierarchies can easily shift, especially when a camp is wiped out by the authorities, but even in different camps two people might find their social positions reversed.

## Broken Homes

Homelessness isn’t always a function of job loss, natural disaster, medical bankruptcy, or the like. Sometimes, it just happens, and, frequently, the people it just happens to are children. Parents are in a position of absolute power, and the social safety net is rife with cracks for individual children to slip through. Children run away for myriad reasons, and getting away from

abusive parents is only one of them. Many homeless teens — as many as 40%, according to some studies — either run away from home or are thrown out for being gay, transgender, or gender-non-conforming. Social services exist to place homeless youth in foster care, but many homeless youth have already been to foster care and have no desire to return. Some are homeless specifically because they fled foster care, and a history in the system is very common among homeless adults.

## Mental Illness

Some homeless people are homeless due to mental illness, to be sure, but this does not account for the prevalence and variety of mental illness among homeless people at large. Much like hanging on to a low-income life, the precarity of homeless life engenders anxiety and depression in epidemic quantities, far more than the housed population. Stress often exacerbates certain illnesses, such as schizophrenia, and no one would deny that homelessness is a significant stressor. Someone might give the impression of a healthy neurotypical person, then experience a serious worsening of their previously-masked symptoms upon becoming homeless. The series of linear steps necessary to access medication may be anywhere from difficult to impossible for someone suffering from severe paranoia or psychosis, assuming they can afford the medication in the first place.

The truth of the matter is simple: we associate homelessness with mental illness not because homelessness causes mental illness (or vice versa), but because the most visible homeless people we most often encounter are those with visible symptoms of mental illness. We don't notice the homeless people who appear mentally stable, but we all notice the guy at the bus stop ranting at invisible aggressors, even if we pretend not to.

## Social Invisibility

Social invisibility may be the greatest obstacle for homeless people in reestablishing a stable life, a wall built brick by brick that slowly isolates them from society. Isolation, as noted above, hurts, not only in the emotional sense but in the sense that it, over time, degrades one's essential well-being. This reinforces the oft-cited and thoroughly incorrect idea that homeless people are lazy — when you're depressed, just getting out of bed can be a struggle. Now, imagine that struggle without a bed, without a roof and walls to provide a sense of security, without knowing where your next meal will come from.

This social invisibility isn't perfect, though. It doesn't isolate them from the frequently-violent response of police, who independently or at the request of nearby home or business owners descend upon homeless individuals and communities, rousting them from what little corner of the world they've carved out for themselves. Frequently, these raids destroy what few belongings they own, either accidentally or intentionally. Very few cities tolerate permanent or semi-permanent encampments of homeless people. Some, when they break up such encampments and destroy what little the inhabitants own, bus them to other cities, completely uprooting them from their communities and support structures.

Fatalism is a common worldview among homeless people, if only as a defense mechanism. Even without the authorities, theft and loss of property are common for the simple reason that homeless people have few ways to secure their belongings. Street crime is an ever-present threat when one lives on the street — stories of muggings aren't unusual among the homeless population. People who are unable to cope with this way of life are usually not the ones who elect to live on the streets instead of finding a spot in a shelter.

## The Axis of Inhumanity and Poverty

Living without a stable income or housing is difficult enough for humans, but Remade must cope with additional challenges that go above and beyond the exigencies of food, shelter, and work. Twisted by conspiracies into inhuman monsters and hunted by either those same conspiracies or others hungry for their power, the Broken are bereft of many of the programs intended to assist homeless people in reintegrating into society, either because their Scars and Variations make it impossible to access those programs or because they fear that those programs may well be an arm of the conspiracy they're on the run from. A mugging or altercation with drug dealers might result in a body count, but even if it doesn't, it will likely bring down unwanted attention, meaning the Remade must evacuate what little shelter she's carved out for herself.

### Fake it 'Til You Make It

Institutions surround us, be they government, private, or non-profit. All have points of contact with those around them, and the Remade are no different. The DMV knows a person's address, has a photo on file, knows what kind of car they drive and what the license plate is. These days, that's easily tracked by largely unobtrusive cameras. Social media networks exist to scrape information on users, building a profile that they monetize by selling to advertisers, but that profile can just as easily be bought by a conspiracy, or that conspiracy can spend the time scraping that information themselves. It's difficult to go through life without interacting with these kinds of institutions, especially for those in poverty who frequently rely on state and federal programs to keep their heads above water. Remade, assuming they can pass for Baselines, can certainly avail themselves of these programs and institutions, but doing so is a serious risk.

Deviant who are fortunate enough to have connections able to provide false identity documents may be able to continue living a more or less normal life during their downtime. The difficulties associated with obtaining and using such ID are discussed in detail in Chapter Two, but in short, they're not perfect and they're not as useful as one might think. Using these IDs should always contain a certain element of risk. This doesn't mean Storytellers should treat every trip to the corner store for a six-pack as a chance to blow a Deviant's cover, but significant interactions with government or large corporations should be laden with anxiety. Play that up; have Storyteller characters spend an inordinate amount of time checking over driver's licenses, birth certificates, and the like, even if they're convinced of their legitimacy. Put random drunk-driving checkpoints along routes the cohort has to travel along, or have the police bust up the fake ID ring who provided the documents in the first place. Never allow the cohort to grow complacent about their documentation, because any interaction could be the one that puts them back on the radar again.

Remade often rely on informal networks that don't report or record personal information, such as criminal organizations, neighborhood associations, or small-scale charities. Storytellers should make sure that plenty of these services exist in the area, not to make life easy for the Broken but to provide ample opportunities for them to interact with Baselines, to build relationships and Loyalty Touchstones that can be tugged on later to provide for drama and plot hooks. Keep in mind that these networks and relationships don't come without strings attached. For charities, it may be something seemingly innocuous, such as holding down a booth at a church fair or something similar, but for criminal networks the favors asked of a beneficiary Deviant are unlikely to be so straightforward. Both, however, have opportunities for danger, either through

attracting the attention of law enforcement or a conspiracy or in being exposed in public and potentially giving oneself away. Even these relative safe harbors are, ultimately, risky for the Remade, and not just because of what they might ask of her.

## Trust No One

Associating with Baselines is dangerous, not only for the Broken, but for those Baselines, because unlike the Deviants, they don't have Variations to defend them when conspiracies come knocking. Baselines make excellent pawns or hostages, as far as conspiracies are concerned, and even if a Storyteller character's intentions are for the best, a loose word or two in conversation to the wrong person might see them kidnapped and used as bait. Some organizations might well blame the Remade for this, such that cutting one's losses rather than walking into an obvious trap might burn a critical resource. No such decision should ever be free of consequences. Storytellers should keep the stakes high, even if those stakes are purely personal.

Another dimension of risk associated with these networks is that even they are not proof against conspiracies. While many of them run under the radar, some (criminal organizations, in particular) represent useful allies or pawns, and others may become compromised if the conspiracies learn that the Broken are making use of them. Anyone might be secretly informing on the Remade, and while Storytellers should use this sort of plot twist sparingly (lest the players take the lesson that all human interaction is undesirable), it has the potential to be a powerful reveal, ideally used at the climax of an arc. Finding out that the priest that the entire cohort trusted was informing on them the entire time will be a powerful betrayal, and the fallout will put an entire community into a new and unpleasant light. Give the characters reason to ask the question, "Can I trust this person?" but steer them away from "Can I trust anyone?" The former will contribute to a feeling of tension, even if the Storyteller character's intentions are genuine, while the latter will make it extremely difficult to get characters to interact with anyone at all.

## Quid Pro Quo

Many of the informal organizations that Deviants rely on will ultimately come asking for favors. This is even more likely to happen if they learn the truth about the Remade. Their power and their place outside society make for a powerful attraction by those seeking under-the-table gain or retribution on their own terms. The relationship changes markedly, and the requests made only get more and more extreme over time. Informal organizations don't always have to be marginal, either. Consider a loose association of corrupt police who hold a Deviant's anonymity over his head, using him to assassinate anyone who gets in their way. They have the resources of the police and associated institutions to draw upon, at least to a certain point, and certainly enough to threaten the Broken. This may not be good for their long-term health, as Remade are literally driven to destroy those who would enslave them, but they don't know that, and greed is a powerful motivator.

These kinds of relationships — the kind that place the Deviant in a temporary position of weakness or being controlled — make for excellent B-Plots, set against the overarching A-Plot of dealing with a powerful conspiracy. Few stories are straightforward arcs, and having two significant threats on the field at once can make for exciting tension regarding how the cohort deals with the problem in addition to the everyday exigencies of life as Remade. In addition, these side-conspiracies make fertile ground for later, greater conspiracies to come, that either rise out of the side-conspiracy or bring it into their much more significant orbit, using their lessers as a catspaw before arriving properly on the scene. This is an excellent way to organically bring in

new conspiracies when it seems that players are ready to finally destroy the current one, never leaving a vacuum in the narrative that allows tension to sap.

## The Little Things

Poverty, and especially homelessness, take a significant toll on a person's health (to the point where life expectancy is wildly divergent based on childhood incomes), and this is no less true for the Broken. The Deviant may be fortunate enough to look human, but any doctor who takes a serious look at them will almost certainly notice something *off* about them. This is problematic enough for Remade lucky enough to enjoy stable housing and income, but homelessness is a rough way of life, and takes its toll on the bodies of those who experience it, making the need for medical attention all the more important (for all that it simultaneously becomes so much harder to access). From exposure to malnutrition, from stress injuries to physical trauma, injuries build up over time. This can take the form of Persistent Conditions, possibly including ones beyond those found in the Appendix — such as a nagging leg injury or a bad back — that only resolve when the character is able to get medical attention and rest.

There's more to coping with life than merely physical injuries, however. Stress is a constant in poverty and especially in homelessness, and has its own attendant effects on health and well-being. Scars in particular are easily exacerbated by stress, especially when that stress is caused by life interfering in the Broken's quest for revenge. Stewing in her hatred, the Remade will be likely to let out their stress and rage through violence far in excess of what she might normally indulge in. Consider Conditions such as Deprived (p. XX) which models stress well, but Leveraged (p. XX) works as well, representing the building pressure and the relief that comes with satiating the need for revenge. This provides an additional source of drama (and Beats) outside of the disadvantages imposed by Scars.

## Up and Out

While class mobility has become harder and harder over the past few decades, classes are not wholly ossified. Poverty and homelessness do not have to be permanent, and indeed, many homeless people are only homeless for weeks or months rather than years. Remade are deeper in the hole that most, however, due both to being hunted and by the Scars that plague them and, if they're not careful, will eventually kill them. This additional weight makes it all the harder to claw one's way to a comfortable lifestyle — but, ultimately, it's not impossible.

## Off the Grid

A Deviant's Conviction interferes significantly with the quiet life of a hermit, to say nothing of the initial investment required to live off the grid, but just because the lifestyle doesn't mesh well with the Remade condition doesn't mean the principles aren't sound. For one thing, rural communities are often distrustful of governmental or corporate authority. Living in such a situation, anchored to a Loyalty Touchstone, a Deviant might well pass months or years in relative safety. This is an opportunity for downtime, if desired, but also for quiet and intimate moments in larger stories.

Points of contact are critical for these sorts of stories, because they give depth and focus both to the narrative and to the setting. A rural farming town or a mining town up in the mountains wouldn't feel the same without the gruff but likeable granger or the firebrand mineworker union rep. They make great Touchstones and are handy sources of plot hooks, and allowing characters

to feel a brief but significant connection to others is also a great way to set them up for a gut-punch when agents of the conspiracy roll into town.

Remember that the setting itself is also a character. We're often accustomed to urban or suburban life, but rural life is a completely different animal. Play up the isolation, whether it's the wide-open big-sky plains with nothing but rolling hills all the way to the horizon or the chilly and damp conifer forests of the Pacific Northwest. Weather is a character, and if it seems cliché to use weather to set the mood, it's only because it works so well. The economy itself is a character: a town that is economically depressed will have an entirely different character than one supported by industry or business. Like Storyteller characters, these features of the environment can serve as hooks for the conspiracy. Imagine a conspiracy's agribusiness arm testing a new fungicide with catastrophic results, or its agents swinging a local election by seeming to come to the economic rescue with new investments. There is nowhere on the planet that is not potentially subject to the conspiracy's whims, as long as that's what serves the pacing and narrative of the story you're telling.

It's also possible to live off the grid in urban, suburban, or exurban settings without suffering homelessness. Consider this fact: there are more empty houses in the United States than homeless people, as many as nine to one, according to some measures. Most of these are the remains of the speculative housing bubble, while others are boondoggle exurbs that collapsed financially or investments for overseas clients hoping for the security of land value. These are perfectly serviceable homes — insulated, wired for electricity, water, sewer, and data — that are empty by virtue of no one having paid a bank for it. A person with a bit of skill at breaking and entering — most household locks aren't that impressive — can squat for quite a while, so long as they don't get attached to any particular house and manage to maintain a low profile. For the Remade, such a house might make an ideal place to hunker down for a while when the conspiracy encroaches, to lick their wounds and prepare their next attack.

## Illegitimate Sources of Income

Living well requires money, yes, but no one said that money had to come through legitimate means. For all their suffering, the Remade still have their Variations, which makes each and every one an out-of-context problem for law enforcement and security services. For players who like heists and stories centered on crime, this can be a fun diversion from the main story, even if the characters themselves are itching to get back to the *real* work of dismantling their foes. For Storytellers, it's an excellent source of plot hooks and side stories to supplement the overarching narrative.

It's important not to let these side stories grow to such an extent that they take over the chronicle, however. At most, a heist should only be a scene or two, with a few dice rolls to establish how the heist goes down. Rather than letting the heist get bogged down in planning (which we guarantee your players will do with gusto), segue right into the action after a brief description of each character's preparation, and let flashbacks tell the story of how the characters anticipated the problems they're running into.

Deviants who rely upon high-stakes theft to pay their way to revenge are precisely the sort who come to the attention of criminal enterprises, whether they want that attention or not. Consider the nature of the setting — a port city on the coast might play host to a smuggling ring running everything from heroin to exotic pets to human trafficking, while an isolated city in the Midwest could have their own homegrown criminal families or regional branches of larger cartels. Laws

don't exist to identify the things people don't do, but to mark those acts and enterprises as undesirable and punishable. If there's a service to provide, no matter how unseemly it is, somewhere someone is trying to make a buck off of it, and the Remade are potential money ticket like no other.

This is potentially lucrative for Deviants, but being integrated into a criminal network is a good way to find oneself at the mercy not only of that network, but exposed to any potential conspiracy moles within it. Tracking those very moles by infiltrating the network might make a great story arc, albeit one fraught with danger. Crime media is practically built upon the betrayals and violence, and that's not *too* far from the truth. In the absence of a controlling authority, whoever can cause the most harm can dictate terms. Not everything is part of the Web of Pain, but that doesn't mean it can't hurt.

## Heist Planning

**Dice Pool:** Variable

### Roll Results

**Success:** When a roll fails during the heist, the player may elect to have that roll be considered a success instead.

**Exceptional Success:** Two rolls may be reversed in this fashion.

**Failure:** All rolls during the heist stand as rolled.

**Dramatic Failure:** The character is Leveraged (p. XX) as a result of their preparation. Other Conditions may be substituted if the Storyteller determines it fits the narrative better.

## How to Secretly Rule the World: Managing Conspiracies

Conspiracies are the focus of every Remade's life, both for the sake of revenge and for the emotional and psychic anchor they represent. Keeping conspiracies active, interesting, and threatening is a major part of the Storyteller's job in a **Deviant** game. Players have a great deal of control over how a conspiracy is shaped and what sort of threats it will deploy against their characters, but it's the Storyteller who brings it all together and synthesizes it, and who plants the seeds for conspiracies to come. This is more collaborative than other Chronicles of Darkness games, but the Storyteller still has plenty to do.

The first and most important job a Storyteller has is making the conspiracy feel real, giving it a sense of weight that, while not directly apparent, can be felt behind the scenes until it strikes — like violence breaking tension within a scene, this breaks tension within a story. Conspiracies are composed of many elements, from its structure to its composition to its methodologies to its motivations, and while characters may not have immediate understanding of all of these, the Storyteller absolutely must.

### Motivations

Just like people, conspiracies have drives — in other words, Principles and Anchors. Keeping track of these desires is a necessity for Storytellers, because those desires will inform the conspiracy's actions and give the story depth. While a conspiracy and a Progenitor may have a key ideology, that doesn't mean they're identical throughout the organization. Humans have motivations of their own, and while they may accept the drives of the group, they'll have their own opinions about them. Individual takes on the conspiracy's purpose will manifest through

action and dialogue. Having two of a conspiracy's lackeys have slightly different understandings of what goes on at headquarters presents the picture of something large enough that no one person can see the whole of it, which makes the conspiracy much more real and terrifying.

That said, there's a reason the eye and the pyramid are the classic conspiracy theorist's image of the Illuminati. The classic conspiracy is a hierarchical thing, and even loose conglomerations of the like-minded with no clear power structure are willing to seize and exercise power not only over society but over individual humans, willing to destroy their lives for an idea. Even if individuals within the conspiracy have reservations about certain aspects of the conspiracy's aims, or at least a different idea of how it'll work out in the end, ultimately those individuals are doing the work of those at the peak of the pyramid, those whose ideals are most closely in line with the collective drives of the conspiracy. That's not a bad thing. It's another source of tension and drama, centered on the possibility of getting insiders to "do the right thing," or to otherwise aid the cohort in their quest for revenge. Faceless and implacable conspiracies are no fun, but hand-and-footholds of this kind give players a way to grasp the whole and offer the leverage for their characters to get what they want.

Memorable foes, Linchpins, and Progenitors are key to signaling these differences to players. It's not a matter of naming every single Storyteller character the characters ever interact with (if only because that's an untenable amount of work for the Storyteller), but making sure that when players do fixate on one or two (as they almost certainly will) those characters have depth and complexity beneath their surface appearance. When you dangle a Storyteller character in front of players, have a plan of action. Even incidental revelations can hook players' interest, whether it's a curious letter they find when rifling through the target's mail or a voicemail message on an unattended phone.

Another way to play up conspiracy-related themes in the chronicle is to seed them into everyday life for the characters. A TV spot, an article in the newspaper (which you could write ahead of time and even print out, if your group is into physical gameplay artifacts), or idle conversation with other Storyteller characters can touch on issues similar to the conspiracy's *raison d'être*. Apart from offering an opportunity to air different points of view on the subject, it also gives the conspiracy a sense of being interconnected with the entire narrative, being so all-encompassing that it surrounds the characters at all times, even when they aren't in the thick of their enemies.

### The Secret Rule of Storytelling

It's a story we're all familiar with: the Storyteller shows up on game night with a three-inch binder stuffed full of notes, character ideas, and contingencies for a the finale of an arc set in the headquarters of the conspiracy — and the players decide that, instead, they'd rather crash a space shuttle into the super-Devoted that was supposed to be the centerpiece of an immaculately-prepared knock-down-drag-out fight. What now, smarty pants? This isn't (or at least, shouldn't be) a call for ironclad railroading and absolute Storyteller control of the plot. Far from it: we suggest you, the Storyteller, learn to love it, because *players will never cease to exceed your expectations*. That's at the heart of why we all love this hobby — we never know how these stories we tell together are going to shake out, and that's beautiful.

It can be frustrating when all your work seems to be for naught, but if you don't overinvest in specific courses of action or narrative tracks to big set-pieces, these



moments don't hit quite so hard. Plan ahead, yes, especially if you find improvisation without some kind of support challenging, but don't lock in those plans. If a scene can go multiple ways (and most can), diagram out the effects of what you consider to be the most likely choices. Even if players surprise you, you'll have done some thinking ahead, and you'll likely be able to adapt one of your scenarios to match the reality at the table. As players progress through the larger narrative, their decisions will radiate outward in a butterfly-effect way, and you can adjust future events to fit. With a little experience, you'll be adapting on the fly with the best of them.

## The Web of Pain

For all that their condition isolates the Remade, **Deviant** is a game of relationships, and relationships ultimately define both Deviants and the world around them. Managing the lion's share of those relationships is the Storyteller's responsibility, be it between a Storyteller character or institution and a player character or between two Storyteller characters. Having a solid understanding of how the world connects behind the scenes makes it much easier to adjust the setting to match player expectations and actions, in addition to giving the Storyteller options when the players inevitably surprise her.

Maintaining a relationship diagram makes it much easier to manage this fictional social network. You can use pen and paper, though that tends to get crowded in a hurry, or a digital mind-mapping program, if you're comfortable with it. If you're up for it, create an alternate version for your players, keeping the complete conspiracy diagram to yourself. This allows them to fill in the blanks as they discover more and more of the conspiracy's true nature, and makes for a fun element of mystery and puzzle solving. Don't just represent relationships between people, either. Keep track of professional and institutional relationships. Knowing how the local FBI office feels about the local ATF office helps color the relationships of Storyteller characters associated with them. This extends to conspiracies as well — each has institutional knowledge and culture, and a conspiracy's connections often give the Storyteller unexpected tools for interfering with or hunting down the cohort.

## Feedback — Listening to Your Players

The most important part of a Storyteller's job is listening to her players, maintaining a sense of how they're interacting with the fiction personally and through their character. This isn't just for the sake of making sure everyone feels safe and welcome at the table, but for adjusting the story to fit the players' expectations. The Storyteller has a great deal of power in terms of the narrative and the characterization, and it's important to give every player a stake in the story's progress. If the world doesn't react to the needs and desires (and subsequent actions) of both characters and players, it's not going to be an engaging chronicle.

### So, Your Favorite Baddie Died

The dice are cruel, and sometimes players are crueler, and so the small-time operator the Storyteller was setting up to become a three-arc villain ends up with a knife under his ribs in a back alley during the second chapter. She might have the temptation to bring them back, either by retconning the situation or claiming a miraculous survival — and sometimes that's doable. Sometimes that's even dramatic and fun! But when a Storyteller character is well and truly dead,

unmistakably so, it's time to accept the loss and move on. Don't fret over having to change things, because a dead body is always a great source of questions that demand answers. If the bit player was really going to wind up somewhere important, someone else will step in to fill his shoes. If the Storyteller's particularly clever (or knows her players well enough to anticipate their murderous tendencies), she might even have a Plan B waiting in the wings in case the worst befalls her precious villain, one that will make the players wish they'd left their knives sheathed.

## What Players Want

Understanding your players' desires is the key to making them feel like their characters are a part of the narrative as a cohesive story that emerges naturally from around the game table (or the video chat, or however you get your group together). There's a significant bit of sleight of hand going on behind the scenes on the Storyteller's part to make that all happen, and it involves a key skill that often goes unmentioned: *learning to read the signals the players are sending*.

Everything they do, from in-character action to out-of-character spending of Experiences, tells the Storyteller what they're looking to get out of play. If they invest in Firearms, they probably want set-pieces centering on gunplay (be it a tense close-range gunfight with pistols or a game of cat-and-mouse between two snipers). Players who put Experiences into their Persuasion or Subterfuge clearly want to be the face of the group, and will enjoy winding Storyteller characters around their fingers. Intentional, focused observation of the players themselves is an invaluable resource when it comes to steering the narrative in a direction they'll want to go in, even if they didn't realize it themselves.

This principle applies to any kind of gaming, regardless of the setting or system, but it's especially important to **Deviant**, where players have a direct hand in the creation of their own conspiracies and antagonists. It may seem like they're doing the Storyteller's work for her, but that's not the case at all, because the mechanical aspect of play is only the foundation upon which the narrative rests. Storytellers should pay careful attention to the process, and to what the players are saying during it. Even a few casual words can provide a hook that will delight players chapters down the road, when an idle thought they expressed turns out to be the key to understanding and defeating their most recent antagonist. As things change and develop during play, move the narrative towards where the players have aimed themselves. No matter what they aim at, after all, they should be hitting something, and it should be something they'll find exciting, fun, and above all interesting.

## No Plan of Battle Survives the Enemy

Players surprising the Storyteller is an inevitability — some would say a feature — of narrative games. Three to five people will have at least seven ideas about where they're going, and the odds that the Storyteller's guessed the one they'll choose, even if she's been studious about listening to and observing her players, are not on her side. Dealing with this fact can be stressful for neophyte Storytellers, and even for seasoned ones at times, especially for those Storytellers fond of scripting things. Scripts can be handy, because they give a firm idea of what a Storyteller character is willing to say, freeing the Storyteller from having to make it up on the spot. Relying too much on scripting, though, from dialogue to plot, can make a Storyteller's response to anything wandering out of the box she's constructed inflexible.

Rather than scripting a story, plan. Think about where the story could go, not where you hope it will. Nail down set-pieces and cool moments, have them ready to pull out on demand, and lay down strings between them that the players will hopefully follow. More often than not, they will, if not necessarily in the order you thought they might. Storytelling is improv, not writing, and being ready for the most likely eventualities and the necessities of the story — the Big Reveal, the Final Battle, and so on — will let the Storyteller focus on what the players are doing in the here and now without having to sweat too much about whether they're "on track." Storytellers uncomfortable with improvisation may find it helpful to create Storyteller characters tied to certain aspects of the setting, locations where events can happen, and the like, writing them down on index cards or another system that makes accessing them easy. Creating an entire world beforehand sounds daunting, but Storytellers who do so get the unparalleled joy of watching their players tear through it. It may sound strange to revel in the wreckage of something one has spent so much time crafting, but it all but ensures that the joy of surprise isn't tainted by the sting of anxiety, and it makes the Storyteller seem really on top of things even when she's not.

## Simplify!

Players have a single character sheet with a variety of bells and whistles attached, and are familiar with their conspiracy's traits. That's all they have to worry about, while the Storyteller has to worry about literally everything else in the chronicle. For this reason, it behooves the Storyteller to simplify everything she can. Instead of character sheets for every Storyteller character, create a library of stock archetypes and, at need, sprinkle in a few extra Skills or Merits to add depth and personality. Such archetypal characters don't even need to be complete — all they really *need* are the dice pools they're likely to actually use and the static traits players' abilities are most likely to interact with! If something unexpected comes up, ballpark it. What matters is that, to the players, there's a seamless mechanical underpinning to the narrative. One exception: major antagonists, especially recurring ones, absolutely *should* receive the benefit of a full character sheet. Rather than stock characters, these are the keystones of the Storyteller's arsenal, and need to be able to hold that weight.

This advice applies to other avenues of the Storyteller's job, as well. Apart from the major plot beats, don't plan too heavily for anything more than a chapter or two in the future. By the time the story gets there, the players will almost certainly have done *something* invalidating chunks of the Storyteller's planning, forcing her to go back and spend time revising she could be using for other tasks. Jotting down notes for the players' Variations means less digging through the book in the middle of the session and saves valuable gaming-time. This goes double for any antagonists the Storyteller has on deck!

## Getting Your Fishhooks In

Pulling players into the narrative is a bit more complex a task than it might seem — more than simply telling a collaborative story. Thankfully, the Storyteller has a fantastic arsenal of fishhooks at her disposal to land this catch, and if she's careful she'll make the narrative seem boundless and open even as she's reeling the players in down a relatively narrow channel.

Relationships ground us and give us context and community in real life, and the same goes for characters within the fiction. The Remade have few friends remaining, but what friends they have mean the world to them. The only thing they might sacrifice their relationships for is the revenge they obsessively seek, so it follows that the Storyteller should make a character's Touchstones as real and as immediate as she can. Little details make characters feel real to

players — a habit of smoking e-cigs, a playful wink, a style of dress, and so on. If the Storyteller has some personal knowledge of quirks like these, she can lean on that to bring them to life when she's describing or portraying these Storyteller characters. Reactions to these traits may vary, as a player or character who really loathes vaping may take offense at the habit, and that's *fine* because it means that *they care about that character*. Getting players to care about Storyteller characters is the entire point of the exercise, and if done particularly well those characters may well enter the group's overarching table-mythology of in-jokes, an honor that few receive.

Keep in mind that the Storyteller is the single focal point for the players' characters to interact with the rest of the narrative. Making Storyteller characters stand out from each other doesn't just mean getting to play voice actor, it means body language, word choice, all the little details that make it clear who's speaking and who they are. A CEO might sit ramrod straight and clearly enunciate every word he says, to the point where he comes off as more than a little dangerous-in-the-serial-killer-sense — or he might habitually rest his head on his chin and be terribly bored with the characters (and, likely, everything around him). Both speak to the character's inner life, and both make him feel like he's taking up space at the game table.

## All Roads Lead to Hell

The world a Storyteller weaves should seem expansive, but the truth is that the characters live in a Potemkin village of the imagination. The world doesn't extend beyond the backdrop of wherever the players go. The difference is that the Storyteller reconstructs this Potemkin village whenever the players venture beyond the façade. The Storyteller has to be ready for these eventualities, and some tips for that are discussed above, but here we'll talk about the practice of making a real, breathing world that is, in the end, nothing but verbal set dressing. All the Storyteller has to worry about is building the world that the players' characters can see at the exact moment and being ready to build wherever they go next.

Balancing the immediate and the possible is a task of preparedness, improvisation, and knowing the players. It's also the ability to move smoothly from one setting or situation to another with the appropriate pacing. There's a difference between a hard cut (“*You're going to the warehouse district? Alright, when you get there...*”) and a transition (“*How do you get there? Car? What do you listen to on the radio on the way?*”). If the Storyteller needs time to think, the latter is a useful tool to get players to roleplay for a minute or two while she gets her next scene in order mentally. On the other hand, if she's been preparing as the last scene winds down (or if she got lucky and planned for something the players want to do), cutting right to the action puts players on the spot and makes them pay attention, the same way a sharp cut in film or television is jarring.

Reorganizing around the players is easier if the Storyteller keeps the rest of the world floating, keeping it and its relation to the current scene in the back of her head at all times. Taking notes can be helpful to keep it in order, either as linear text or a mindmap that illustrates the potential paths players might take from the current scene. Never forget that Storyteller characters have their own lives and motivations, and are busy working toward them in the background. If the Storyteller drops hints and the players don't follow them up, that doesn't mean the plotline is off-limits, it just means the players have given the Storyteller the opportunity to build something fun and dangerous behind the scenes, which can intrude into the path they've taken at a convenient time in the future. This isn't an excuse to screw over the players, but a way to make the world

moving behind the scenes feel much larger than it really is (not to mention a good way to motivate players who are dithering over what to do next).

## A Conspiracy's Role

Deviants' obsessive focus on revenge puts a conspiracy center-stage in their minds, and to be sure the Remade play a major role in a conspiracy's plans, but there's almost always more to it than a simple desire to enslave, vivisect, or whatever cruelty the conspiracy has in mind. The transformed aren't the *ends* for the conspiracy; they're the *means*. Even if the conspiracy has a disturbing take on transhumanism at the center of their ideology, intending to use what they learn from the Broken to transform themselves (and, in their minds, do it "right"), that transformation is almost certainly not the end goal. The conspiracy's plans hinge on what they can do with what they learn from the Remade, and while to the cohort they make seem like implacable monsters hunting them simply for the sake of doing so, the Storyteller needs to know the next phase of the conspiracy's plan. **Deviant** focuses on the endgame of revenge, but knowing the conspiracy's endgame allows her to make decisions on the conspiracy's behalf that seem organic and realistic. Even if the conspiracy will never realize its dreams, players will be able to understand what they're striving for. Besides, the Storyteller needs *something* for the mad scientist or the chief cultist to monologue about — it might as well be internally consistent.

What matters most for the purposes of the chronicle is what the conspiracy poses a threat to, because that informs both its actions and the context in which the Remade are mostly likely to encounter it in the wild. The most obvious and universal threat is, of course, a threat to other people, be they innocent bystanders, pawns in the conspiracy's game, or specific targets either related or unrelated to the Deviants themselves. This sort of wide-angle targeting could easily affect a Remade's Loyalty Touchstones, and defending unrelated innocents is a good source of new Loyalty Touchstones.

Some conspiracies have wider aims of the world-altering sort. They mean to take over a major country, start a war, destroy an economy. They may be genocidal maniacs, or they may have political ambitions that require a certain segment of the population or power structure to be "removed from the equation." They mean to remake the world in their own image, and to them, the more eggs broken while making the omelet, the bigger and better the omelet. Discovering the deep and sweeping plans of the conspiracy is a wonderful revelation for players and characters alike. For the characters, it casts their craving for revenge in an entirely new and far more heroic light, which may well spur them to unconsidered action. Saving the world is a great way to end a chronicle, if the narrative's reached that scale.

But what if the Storyteller and the players want to keep going, ratcheting the stakes up further even after such a climactic battle? Fortunately, conspiracies aren't limited to the prosaic rules of reality-as-we-know-it. Conspiracies at this level aren't content with world domination, or at least not in the petty way those that came before them were. Instead, they intend to remake *reality itself*. Such power is inherently dangerous, but in the hands of amoral maniacs it's a thousandfold worse. Their plans might involve tearing down the barrier between the physical and spirit worlds, raising the dead en masse, or engaging in the mass transformation of humans. Perhaps they verge into the realm of the conceptual, hoping to annihilate the division between human souls, or to travel through and alter time as they wish (which is to say, to destroy it completely from the perspective of everyone else). As long as the Storyteller can conceptualize a conspiracy's master plan and articulate it to the players in a villain's dramatic speech, it's fair game.

## Revenge's Endgame

The Remade are on a quest for vengeance, and they'll get it, sooner or later (or die trying). Those moments are the key points in what's left of the Remade's life, and it's absolutely critical for them to carry that weight within the narrative. In other words, it has to feel as meaningful for the player as it does for the character, if not in the same way. More than any other moment, those are the moments of pathos that will define the chronicle, so the Storyteller should do everything in her power to make them iconic. Don't have the fight in a warehouse; have it in a secret laboratory inside that warehouse with dozens of human-sized test tubes for players to shatter, and plenty of flammable chemicals inside them to start a fire that will slowly spread up the walls and ceiling, leaving only the catwalk for the final confrontation. These are the moments when cinematic violence is not only permissible, it's *encouraged*.

Big set pieces like this, however, are vulnerable to the Secret Rule of Storytelling, as discussed above. Storytellers can design a conspiracy web to lead to a particular location, but players may well decide to deal with that location in a way that doesn't allow all the bells and whistles associated with the location to go off. Unlike the rest of the chronicle, though, these moments are important enough that a little railroading, as long as it's subtle, will be more than offset by the amazing scene where a Remade's Conviction is finally sated. Create a path of least resistance, and while players won't always go for those, the more they poke and prod at their leads, the more that route will stand out as the best option. Give them an insider willing to help — to open doors, to blank a certain set of security cameras, and the like. The fiction can remain exciting and tense even as the mechanics give a little under the weight of player agency and Storyteller fiat.

## That's Not How I Remember It

Sometimes characters change their minds. Sometimes *players* change their minds. Storytellers often feel a strong sense of ownership over the chronicles they put together and run for their friends, but the story is a collaborative one, and players should absolutely have a veto if they decide that their characters' aims have changed, or if they themselves have a reason to change the endgame for their character.

Finally, sometimes characters don't get what they want. Sometimes, their Scars or their dangerous lives catch up with them, and they don't live to take revenge on the conspiracy that violated them. Those are valid endings too, if bittersweet or just plain bitter. Try to give those endings meaning too. They may not be that signature moment of revenge, but they're just as important, because this character's story is coming to an end. Their friends may carry the torch onward for that character, forever changed by that character's impact in their lives, but the player of that character is going to show up to the next session with a new character, new plot threads, and very likely a very different viewpoint on the cohort's vengeance-quest.

## Moving On

The Remade have taken their revenge, a conspiracy lies in shambles, the conspirators dead — all is right with the world. Except, of course, it isn't, because Conviction and Loyalty are the only things holding the Remade together. Without an enemy to fight or someone to protect, their Scars will inevitably worsen over time, and they will die or transform into something even less human than they already are. That's a valid ending to a chronicle — a sad and painful contentment, knowing that the world will be a better place for their sacrifice, knowing that no one will ever have to suffer the way they did. Characters may choose to die on their own terms, perhaps in the very scene that they take their revenge, a final climax like no other.

But the end of a conspiracy doesn't have to be the end of the chronicle. The world is full of bad actors, people willing to discard empathy and consideration for others in the name of power — people who, upon noticing the Remade, would desperately want to tinker with them or turn them to their own ends. In short, there's always a bigger conspiracy to fight, as long as the players want to keep their characters running on the treadmill of revenge.

Introducing a new conspiracy is easier if its precursors have appeared previously in the chronicle, but it's not a necessity. What matters most is making the conspiracy's intrusion into the cohort's lives personal. Give them a reason to hate the conspiracy, to refocus their now-idle ire upon it. Give them a drive that makes them anathema to the characters, so they'll want to do so. Be wary of scale creep, but don't necessarily shy away from it entirely. The Storyteller should pace herself, ratcheting up the consequences of failure bit by bit as conspiracies fall and conspiracies rise. By now, she should know her players well enough to know where they'd want the line to be drawn — or, for that matter, if they'd want it drawn at all.

## Appendix One: Equipment

### Weapons

#### Melee Weapons Chart

[BEGIN CHART]

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	-1	1	1	•	Stun
Brass Knuckles	0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack
Baton	1	-1	2	2	n/a	
Crowbar	2	-2	2	2	•	
Tire Iron	1	-3	2	2	••	+1 Defense
Chain	1	-3	2	2	•	Grapple
Shield (small)	0	-2	2	2	••	Concealed
Shield (large)	2	-4	3	3	••	Concealed
Knife	0	-1	1	1	•	
Rapier	1	-2	1	2	••	Armor piercing 1
Machete	2	-2	2	2	••	
Hatchet	1	-2	1	1	•	
Fire Axe	3	-4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	-6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Spear*	2	-2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

[END OF CHART]

**Type:** A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A tire iron might be any metal club, such as an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand axe.

**Damage:** Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Size:** Size 1 items can be hidden in a hand; two Size 2 items can be hidden in a coat; Size 3+ items cannot be hidden.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

*Concealed:* A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

*Grapple:* Add the chain's weapon modifier to grappling dice pools.

*Stun:* Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to stun.

*Two-handed:* This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

\* The reach of a spear gives +1 to Defense against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

## Ranged Weapons Chart

[BEGIN CHART]

Type	Damage Example	Range	Clip Special	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability
Revolver, light (Special)	1	20/40/80	6	0	2	1	•• SW M640 (.38)
Revolver, heavy (Magnum)	2	35/70/140	6	-2	3	1	•• SW M29 (.44)
Pistol, light	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	••• Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, heavy (ACP)	2	30/60/120	7+1	-2	3	1	••• Colt M1911A1 (.45)
SMG, small* (9mm)	1	25/50/100	30+1	-2	2	1	••• Ingram Mac-10
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	-3	3	2	••• HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle (30.06)	4	200/400/800	5+1	-5	2	3	•• Remington M-700



Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	-3	3	3	•••	Steyr AUG (5.56mm)
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	-4	3	2	••	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	-5	3	3	•••	

### [END CHART]

**Damage:** Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

**Ranges:** The listed numbers are short/medium/long ranges in yards/meters. Attacks at medium range suffer a -1 penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a -2 penalty.

**Clip:** The number of rounds a gun can hold. A +1 indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase it by 1.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 on attack rolls.

**Size:** Weapons of Size 1 can be fired one-handed; Size 2 weapons must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; Size 3 weapons can be fired two-handed, but not hidden on one's person.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

\* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

\*\* Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality.

\*\*\* Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots.

## Grenades

### [BEGIN CHART]

Type	Damage	Availability	Initiative	Tags	Blast Area	Force	Range	Strength	Size
Frag, Standard	2		0	10	3	Thrown (A)	2	1	•••• Knockdown
Frag, Heavy	3		-1	5	4	Thrown (A)	2	1	•••• Knockdown
Molotov Ignited, Muffled	1		-2	3	2	Thrown	2	2	• Incendiary,
Pipe Bomb Knockdown	1		-1	5	2	Thrown	2	1	• Ignited,
Smoke – Muffled	0		10	–	Thrown (A)	2	1	•• Concealment,	
Stun	0	0	5	2	Thrown (A)	2	1	•• Knockdown	

Thermite	3	5	4	Thrown (A)	2	1	••••	Incendiary
White Phosphorous	3	5	4	Thrown (A)	2	1	••••	Concealment, Incendiary

**[END CHART]**

**Damage:** Indicates the damage automatically dealt to those within the blast radius (p. XX).

**Initiative:** The initiative penalty wielding the weapon inflicts.

**Blast Area:** The diameter of the explosion, in meters or yards.

**Force:** The additional damage inflicted by the explosion (p. XX).

**Range:** Throwing a grenade is a Dexterity + Athletics roll. Success means the grenade lands within the blast area of its intended target. An exceptional success places the grenade within ground zero of the target. Additional successes on the attack roll do not otherwise increase the damage the explosive inflicts.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 on attack rolls.

**Size:** Size 1 items can be hidden in a hand; two Size 2 items can be hidden in a coat; Size 3+ items cannot be hidden.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

*Concealment:* Characters in the blast area suffer the Blinded Tilt in both eyes until they leave the area. Those within the secondary blast area instead suffer the Blinded Tilt. Those concealed by the smoke enjoy total concealment (p. XX) against attacks. The smoke dissipates after two minutes.

*Ignited:* The user must light a fuse or rag as an action before throwing it on the next turn.

*Incendiary:* Characters in the blast area catch fire automatically as though exposed to a torch with a heat bonus equal to the incendiary grenade's damage bonus. This is instead a bonfire at ground zero. Within the secondary blast area, the heat bonus is halved (rounded up). The affected area also gains the Inferno Tilt.

*Knockdown:* Characters in the blast area who suffer more damage from the blast than half their Size (rounded up) suffer the Knocked Down and Stunned Tilts. Those in the secondary blast area instead suffer the Knocked Down Tilt if they suffer damage more damage than half their Size.

*Muffled:* The device does *not* impose the Deafened Tilt as do other explosives.

## Armor

**[BEGIN CHART]**

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
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**Modern**

Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso

Flak jacket	2/4	1	-1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full riot gear	3/5	2	-2	-1	•••	Torso, arms, legs

### Archaic

Leather (hard)	2/0	2	-1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	-2	-2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso, arms, legs

### [END CHART]

**Rating:** Armor provides protection against normal attacks and firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

**Strength:** If a character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by one.

**Defense:** The penalty imposed on a character's Defense when wearing the armor.

**Speed:** The penalty to a character's Speed when wearing the armor.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

**Coverage:** The areas of a character protected by the armor. Unless an attacker targets a specific unarmored location (see "Specified Targets," p. XX), the armor's protection applies. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

\* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or from being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt. Attackers have no idea the target is wearing armor until after they land a successful hit.

## Services

### [CHART]

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
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#### Academics

Forensic accountant consulting	••••	+3
Research assistance from grad students	••	+2
Semiotic analysis of a work of art	••	+2

#### Computer

Data recovery specialist	••••	+3
Graphic/web design or forgery	••	+2
Targeted malware or DDOS attack	•••	+2

#### Crafts

Custom equipment modifications	•••	+2
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No-questions-asked vehicle tow     •••     +2

Targeted sabotage     ••     +2

### **Investigation**

Crime scene cover-up     ••••     +3

Private investigation/background check     ••     +2

Search and seizure warrant     ••••     +3

### **Medicine**

Black-market surgeon     ••••     +3

Rush plastic surgery     ••••     +2

Under-the-counter prescription drug or toxin     •••     +2

### **Occult**

Conspiracy spy or turncoat     •••     +2

Esoteric consultant/sage     ••••     +3

Psychic/medium     •••     +2

### **Politics**

Astroturfing     •••     +2

Lobbying effort (read: bribe)     ••••     +3

Opposition research     •••     +2

### **Science**

Hazmat cleanup crew     •••     +3

Lab access     ••     +2

Volatile compounds or explosives dealer/consultant     ••••     +3

### **Athletics**

Arranging an “accidental” injury while target is exercising or playing sports     •••     +2

Access gym membership lists and member data     •••     +2

Rigging an athletic competition     ••••     +3

### **Brawl**

Hired muscle or bodyguard service     •••     +2

Hiring goons to “send a message”     ••••     +3

Provoking a pre-planned barfight or riot     •••     +2

### **Drive**

Professional stunt driver     •••     +2

Staged car crash     •••     +3

Uber/Lyft/taxi ride • +1

### **Firearms**

Cover fire from local mafia or gangs ••• +3

Exotic/experimental gun repair ••• +2

Procuring smuggled military arms •••• +2

### **Larceny**

Burglary/robbery support team ••• +2

Security vulnerability analysis ••• +2

Stolen key or keycard ••• +2

### **Stealth**

Strategic distraction ••• +3

Tailing a suspect ••• +2

Targeted vandalism •• +2

### **Survival**

Search party or wilderness tracker ••• +2

Trail guide •• +3

Weatherproof a shelter •• +2

### **Weaponry**

Forge/modify an archaic weapon ••• +2

Identify wound from obscure weapon ••• +2

Training in archaic warfare ••• +2

### **Animal Ken**

Determining source stock of Chimeric/Manticore •••• +3

Identifying animal by droppings, fur, or photographs •• +2

Animal or Manticore trainer ••• +2

### **Empathy**

Cold reader •• +2

“Good cop” interrogator ••• +2

Professionally produced dossier or psychographic profile •••• +3

### **Expression**

Freelance writer/editor • +2

Influence over major news outlet ••• +3

Guerilla marketing consultant ••• +2

### **Intimidation**

“Bad cop” interrogator	•••	+2
Cyberstalking	••	+2
Leg-breakers	••••	+3

### **Persuasion**

Con artist/accomplice	••	+2
P.R./propaganda campaign	••••	+3
Procurer	•••	+2

### **Socialize**

Catering	• to ••••	+1 to +3
Live entertainment	••	+2
Seamstress/tailor	•••	+2

### **Streetwise**

Black market access	••	+2
Street/prescription drug dealer	•••	+2
Find crash space	••	+1

### **Subterfuge**

Amateur actor/actress	••	+2
Document/ID counterfeiter	•• or •••	+1 or +2
FX make-up artist	•••	+2

**[[END CHART]]**

**[PAGE BREAK]**

## **Appendix Two: Tilts**

Tilts come in two forms: Personal and Environmental.

Personal Tilts only apply to one character, and include ways in which that character can overcome the effect. In many cases (Arm Wrack, Blinded, Deafened, and Leg Wrack), if a Personal Tilt is caused by an attack to a specified target (p. XX), mark an X under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack, and the Tilt ends when the damage that caused it is healed.

Environmental Tilts affect the whole scene, and offer ways for individual characters to mitigate their effects.

**[THE FOLLOWING ARE ALL TILTS]**

### **Tilts**

The list below gives some common Tilts that can be used to model difficulties in combat or the effects of Scars, Variations, or hostile supernatural powers.

## Arm Wrack

Personal

**Description:** The character's arm is painfully (and debilitatingly) injured.

**Effect:** The affected character drops whatever they're holding in that arm and can't use it to attack opponents. If this effect spreads to both limbs, roll only a chance die on any rolls that require manual dexterity, and take -3 to all other Physical actions.

**Causing the Tilt:** Supernatural power or targeted blow to the arm (-2) that deals damage in excess of Stamina, or to a hand (-4) that deals any damage.

**Ending the Tilt:** The relevant damage heals.

## Beaten Down

Personal

**Description:** The character has had the fight knocked out of him.

**Effect:** The character cannot take active part in the fight without extra effort. The player must spend a point of Willpower *each time* he wants the character to take a violent action in the fight. He can still run, Dodge, and apply Defense.

**Causing the Tilt:** The character suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina *or* any amount of lethal damage.

**Ending the Tilt:** The character surrenders and gives the aggressor what he wants. At this point, the character regains a point of Willpower and takes a Beat, but can take no further action in the fight.

## Blazing Light

Environmental

**Description:** Bright light in the area hurts the eyes.

**Effect:** Characters suffer a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision, and the pain and distraction causes a -1 penalty to any other rolls. Characters closing their eyes to avoid the pain suffer the Blinded Tilt in both eyes.

**Causing the Tilt:** Sunlight reflecting off snow, sand, or water at just the right angle; the Bioluminescence Variation.

**Ending the Tilt:** Dimming the light, removing elements of the terrain that reflect it into eyes, or donning protective eyewear.

## Blinded

Personal

**Description:** The character's eyes are damaged or removed.

**Effect:** The character suffers a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision. Increase to -5 and loss of all Defense if both eyes are affected.

**Causing the Tilt:** Supernatural power, darkness, or targeted blow (-5) that inflicts damage. An attacker can inflict temporary blindness by slashing at her opponent's brow, throwing sand into his eyes, or kicking up dirt. This requires an attack roll of Dexterity + Athletics with a -3 penalty. (Defense applies.) If the attack succeeds, the target is Blinded for the next turn.

**Ending the Tilt:** The relevant damage heals.

## Blizzard

Environmental

**Description:** Heavy snowfall carpets the ground and is whipped up by howling winds into a barrage of whirling white.

**Effect:** Rolls to see things close to the character's person suffer a -1 penalty. Each additional 10 yards/meters inflicts an additional -1 penalty (cumulative) on all visual Perception rolls. This penalty also applies to ranged attacks.

Every four inches of snow applies a -1 penalty to appropriate Physical rolls, including combat rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** For the most part, the weather is out of the characters' control.

**Ending the Tilt:** Without supernatural powers, characters can't end a blizzard. Proper equipment (such as goggles and snow boots) can add +1 to +3 to a roll, offsetting some of the penalties.

## Deafened

Personal

**Description:** The character can't hear.

**Effect:** If the character is deaf in one ear, he suffers a -3 penalty to hearing-based Perception rolls. A character struck deaf in both ears only gets a chance die on such rolls, and suffers a -2 penalty to all combat-related dice rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** A particularly loud noise within 10 feet of the character may cause temporary hearing loss, usually in both ears. A supernatural power, or a targeted blow (-4) that inflicts damage.

**Ending the Tilt:** Deafness caused by loud noises fades after (10 - the victim's Stamina + Resolve) turns. If caused by damage, the relevant damage heals.

## Drugged

Personal

**Description:** The character's mind is addled by mind-altering substances.

**Effect:** A generic narcotic can be represented with one set of modifiers; the character suffers a -2 modifier to Speed (and static Defense, if used) and a -3 penalty to all rolls in combat. The character ignores wound penalties.

**Causing the Tilt:** Drugs are ingested by or injected into the character, voluntarily or not. Injecting another character with drugs is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon.



**Ending the Tilt:** A drugged character can shake off the effects for a turn by succeeding on a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll, with a -1 to -3 penalty based the potency of the drug (use -2 as the default).

## Earthquake

Environmental

**Description:** Everything shudders and shakes, and rents tear the ground wide open.

**Effect:** When the earthquake's actually occurring, all Dexterity-based dice pools (and Defense) suffer a -1 to -5 penalty. Characters take between 1 and 3 points of lethal damage per turn of the earthquake's duration. A reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll downgrades that damage to bashing — or cancels it, on an exceptional success.

**Causing the Tilt:** Without tremendous supernatural power, it's almost impossible to cause an earthquake. A powerful explosion could create the same effect.

**Ending the Tilt:** Earthquakes are quick events. It's very rare for one to last more than a minute (20 turns).

## Extreme Cold

Environmental (sometimes Personal)

**Description:** Bone-chilling winds bite through the character, or trudging through knee-deep snow takes all of the sensation from his limbs.

**Effect:** When the temperature is below freezing, characters can't heal bashing damage. Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is affected, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

**Causing the Tilt:** A frozen environment, a walk-in freezer, etc.

**Ending the Tilt:** Find a source of warmth or warm clothing. A character who has hypothermia requires medical attention.

## Extreme Heat

Environmental (sometimes Personal)

**Description:** The character might be stumbling through the desert with the sun beating down on him, or running through the steam tunnels surrounding an old boiler room. This Tilt can also be the result of a debilitating fever.

**Effect:** Characters can't heal bashing damage. Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

**Causing the Tilt:** This Tilt is usually caused by environmental factors — being out at noon in the desert, or spending too long in a sauna or forge.

**Ending the Tilt:** Get out of the heat. In a desert or similar environment, finding shade is paramount.

## Flooded

Environmental

**Description:** Some liquid has risen enough to impede the character's progress.

**Effect:** Each foot of liquid inflicts a -2 penalty to all Physical dice pools. If the water goes up over her head, the character has to swim (Dexterity + Athletics). Alternatively, she can try to hold her breath (Stamina + Composure).

**Causing the Tilt:** Normally, this Tilt is the result of heavy rain, sudden snowmelt, or a broken water main.

**Ending the Tilt:** Characters can escape flooding by getting to high ground, which is enough to mitigate this Tilt.

## Heavy Rain

Environmental

**Description:** Torrential rain lashes down in knives.

**Effect:** Heavy rains cause a Perception penalty of -3 dice to Perception rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** Short of a supernatural power or a fleet of cloud-seeding aircraft, Heavy Rain is the result of natural weather patterns.

**Ending the Tilt:** The best way out of the rain is to get indoors.

## Heavy Winds

Environmental

**Description:** Howling winds buffet at the characters.

**Effect:** Heavy winds are loud, so characters suffer a -3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Also, the wind inflicts a penalty to all Physical rolls. Grade the wind from one to five; one is tropical-storm level (around 40 MPH), three is hurricane level (around 80 MPH), and five is tornado level (150+ MPH). The wind's grade represents the penalty applied to Physical dice rolls. Characters outside take bashing damage each turn equal to the wind's rating. Characters can make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid damage.

**Causing the Tilt:** Heavy winds are a fact of life, from siroccos in the desert, to tornados in the Midwest US, to wind shears everywhere.

**Ending the Tilt:** Getting out of the wind is the best way to end this Tilt.

## Ice

Environmental

**Description:** The ground's covered in a layer of ice that sends wheels spinning and people's feet flying out from under them.

**Effect:** Divide the character's Speed in half. All Physical rolls (and Defense) suffer a -2 penalty. Attempting to move at full Speed increases the Physical penalty to -4. Any dramatic failure on a Physical roll inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt. When driving halve Acceleration, and take a -5 penalty to Drive rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** This Tilt applies to any surface that's slick and slippery, including a spill of industrial lubricant or just a well-polished wooden or linoleum floor.

**Ending the Tilt:** "Get off the ice" is good advice, but that can take work. Characters can use heat or fire to melt ice, or throw down copious quantities of salt or grit to increase traction.

## Immobilized

Personal

**Description:** Something holds the character fast, preventing him from moving.

**Effect:** The character can't do anything. He can't apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can't take combat-related actions. If someone's holding him down, he can spend a point of Willpower to deliver a head butt or similar attack.

**Causing the Tilt:** The usual way to inflict this Tilt is through the Restrain grappling move.

**Ending the Tilt:** An Immobilized target can break free by escaping from a grapple or snapping whatever binds her. If held by an item, the character must make a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the item's Durability. Take a -2 penalty for restrained limbs; increase to -4 if hogtied. A success breaks free. Each roll, successful or not, deals a point of bashing damage.

## Inferno

Environmental

**Description:** The area is on fire. Anything flammable is either already burning or will be soon.

**Effect:** All characters suffer a -2 to all rolls due to smoke and heat. After two turns, any character that breathes also suffers 2B per turn due to smoke inhalation. After three turns, the character also suffers 1L per turn from burns and must succeed on a Dexterity + Stamina roll each turn to avoid catching fire (see p. XX).

**Causing the Tilt:** Objects or people catching fire and letting it spread can cause this Tilt, as well as supernatural powers or particularly volatile explosions.

**Ending the Tilt:** Different types of fire require different methods to extinguish; in general, cutting off the fire from its fuel sources does the trick. Water, carbon dioxide, sand, and baking soda can be useful, depending on the size and type of the fire. Eventually all fires burn themselves out, but that can be cold comfort in the aftermath of a destructive blaze.

## Insane

Personal

**Description:** The character suffers from a panic attack, sudden imbalance, or a full-on psychotic break.

**Effect:** The character gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls, but takes actions after everyone else. A character suffering from this Tilt cannot spend Willpower in combat, and suffers a -3 penalty to all Social rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** Any character with an appropriate Condition may acquire the Insane Tilt. The Storyteller can call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a general anxiety that gnaws at the character's mind.

**Ending the Tilt:** The specific effects of this Tilt don't normally last beyond the end of the scene. To end earlier, roll Resolve + Composure as an instant action, contested by a dice pool of (10 – her Willpower dots). Take no other actions this turn, and don't apply Defense to attacks.

## Insensate

Personal

**Description:** The character shuts down, either due to extreme fear or sudden pleasure.

**Effect:** The character can't take any actions until the Tilt is resolved. He can apply Defense to incoming attacks, and if he takes any damage from an attack, the Tilt ends.

**Causing the Tilt:** Several supernatural powers can leave their victim in a trance-like state of heightened emotion. A hallucinogenic drug might have similar effects; administering such a drug is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, which suffers a –1 modifier.

**Ending the Tilt:** The Tilt wears off at the end of the scene. The victim can spend a point of Willpower before then to act normally for one turn. A successful attack will also end the Tilt. If a character has been knocked insensible by drugs, then when this Tilt ends it is replaced with the Drugged Tilt.

## Knocked Down

Personal

**Description:** Something knocks the character to the floor.

**Effect:** The character is knocked off her feet. If she hasn't already acted this turn, she loses her action. Once she's on the ground, a character is considered prone. The character can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can attempt to attack from the ground at a –2 penalty.

**Causing the Tilt:** A melee weapon (damage modifier +2 or greater), or a firearm (damage modifier of +3 or greater) can knock a character down. A close combat attack with a targeted attack against the legs (–2 modifier) can knock someone down. If successful, the target is knocked down, but takes only half damage.

**Ending the Tilt:** Standing up takes an action. A character who hasn't yet acted can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, minus weapon modifier. If successful, she avoids the effects of this Tilt.

## Leg Wrack

Personal

**Description:** Pain or numbness in the leg

**Effect:** If their leg is broken, sprained, or dislocated, halve the character's Speed and suffer a –2 penalty on Physical rolls that require movement (and Defense). If both legs are wracked, the character falls over — taking the Knocked Down Tilt. Speed is reduced to 1; moving precludes other actions. Physical rolls that require movement are reduced to a chance die.

**Causing the Tilt:** Supernatural power or targeted blow (–2) inflicting damage in excess of Stamina.

**Ending the Tilt:** The relevant damage heals.

## Poisoned

Personal

**Description:** Poison is tearing the character apart from the inside.

**Effect:** A poison is either “moderate” or “grave.” A moderate poison causes 1 point of bashing damage per turn. A grave poison deals 1 point of lethal damage per turn.

**Causing the Tilt:** Ingesting or inhaling a poison inflicts this Tilt. Injecting an opponent with a poison counts as a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, and suffers a -1 modifier.

**Ending the Tilt:** Immediate medical attention. Roll Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action each turn. If the character intends to act, the roll suffers a -3 penalty. Success counteracts the damage for one turn.

## Poor Light

Environmental

Dim illumination, strobes, or flickering lights make it difficult to track movement and see clearly.

**Effect:** Affected characters suffer a -2 penalty to visual-based Perception rolls, including ranged combat, rising to -3 at medium range and -4 at long range.

**Causing the Tilt:** This Tilt applies to scenes of “natural” darkness with dim ambient light, such as the outdoors at night away from urban light pollution, and to disconcerting environments like a nightclub with its effects system on.

**Ending the Tilt:** Bring, find, or create a light source.

## Sick

Personal

**Description:** The character suffers from nausea, fever, or related symptoms.

**Effect:** A sickness is either “moderate” or “grave.” A moderate sickness causes a -1 penalty to all actions during combat. That penalty increases by 1 every two turns. A grave sickness inflicts the same dice penalties as a mild sickness, plus 1 point of bashing damage per turn.

**Causing the Tilt:** Exposure to disease either from living sources or sample.

**Ending the Tilt:** Penalties fade at a rate of one point per turn once the character has a chance to rest. Any damage remains until the character can heal.

## Stunned

Personal

**Description:** The character is dazed and unable to think straight.

**Effect:** The character loses her next action, and halves her Defense until she can next act.

**Causing the Tilt:** A character can be stunned by any attack that does at least as much damage as their Size in a single hit. Some weapons have a “stun” special ability. These double the weapon modifier only for the purposes of working out whether the attacker inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Attacks against the target’s head count the character’s Size as 1 lower.

**Ending the Tilt:** The effects of this Tilt last one turn. The character can end the Tilt during their own action by reflexively spending a point of Willpower, but -3 modifier applies to any actions they take that turn.

### [QUICK REFERENCE TABLE]

#### Personal Tilts

##### Tilt    Effects

**Arm Wrack**    One arm: Drop anything held. Both arms: Chance die on rolls requiring manual dexterity, -3 to other Physical actions.

**Beaten Down**    Cannot take violent action in combat without spending Willpower.

**Blinded**        One eye: -3 to vision-related rolls. Both eyes: -5 to vision-related rolls, lose all Defense.

**Deafened**      One ear: -3 to Perception rolls. Both ears: Chance die on Perception rolls, -2 to combat rolls.

**Drugged**        -2 Speed, -3 to combat rolls (including Defense and Perception). Ignore wound penalties.

**Immobilized**    No combat actions. Can't move or apply Defense.

**Insane**          +1 to combat rolls, act after everyone else, -3 to Social rolls, can't spend Willpower.

**Insensate**      No combat actions. Can move and apply Defense. Taking damage ends the Tilt.

**Knocked Down**    Lose action this turn (if it hasn't been taken), knocked prone. Can apply Defense, attack from ground at -2.

**Leg Wrack**      One leg: half Speed, -2 penalty on Physical rolls for movement. Both legs: Knocked Down, give up action to move at Speed 1, movement-based Physical rolls reduced to chance die.

**Poisoned**        Moderate: One point of bashing damage per turn. Grave: One point of lethal damage per turn.

**Sick**            Moderate: -1 to all actions. Penalty increases by 1 every two turns. Grave: As moderate, but also inflicts one point of bashing damage per turn.

**Stunned**        Lose next action. Half Defense until the characters next acts.

#### Environmental Tilts

##### Tilt    Effects

**Blazing Light**    -3 penalty to vision-related rolls and -1 penalty to all other rolls. Closing eyes imposes Blinded Tilt in both eyes, instead.

**Blizzard**        -1 penalty to visual Perception and ranged attack rolls, increased by 1 per 10 yards/meters. -1 penalty to Physical rolls per four inches of snow.

**Earthquake**     Penalty to Dexterity rolls depending on severity. Take one to three lethal damage per turn, Stamina + Athletics downgrades to bashing.

Extreme Cold Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.

Extreme Heat Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.

Flooded -2 to Physical dice pools per foot of flooding. Once water is over head, character must swim or hold breath.

Heavy Rain -3 to aural and visual Perception rolls.

Heavy Winds -3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Winds rated between 1 and 5, severity acts as penalty to Physical rolls and deals that much bashing damage per turn, Dexterity + Athletics to avoid.

Ice -2 Speed, -2 to Physical actions. Can move at normal speed but -4 Physical actions. Dramatic Failure causes Knocked Down; Drive rolls are at -5 and half Acceleration.

Inferno -2 to rolls. After 2 turns, 2B damage per turn. After 3 turns, 1L per turn and may catch fire.

Poor Light -2 penalty to visual-based Perception rolls, including ranged combat, rising to -3 at medium range and -4 at long range

**[END TABLE]**

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## Appendix Three: Conditions

The list below provides some common Conditions that you can apply to characters throughout the chronicle.

**[THE FOLLOWING ARE ALL CONDITIONS]**

### Addicted (Persistent)

Your character is addicted to something, whether it's drugs, gambling, or other destructive behaviors. She needs to indulge her addiction regularly to keep it under control, and it takes over her life. Choose a specific addiction upon taking this Condition; characters can take this Condition multiple times for different addictions. Being unable to feed the addiction results in the Deprived Condition.

**Possible Sources:** Alcoholism; substance abuse; the Addictive Variation Scar

**Resolution:** Gain or lose a dot of Integrity, or achieve exceptional success on a breaking point; for Remade, heal a medium or major Instability.

**Beat:** Your character chooses to get a fix rather than fulfill an obligation, or causes significant complications for her cohort by indulging her addiction.

### Amnesia (Persistent)

Your character is missing a portion of her memory. An entire period of her life is just gone. This causes massive difficulties with friends and loved ones.

**Resolution:** You regain your memory and learn the truth. Depending on the circumstances, this may constitute a breaking point.

**Beat:** Something problematic arises, such as a forgotten arrest warrant or old enemy.

## Bestial

Your character acts on primal, physical impulses. Frightening things make him run. He meets aggressive threats with violence and anger. Take a -2 die penalty to all rolls to resist physical impulse. As well, take a -2 penalty to Defense due to impulsive action. Any rolls to compel your character to impulsive, aggressive action or escape achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

**Possible Sources:** The Alternate Persona Scar.

**Resolution:** Cause damage in someone's last three Health boxes.

## Blind (Persistent)

Your character cannot see. Any rolls requiring sight may only use a chance die. If she could reasonably substitute another sense, make the roll at -3 instead. In a combat situation, she suffers the drawbacks of the Blinded Tilt (p. XX). This Condition may be temporary, but if that's the result of a combat effect, the Blindness Tilt would apply instead.

**Possible Sources:** The Deterioration or Sensory Deprivation Scar

**Resolution:** Your character regains her sight.

**Beat:** Your character encounters a limitation or difficulty that inconveniences her.

## Broken (Persistent)

Whatever you did or saw, something inside you snapped. You can barely muster up the will to do your job anymore, and anything more emotionally intense than a raised voice makes you flinch and back down. Apply a -2 to all Social rolls and rolls involving Resolve and a -5 to all use of the Intimidation Skill.

**Resolution:** Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point; for Remade, heal a medium or major Instability.

**Beat:** You back down from a confrontation or fail a roll due to this Condition.

## Deaf

Injury to the brain or structures of one or both ears causes deafness. In the latter case this might come from sudden or repeated exposure to loud noise, such as from a powerful PA system or firearms. Deafness imposes the same effects as the Deafened Tilt (one ear: -3 to perception rolls; both ears: chance die on Perception rolls, -2 to combat rolls.)

This Condition may also be Persistent.

**Possible Sources:** The Deterioration or Sensory Deprivation Scar

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. A hearing aid, cochlear implant, or similar prosthetic aid can provide assistance.

## Deprived



Your character suffers from an addiction. Because she is without it, she's unable to focus or contain herself. Remove one die from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits or Scar Resistance rolls.

**Possible Sources:** Failing to feed an addiction.

**Resolution:** Your character indulges her addiction.

### Disabled (Persistent)

Your character has limited or no ability to walk. Her Speed trait is effectively 1. She must rely on a wheelchair or other device to travel. A manual wheelchair's Speed is equal to her Strength and requires use of her hands. Electric wheelchairs have a Speed of 3, but allow the free use of the character's hands. An injury can cause this Condition temporarily, in which case it resolves when the injury heals and the character regains mobility.

**Possible Sources:** The Fragility, Missing Limb, or Sensory Deprivation Scar

**Resolution:** Mundane or supernatural means cure the character's disability.

**Beat:** Your character's limited mobility inconveniences her or makes her slow to respond.

### Distracted

Constant confusion and distractions buffet your character from all sides. She cannot take extended actions, and suffers a -2 die penalty to all rolls involving perception, concentration, and precision.

**Possible Sources:** Being in a highly confusing environment; the Glitch Scar

**Resolution:** Leaving the environment.

### Embarrassing Secret

Your character has a secret from his past that could come back to haunt him. If this secret gets out, he could be ostracized or maybe even arrested. If it becomes known, this Condition is exchanged for Notoriety (p. XX).

**Resolution:** The character's secret is made public, or the character does whatever is necessary to make sure it never comes to light.

**Beat:** n/a

### End Stage

The Divergence has reached a terminal stage, as new mutations proliferate and existing ones worsen beyond the capacity of the human mind and body to compensate for them. Any of the Deviant's Magnitude 5 Variations (as well as those of lower Magnitude that represent the maximum Magnitude for that Variation) exceed their usual capabilities and activate immediately. A character with Gigantic 5 might grow to Size 30, for example, or a per-scene, per-chapter, or per-story limit might not apply to a Variation that normally has one. Although this can be potent, it is primarily a narrative effect — the explosive power of a supernova that will leave only a dead star behind.

Unless the character resolves this Condition by the end of the current chapter, he dies. No medical intervention, Variation, or supernatural influence can prevent or reverse this death. The

forces at work are too much for the human body to bear, and the Deviant's cracked soul shatters beyond repair.

**Possible Sources:** Suffering a major Instability in the character's rightmost Stability box.

**Resolution:** Heal a major Instability by destroying a Conviction Touchstone.

## Fatigued

Your character has never been so tired in all her life. For every six hours he goes without sleeping, take a cumulative -1 die penalty to all actions. At every six-hour interval, make a Stamina + Resolve roll (with the penalty) to resist falling asleep.

**Possible Sources:** Staying awake for 24 hours; being dosed with a sedative or anesthetic; the Dependency, Genetic Disorder, or Hemophilia Scar

**Resolution:** Getting a full night's sleep.

## Fragile

The equipment the character is using to aid his action won't last long for some reason, whether because it's an object put together with duct tape and bubble gum, or because his relationship with the people involved sours, or because his computer ends up suffering a blue screen of death and the data is corrupted. A plan may be Fragile because of disrupted communication between the characters, or because of an unexpected hurdle, etc. The equipment ceases to exist in any usable form after a number of uses equal to its creator's dots in the Skill used to build it. If the creator's Skill rating is unknown, the Storyteller may roll 1-3 dice each time the equipment sees use, with a failure resulting in its breaking.

**Possible Sources:** Achieving a failure on a Build Equipment roll

**Resolution:** The equipment falls apart one way or another. Plans grant one Beat to each player whose character is involved when this Condition resolves.

## Frightened

Something's scared your character to the point where he loses rational thought. Maybe he's just looked down at a 100-story drop, or seen a tarantula the size of his fist crawling up his leg. Whatever the case, he needs to leave right now. His only priority is getting the fuck away from the thing that's frightened him — to hell with his stuff, his friends, and his allies. If someone tries to stop him from escaping, he fights his way past them. He can't approach the source of his fear or act against it — and if the only way out involves going near the source of his fear, he collapses on the ground in terror. Supernatural creatures prone to loss of control must make their usual rolls to avoid doing so. Suppressing this Condition's effects for a turn costs a point of Willpower.

**Possible Sources:** Coming face to face with a phobia

**Resolution:** The character escapes from the source of his fear; the scene ends.

## Fugue (Persistent)

Something terrible happened. Rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time. Whenever circumstances become too similar to the situation that led to your gaining this Condition, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If you

fail the roll, the Storyteller controls your character for the next scene; your character, left to his own devices, will seek to avoid the conflict and get away from the area.

**Resolution:** Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point; for Remade, heal a medium or major Instability.

**Beat:** You enter a fugue state as described above.

## Guilty

Your character is experiencing deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse. This Condition is commonly applied after a successful breaking point roll (p. XX). While the character is under the effects of this Condition, he receives a -2 to any Resolve or Composure rolls to defend against Subterfuge, Empathy, or Intimidation rolls.

**Resolution:** The character confesses his crimes and makes restitution for whatever he did.

## Hunted (Persistent)

Someone who poses a serious threat to the character's safety and well-being, physically or emotionally (or both), is after her. For Remade, it's usually a conspiracy agent. Whoever it is might be intent on direct violence, or simply wish to torment her.

**Beat:** The character's persecutors find her.

**Resolution:** The character stops her persecutors, either through direct means like violence, or indirect means like changes in lifestyle that deny them access to her or taking down part of the Web of Pain.

## Informed

Your character has a breadth of research information based on the topic she investigated. When you make a roll relating to the topic, you may choose to resolve this Condition. If you resolve it and the roll fails, consider it to have a single success. If it succeeds, consider it an exceptional success.

The roll that benefits from the Informed Condition can be any relevant Skill roll. For example, a character with Informed (Werewolves) might gain its benefits when using researched information to build a silver bear trap with the Crafts Skill. Combat rolls cannot benefit from this Condition.

**Resolution:** Your character uses her research to gain information; you resolve the Condition as described above.

## Inspired

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. An exceptional success on that roll requires only three successes instead of five, and you gain a point of Willpower.

**Resolution:** You spend inspiration to spur yourself to greater success, resolving the Condition as described above.

## Intoxicated

Your character is drunk, drugged, or otherwise dulled to the world around her. While she's probably not hallucinating, her inhibitions and reactions are both lower than they should be.

Your character suffers a -2 die penalty to all Dexterity and Wits dice pools. Characters using Social maneuvering against her face two fewer Doors than usual.

**Possible Sources:** Heavy drinking or drug use, the Addictive Variation Scar

**Resolution:** Sleep it off.

## Leveraged

Another character has blackmailed, tricked, convinced, or otherwise leveraged yours into doing what they wish. You may have the Leveraged Condition multiple times for different characters. Any time the specified character requests something of yours, resolve this Condition if your character does as requested without rolling to resist.

**Resolution:** Your character may either resolve the Condition by complying with a request as above, or if you apply the Leveraged Condition to the specified character.

## Madness (Persistent)

Your character saw or did something that jarred her loose from reality. This isn't a mental illness born of brain chemistry — that, at least, might be treatable. This madness is the product of supernatural tampering or witnessing something that humanity was never meant to comprehend. The Storyteller has a pool of dice equal to 10 - (character's Integrity) or 10 - (Resolve + Acclimation). Once per chapter, the Storyteller can apply those dice as a negative modifier to any Mental or Social roll made for the character.

**Resolution:** Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point; for Remade, heal a medium or major Instability.

**Beat:** You fail a roll because of this Condition.

## Notoriety

Whether or not your character actually did something heinous in the past, the wrong people think he did and now he's ostracized by the general public. Suffer a -2 on any Social rolls against those who know of his notoriety. If using Social maneuvering (p. XX), the character must open one extra Door if his target knows of his notoriety.

**Possible Sources:** The Conspicuous Appearance or Lying Eyes Condition

**Resolution:** The story is debunked or the character's name is cleared.

## Shaken

Something has severely frightened your character. Any time your character is taking an action where that fear might hinder her, you may opt to fail the roll and resolve this Condition.

**Resolution:** The character gives into her fear and fails a roll as described above.

## Spooked

Your character has seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify her, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates her and dominates her focus.

**Resolution:** This Condition is resolved when your character's fear and fascination causes her to do something that hinders the group or complicates things (she goes off alone to investigate a strange noise, stays up all night researching, runs away instead of holding her ground, etc.).

## Steadfast

Your character is confident and resolved. When you've failed a roll, you may choose to resolve this Condition to instead treat the action as if you'd rolled a single success. If the roll is a chance die, you may choose to resolve this Condition and roll a single regular die instead.

**Resolution:** Your character's confidence carries him through and the worst is avoided; the Condition is resolved as described above.

## Stoic

Your character shuts down the parts of herself that care. She won't open up to anyone and pretends she's fine when she isn't. Gain a two-die bonus to Subterfuge rolls to hide her emotions or avoid talking about a traumatic experience. She doesn't suffer the untrained penalty for any Subterfuge roll. Until she resolves this Condition, she can't heal minor Instabilities, and she can't spend Willpower on actions that would reveal her true feelings.

**Possible Sources:** Personal trauma; the Frozen Heart Scar

**Resolution:** Opt to fail a roll to resist Empathy or a supernatural effect that would read your character's emotions or mental state.

## Volatile

The equipment the character is using to aid his action is ready to blow at any moment, figuratively or literally. One wrong word, one badly placed rune, and it's time to duck and cover. A plan may be Volatile because it backfires terribly, or because a Storyteller character betrays the group, etc. Any failure achieved while benefiting from the equipment is automatically a dramatic failure. The equipment may continue to exist after this Condition is resolved, but if so, reduce its equipment bonus by two dice. This can create equipment *penalties* if the original bonus was fewer than two dice.

**Possible Sources:** Achieving a failure on a Build Equipment roll

**Resolution:** The character suffers a dramatic failure while using the equipment. Plans grant one Beat to each player whose character is involved when this Condition resolves.