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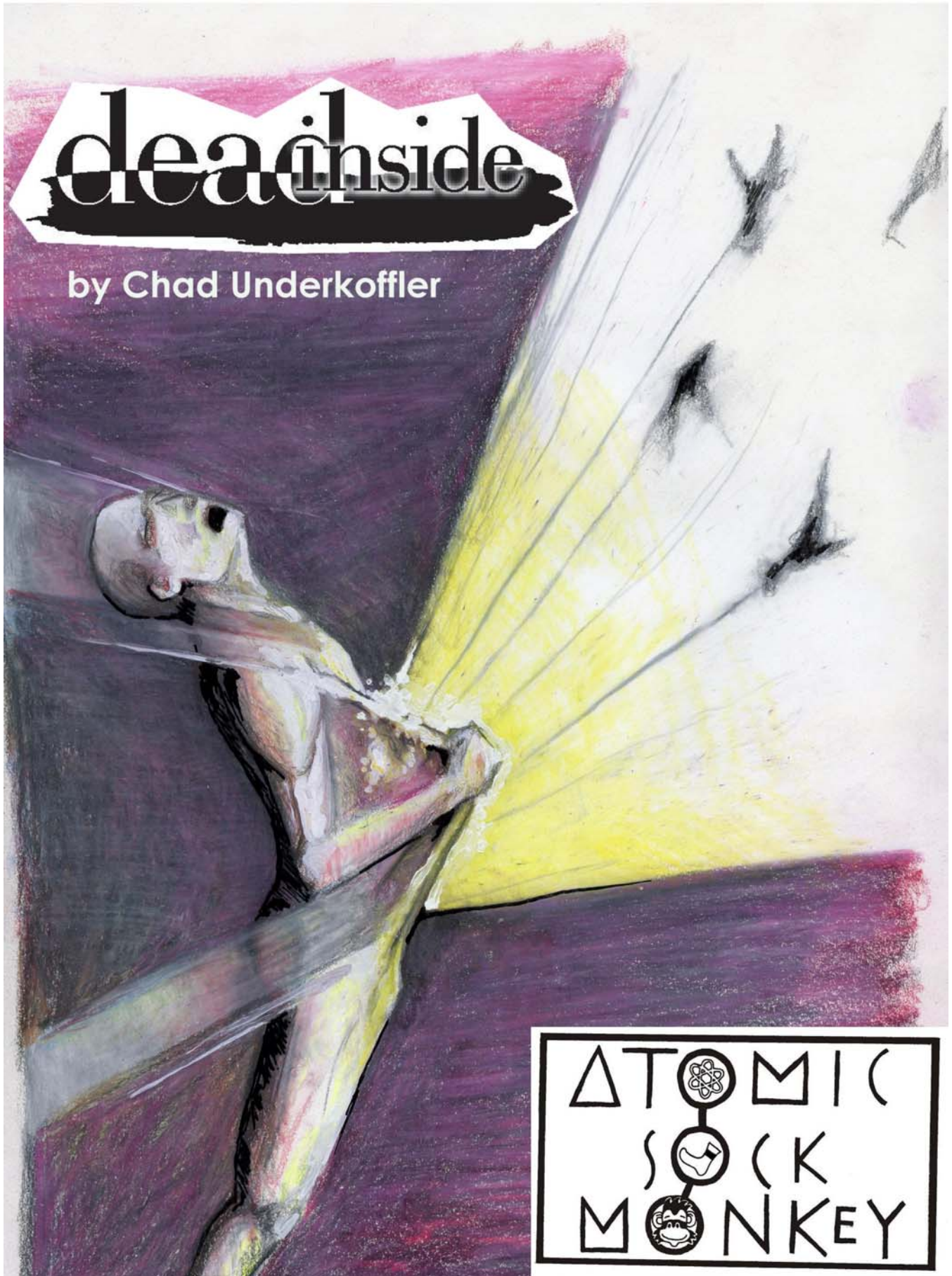
by Chad Underkoffler

ATOMIC SOCK MONKEY

dead inside

Dead Inside: The Roleplaying Game of Loss and Redemption

by Chad Underkoffler

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Special thanks to Phil Reed for the phrase "dead inside":
it served as the seed for my supersaturated thoughts to crystallize around, leading to this book.

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Introduction

Welcome to *Dead Inside: the Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption* (or *DI* for short). This is the first game system I've designed that I've felt is ready for prime-time. I hope you enjoy it.

Why did I write *DI*?

The simple answer is that Phil Reed and I were talking about working on a project together about two years ago, the phrase "dead inside" popped out during our discussion. The words and the concept took root in my mind, and grew until it flowered into this book.

The complicated answer involves a personal challenge. That is, I wished to see if I could write a roleplaying game (RPG) on my own, which did all the things I wanted it to do. That is, a rules light game that eliminates *unnecessary* randomness, permits *interesting* randomness, encourages player choice when appropriate, and – when choice is not appropriate for a character in a situation– rewards player reactions and performance.

A further part of the answer is that I wanted to strive against what I see as a negative emphasis in many RPGs. My perception is that a number of games can be summed up in the phrase "Kill things and take their stuff." In essence, they encourage murder, burglary, looting, and so forth. I decided to turn the phrase around and make "Heal things and give them your stuff" the core of my game. The *DI* system encourages characters to act differently from a typical RPG: generosity, courtesy, and compassion are actually more effective than violence in most cases.

Also, I started to get really interested in the question "why does the character do this?" rather than "what does the character do?" *DI* is not primarily about succeeding or failing in a task, but the *reasons for* and the *manner in which* tasks are attempted.

Finally, I wanted PCs to have cool powers, to philosophize within the game, and to pursue character growth.

I realize *DI* is not going to be everyone's cup of tea. That's fine. It's a different sort of game than the lion's share of those on the shelves, and it's meant to be out of the ordinary.

I believe that every reader can get something out of this book. At the very least, there are plenty of character and location descriptions, adventure seeds and scenarios, and neat philosophical ideas to think about. But for those that embrace the concept and idiom of *DI* and run with it, I know that they'll have a thought-provoking, challenging, and fun gaming experience.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

While most people who are reading this book are familiar with RPGs, I'd like this *Introduction* to give those unfamiliar with the hobby a basic understanding of what they're looking at. (Also, it gives me a chance to opine.)

RPGs can be described as an "improvisational radio theater" game.

Theater because players take on the role of a character (Hamlet, Bridget Jones, or a character they make up themselves), while a Gamemaster (GM) takes the role of the director and all the extras.

Radio because since there's only verbal descriptions of the character, his actions, and the setting (GM: "The wind blows softly through the trees. You're standing in a glade, near a mossy fallen log. Suddenly, a shot rings out!").

Improvisational because there is no set script: player characters (PC) can try to do anything the player thinks is appropriate (Player pretending to be Joe Racecar, Secret Agent: "I jump behind the fallen log.")

The *game* part of an RPG comes in because there are rules to determine if the character can successfully do what the player wants him to do (GM: "Roll 2 dice. If you roll a 7 or better, you can get behind the log before the sniper fires again.")

Players "win" an RPG by having fun; in that way, it's no different than playing poker for matchsticks or playing charades to pass the time in an amusing fashion. The journey is more important than the destination.

Being Dead Inside

Discovering You're Dead Inside

"It seems you have discovered your unpleasant nature."

– Stranger to John Murdoch, *Dark City*

Maybe you've never felt anything strongly: from the day you were born, you rarely cried or laughed. Interacting with other people was always difficult, because you suffered a fundamental separation from them.

Maybe you've always been "normal," but one day woke up feeling a raging *hollowness* inside. You don't know why or how, but now something important is missing from you.

Maybe you've ground your spirit down to the nub in pursuing your base desires, running from your fears, drowning all that you found meaningful in excess.

Maybe you drove yourself beyond your limits, attempting to do the impossible. You succeeded – but it was too late. Despite your heroic efforts, everything went to hell anyway... and it took part of *you* with it.

Maybe you've purposefully sold what makes you *you* to achieve your dreams of wealth, love, or power. Once the euphoria of success wore off, your victory tasted like ashes in your mouth.

Maybe everything has gone wrong since you lost your lucky charm, the railroad pocket-watch your grandfather gave you on his deathbed. The *tick tick tick* of that watch got you through many long nights of the soul – and now it's missing, and with it, your peace of mind.

You've realized something terrible has happened: the scales have fallen from your eyes. At this moment, the world is strange, dreamlike, and mutable. Everything is in flux; anything is possible. You see the monsters and magi, sinners and saints, angels and demons who walk the streets with you. Rainbow rings beckon – are they gates to heaven, hell, or limbo? You feel empty, hollow, cold, hurt. Perhaps you're mad. Perhaps you're saner than you've ever been before.

You're Dead Inside. What are you going to do about it?

Why Are You Dead Inside?

She said her name was Lucy, because she had the sun in her eyes. I said my name was Michael, and I'd love to row her boat ashore. She laughed.

We left the record store and had an ice cream, all the while talking about music. I couldn't stop looking at her maple hair and suntan eyes. She kept smiling; I kept smiling; we kept touching each other lightly – on the hand, on the shoulder, on the small of the back.

She came back to my place to hear the prizes of my blues collection. We hadn't even finished listening to Ma Rainey's "Black Cat, Hoot Owl Blues" before we were kissing. By the time Elizabeth Smith's "Gwine To Have Bad Luck For Seven Years" came on, we were half-naked on the bed.

"Do you want me?" she asked, her eyes shining.

"Yes."

"Would you like the best sex you've ever had, right now?" The afternoon light turned the skin above her bra buttery-yellow.

"Oh, yeah."

"It'll cost you."

I quirked an eyebrow at her. "I thought you were an architect?"

"Oh, I don't want money. Just your soul." She laughed, a trilling of birdsong.

I thought it was a joke. "Oh, all right. Sure."

And then everything was sweat and flesh and friction and release and darkness.

God help me, I thought it was a joke.

Born Without a Soul

You have been cheated by fate. When you were born, you didn't get a soul. Whether due to falling through the cracks of the mystical bureaucracy, or maybe there just wasn't enough soul-stuff lying around at the time, either way – you got shorted. This has made your life difficult, lonely, and confusing. You have a strong intuition that if you don't change this state of affairs, it'll even be *worse* after you die.

Your Soul Has Been Stolen

Someone has cracked you open and scooped you out, forcibly taking your spirit. Perhaps it was a Mage, stealing your soul for power. Or another Dead Inside, desperate to become whole, snatched it away. Maybe a monster was hungry, and chowed down on your soul as a midnight snack. Perhaps a baby was born near you, and their fresh, new vitality ripped away your loosely-held essence. In any case, someone else has your inner self, and they won't give it up without a fight.

Your Soul Rotted Away

You wore away your spirit through chronic abuse. Whether through greed, hypocrisy, malice, or other soul-killing actions, you've emptied yourself of meaning. Now you're paying the price. When you look in the mirror, you can see the Void yawning behind your eyes. Will you continue down this road to oblivion or try to regain what you have lost?

Your Soul Broke

You once did the impossible – found the overlooked budget item that was draining your uncle's company dry, ran into a crossfire to pull your buddy to safety, lifted a wrecked car off of a child – and it ended up being all for naught: the company went bankrupt anyway, your buddy died in triage, the child was already dead. Something shattered inside you. You are broken, and if you stay broken, only death remains. You don't want to die. You need to rebuild yourself, but how?

You Sold Your Soul (Or Were Tricked Out of It)

You voluntarily signed over your immortal soul in return for money, power, goods, or services. It was great at first, tooling around in your new Ferrari, rolling around in hundred dollar bills, or dancing with your trophy spouse. But soon, it was clear that gaining your prize really didn't make you happy like you thought it would. Worse, because you lack a soul, *everything* seems darker, stranger, less enjoyable, more distant. You now realize your error and seek to correct it.

You Accidentally Hid Your Soul Somewhere

You unknowingly poured your essence into a treasured thing – perhaps a childhood toy, a lucky shirt, a security blanket, a favorite hobby, your first lover, a perfect job, an intimate friendship. While you held it, did it, or were in it, everything seemed safe, warm, calm. Now it's lost, and you feel like a piece of yourself is missing. Somehow you know that if somebody *bad* gets hold of your treasure (whatever or whoever it is), you would be in danger: they could use what you've put of yourself into the treasure against you. You need to get back what you have lost – first the treasure, then the soul.

REALIZING YOU'RE DEAD INSIDE

I woke up and felt like hell. I couldn't even call into the office and say I was sick. Lucy was gone. I fell back asleep.

I woke up eight hours later feeling even worse. Cold. Nauseated. Exhausted. It took fifteen minutes, but I forced myself out of the bed and stumbled to the bathroom. I needed aspirin, Pepto Bismol, NyQuil, anything. That's when I saw what she had written on my mirror with her lipstick.

"It wasn't a joke. Now I have your soul. Thanks, Lucy."

I looked past her rusty letters into my reflected eyes. They looked dry, glassy, dead. Like I felt inside. Dead inside.

The frozen chewing I felt in my chest made me want to cry. My head hurt. My limbs felt numb.

Then, my reflection blinked. I watched its eyes close. That means my eyes were open.

I'm going crazy, I thought. But my reflection immediately shook its head no, then reached up with a hand towards the mirror-pane. Both of mine clutched the edge of the vanity. It extended a finger, and was going to write on the glass.

My phone rang, and I jumped, knocking over a can of shaving cream. I looked away, watching the can fall, and when I looked back at the mirror,

my reflection simply mimicked my dulled movements.

The phone stopped ringing after awhile, but my reflection stayed the same, slavishly following my movements. But its eyes told me it had something it wanted to say, but couldn't.

I'm going crazy, aren't I?
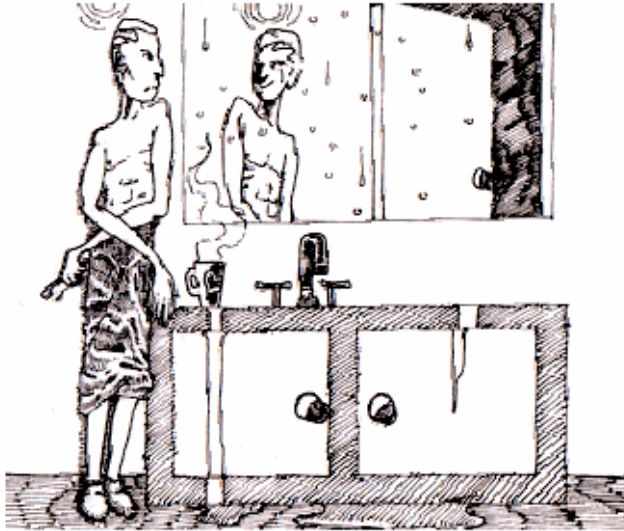
Something woke you up, cluing you in. Something is terribly wrong with you: not a mental disorder, but a spiritual loss. There are a number of ways this revelation could have occurred:

- **You knew from the get-go, but didn't believe**. The lady with the cornflower blue eyes even pointed out the "soul rider" in the too-good-to-be-true sales contract for your spiffy new sports car. You thought it was some kind of joke... until you finished signing your name. At that second, you felt something rip in your chest. Right before you passed out from the pain you saw the knowing smile on her ruby red lips.

- **You realized, slowly**. First, you thought your eyes were bothering you, what with all the little flashes and images you caught out of their corners. Next, you looked into the mirror, and realized you felt exactly how you looked: sallow, worn, and empty. You went to church, and didn't hear a word of the sermon. You treated yourself to a movie, chocolate, a new book, a Swedish massage –

and none of it brought you any happiness. Then, you saw the dead man walk through a solid wall, and no one else on the sidewalk noticed. That's when it started to fall into place.

- **You were told outright**. Someone claiming to be a psychic keeps calling and leaving odd messages on your voicemail. "You've lost your soul, but I can help you get it back." It's got to be some sort of scam, right? Please let it be a scam...

- **You bumped your head**. Ow. Now you see Dead Inside people (and Ghosts, Zombis, Sensitives, Mages, and...).

- **You had a vision or dream**. The nightmare was different this time: instead of showing up to school without your clothes, you showed up without your bones. As you slithered into Mrs. Beatty's classroom like a giant snail, you saw an address written on the slate in vivid red chalk. As usual, the kids all stared and pointed. But they didn't laugh this time, and neither did you, when you woke up to find a piece of red chalk in your hand and the same address scrawled on your ceiling. You know you're missing something inside, but do you dare go to see if it's at that address?

- **You woke up in the Spirit World (see below)**. You're not in Kansas anymore, Toto. Hit the (yellow) bricks and start figuring out what happened.

Feel free to mix and match!

WHAT IS BEING DEAD INSIDE?

"A living thing should either create or destroy according to its capacity and caprice, but you, you do neither. You only live on dreaming of the nice things you would like to have happen to you but which never happen; and you wonder vaguely why the young lives about you which you occasionally chide for a fancied impropriety never listen to you and seem to flee at your approach. When you die you will be buried and forgotten, and that is all. The morticians will enclose you in a worm-proof casket, thus sealing even unto eternity the clay of your uselessness. And for all the good or evil, creation or destruction, that your living might have accomplished, you might just as well have never lived at all. I cannot see the purpose in such a life. I can see in it only vulgar, shocking waste."

– Apollonius of Tyana, *The Circus of Dr. Lao*

Being Dead Inside means that – for one reason or another – you lack a complete soul: all you have left are the barest shards and fragments of a living spirit. But what is a soul? Is this literally an immortal essence living within your flesh, or merely a metaphor for drive, meaning, personality, goals, joy, socialization, or dreams? These are the questions philosophers and neurologists ponder.

In *DI*, the soul is a mystical essence that is separate from yet dwells within the body. It rarely interacts with gross matter. It's energy, impulse, willpower, chi, force. It can be grown, wasted, burned, given, traded, stolen.

When you lose too much of this energy, you become Dead Inside. This means that there is hole in your self that cannot be filled with anything for long; you hunger deeply for something you can't quite identify; you're gripped by an internal chill that cannot be measured by any thermometer.

The world seems muffled behind a thick layer of cotton, blurred through a cloudy pane of glass. It's difficult to feel a connection to anyone or anything. Most social interactions are challenging because of this distance. Most Average People – and most animals – are uncomfortable, creeped-out, and skittish around you. (Some canny Dead Inside take advantage of this unease, and use it to gain positions of authority, rank, or power.) You probably only have one or two people you can communicate enough with to call "friends."

Furthermore, you've become vulnerable and open to dangers and experiences most Average People are blind to and armored against. You can sense ghosts, receive visions of the future, and walk through Gates to the Spirit World. You also have a deeper understanding of what a soul *is* and how it can be *used* to change yourself, your situation, and your world. Unfortunately, now that you have the *knowledge*, you lack the *resources*. If you could just regain a soul, you could do incredible things….

You feel an overwhelming urge to fill your hollowness. This obsessive need shapes your words, thoughts, and deeds. It nips at you when you're busy,

and gnaws at you when you're not. The lack of a soul is like an itch in the middle of your back that you just can't scratch. The only thing that can stop the cold wind whistling through that empty space is to put some soul in there.

HOW DO I STOP BEING DEAD INSIDE?

I ended up going to my shrink anyway; he gave me some pills. Something about him reminded me of a turtle, a clam, a jar of pickles with its lid screwed tight. He was so blind he couldn't see me shattering inside.

The pills didn't help. He told me to wait a month until my body adjusted. I waited two, and they *still* didn't help.

I felt a transparent velvet curtain around me, cutting me off from other people. There was a wind blowing through my holes, making a low whistle only I could hear. Inside, my heart was cold all the time. Ninety degrees in the shade, and I shivered while I sweated. I started wearing a sweater everywhere; people just stared. I could feel their eyes poking at me, drilling through me like I was a wad of cotton.

Work was hell. I couldn't talk to them anymore. I didn't get the jokes they told around the water-cooler and in the lunchroom like I used to. When I tried to tell them about something I found funny, all I got was blank stares and polite, noncommittal smiles under eyes full of puzzlement and fear. I

took all my saved-up vacation; they were glad to see me go.

I spent my time haunting the record store where Lucy and I had met and laughed. She never came back.

Who did show up was a skinny old man, stinking of cheap cigars, who seemed to glow from within. "You look like you're in bad shape, kid." He scratched the graying toilet-ring fringe of hair around his scalp.

I shrugged. "Yup." My voice had been a monotone for months.

He touched my cheek before I could turn away, and he felt *warm*. My cheek felt warm, for the first time in weeks. My eyes widened.

"I can help you find what was lost," he said. "My name's Oskar. Pleezedtameetcha."

I cried as he shook my hand.

Figure out how to (re)gain a soul: either get your original back, or grow a new one. Finding the thief will be difficult and dangerous, and growing a new one is work, and just as hazardous – others will show up and attempt to steal what you've managed to gather together.

Here are some of the methods used to collect soul-energy:

Eat a Ghost

Ghosts (see *Chapter 2*) are dead souls lacking bodies, holding themselves together through force of will. Dead Inside are live bodies lacking a soul. By capturing and eating a Ghost, a Dead Inside can absorb some of that spirit into themselves – hey presto, instant soul. However, chowing down on Ghosts is a *soul-rotting* action – the eater is destroying another's soul-energy for selfish purposes, and that carries a price. Thus, it's inefficient, as a chunk of the Ghost's soul-stuff decays during the process. It also might transfer unwanted memories, personality tics, urges, phobias, and fanaticisms of the spectral victim to the consumer.

THE *DI* COSMOLOGY

Where Do Souls Come From?

At any one time, there is a finite amount of soul-stuff (or soul-blood, soul-power, spirit-force, essence, or a host of other names) in the cosmos. When people die, their essence flows back to the Source (from the Real World via the Spirit World; see *Chapter 2*) to melt and mix with all the other souls of the dead. When someone is born, a fraction of that spiritual mixture is poured into them. This "undifferentiated reincarnation" may explain why so many people have past-life readers telling them they used to be Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon: *many* people share bits of soul-energy that once made up those famous people.

Unfortunately, as the global population grows, there's less and less spirit-force per capita waiting to be doled out at each instant, so more people are being born empty. Even in the past, when there was plenty of soul to go around, accidents happened: people have always fallen through the spokes of the Wheel of Life and Death. But not in the numbers that they do today.

However, the overall amount of soul-stuff in the cosmos can be increased though the actions of the living. Searching out meaning, creating beauty, offering kindness, strengthening other souls you meet in your day – all have a positive effect. Some say that cultivation of this energy is the *purpose* of the universe.

Unfortunately, essence can be destroyed: either by the cruel and injurious actions of the living within the cosmos or by evanescing into the Void (which lies beyond the Real World).

Can I Visit The Source?

From the Spirit World, the Source lies to the uttermost West across the Sea. The souls of the dead are wafted that way by unseen winds. None who have attempted to visit the Source bodily have ever returned. Perhaps they succeeded, perhaps they failed, perhaps they're still traveling. In any case, it's one hell of an adventure.

Of course, you could just wait until you die. And it's not like you haven't been there before.

Where is the Spirit World?

Between the Real World and the Source. Whether this means they are arrayed in different dimensions or layered atop one another at different vibratory rates or other such hoo-haw is irrelevant. What is important is that the Spirit World is both the insulator and conductor between the pure energy of the Source and the gross matter of the Real World.

Where is the Void?

On the other side of the Real World from the Spirit World. It's thought that the Real World is the outer shell of the cosmos, protecting the Source from the emptiness of the Void.

Can I Visit The Void?

That's definitely a one-way ticket, baby. The Void is what eats the universe.

How's That Go Again?

Void ↔ Real World ↔ Spirit World ↔ Source

What Does a Soul Look Like?

Soul-stuff is invisible and intangible in the Real World, though those gifted with Second Sight may see it as a faintly glowing transparent fluid and are able to manipulate it with effort. In the Spirit World, it is fully visible, slightly viscous, and infinitely compressible. Some types of entity are composed entirely of soul-blood (like Ghosts, Free Spirits, and Tulpas; see *Chapter 2*), and nearly all Spirit World transients and inhabitants can touch, manipulate, consume, utilize, or even bleed soul-stuff themselves. Many seek out the soul-energy of others to fill their emptiness.

Is the Source God? If Not, Where's the Divinity? How Did This All Start?

That answer is unknown at this time – and not for lack of people trying to discover it... for millennia. Sounds like a worthy pursuit, doesn't it?

In any case, many inhabitants of the Spirit World believe that the Source is indeed God, and also believe that the Voice (see *Chapter 2*, *Special Imagos*) is the Voice of the Divine. Some folks believe that God stands outside of the cosmos, watching – checking his lists of naughty and nice, or with the hands-off pride of an artist, or with the hands-on tinkering of a clockmaker. Some people think the Source → Birth → Life → Death → Source cycle is merely a natural process. Nobody has any convincing, objective proof for or against faith in the Divine.

Yet. . . Something or Someone started the Wheel of Life and Death turning. Make up your own mind.

Steal Someone Else's Soul

While a dangerous and soul-rotting method, *soul-theft* is a quick fix for the Dead Inside. Faster than *soul-cultivation* and more straightforward than *interacting with the Imagos* (see below), stealing another's spirit is slightly safer than eating a Ghost (the stolen essence of living beings carries fewer of the mental side effects, unless the victim is of particularly strong character or will). However, living beings strongly resist having their souls being burgled and will fight back. Also, as with eating a Ghost, some of the stolen energy is lost because of soul-rot.

> NOTE - Stealing back your own soul from a soul-thief is not immoral or soul-decaying: while theft, it is *you* that is being liberated.

Buy Your Soul Back

If you can find the guy you sold it to in the first place, you can try to buy it back. Repurchasing your soul is perfectly justified and won't collect any bad karma. However, finding the possessor of your innermost essence will probably be difficult, possibly even dangerous. Furthermore, the price of the goods may have gone up (the buyer may want something even rarer or more splendid to make the trade), the buyer could've sold it to someone else already, or the new owner simply refuses to part with it. Then you're back to square one.

Grow a New Soul

Soul-cultivation is the slow, steady, and safe path to renewal. The soul you nurture through thoughts, words, and deeds will not only unequivocally be your own, but will increase the overall amount of soul-stuff in the cosmos, eventually benefiting all creation. Some philosophers believe that growing more soul is the purpose of the universe. However, cultivating new soul means hard work, hard choices, and strong faith, which is hard enough for ensouled Average People, much less soulless Dead Inside. However, in the Spirit World, soul-cultivation seems to be much easier.

Interact With the Imagos

Some Average People interact in their dreams with what Carl Jung called *archetypes*. This interaction can help them integrate events in their external, physical lives with events in their internal, psychological lives.

The Dead Inside can benefit from *direct* contact with these archetypes (or *Imagos*) in the Spirit World. By resolving issues, untangling puzzles, interpreting their appearance (or absence), or pursuing quests that the Imagos set before them, the Dead Inside can strengthen their soul. However, the Imagos ask a high price: the tasks they require are usually confusing, dangerous, or unpleasant (sometimes all three at once). In short, interacting with the Imagos is forcing growth in a crisis.

Find & Break Your Soul Egg

If a soul is trapped in a physical object (also called a *Soul Egg*), it can be released by breaking or destroying that object. It can be risky, depending on who or what took the Soul Egg, where the Soul Egg is hidden, and what guards it. Also, the return on your efforts might be small, since some (or all) of the soul contained within the Egg may have been used by whoever last held it. However, no matter how much of the essence is left intact, it will be ready, waiting, and eager to be poured back into the owner's body.

Work With Other Dead Inside

"Many hands make light work." That's no less true for the Dead Inside. Helping one's companion(s) is exceptionally rewarding: not only have you helped another (re)gain something of vital importance, but the act of helping is in itself a form of soul-cultivation. Furthermore, a grateful friend can help *you* in your efforts to (re)gain a soul. But joining forces with another Dead Inside means that you set yourself against his enemies and share the dangers of his search, in addition to the attentions of *your* foes and the hazards of *your* quest.

WHAT DO THE DEAD INSIDE DO?

The Dead Inside *strive*.

They reach for meaning. They struggle for growth. They seek a return of what has been lost. They cannot turn away from their quest for a soul, because that would give them time to dwell on the holes within. They must keep moving, trying to fill themselves.

Because they *know* that if they die, the hollowness won't end – it will only become deeper, longer, and colder. Without a soul, they cannot return to the Source. Death will merely change them from a living body without a soul to a *dead* body without a soul: a Zombi (see *Chapter 2*).

The Real World and the Spirit World

Two Worlds, No Waiting

"There is one spectacle grander than the sea, that is the sky; there is one spectacle grander than the sky, that is the interior of the soul."
– Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*

The setting of *DI* is split into the Real World and the Spirit World. While the adventures of the strange beings (see below) of *DI* begin in the Real World, the Spirit World is where the *real* action is. Scenarios can be set in either, as well as weirder places – like within the dreams of a little girl, on the surface of a gigantic dead god's skull, or even inside a Soul Egg (see below).

In the Real World

"This world is hard and cold," said Oskar. "Most folks don't even recognize it, wrapped up in their shells. Your shell is cracked now, and you can feel the draft."

I nodded.

He looked at me, and the glowing on him intensified in his ice-blue eyes.

"Your name's Michael, right? And hers was L... Lucy."

The look on my face must have combined the dual shocks I felt: that he knew who I was, and that I had the strangest feeling that I knew how he knew — how he did it, I mean. How he Saw.

It was like he was full of electricity, and made it move up into his head. I had an adolescent memory wash over me of watching my dad shave. The sudden connection, the eureka, the "so that's how you do it." But I couldn't. I didn't have the juice.

"No you don't, Mike. Not yet," Oskar confirmed my thoughts. "But, if you struggle for it, do your best, go all-out, while chasing that piece of you that's missing, you'll get some juice." He pulled a fresh, if battered, cigar out of his jacket pocket, bit off the end, and jammed it in his mouth. "I

know. I was where you are, once. Down in the hole." He fiddled with a safety match. "I can help you out of that hole."

Before I could say anything, a dead man walked through the wall of the record store. We both turned to watch the ghost float through the shop. None of the customers saw the transparent figure. I realized that they were blinded by their own sufficiency and I had sight only because of my lack. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man gets a straightjacket instead of a crown. My voice stuck in my throat, wriggling like a carnival goldfish in a plastic baggie.

"Hey, Oskar." The dead man waved as he floated towards the wall opposite.

"Hey, Raymond. Staying out of trouble?"

"You know it." The ghost laughed, then slid through a wall-display into the Fashion Bug next door.

"Let's go outside. Then I can light this up. And we can talk about what we can do for each other."

I shrugged and followed Oskar out to the sidewalk, where he lit his cigar. By the time we had turned the corner into the alleyway, he was merrily puffing away.

"Listen, Mike, I can take you somewhere where things'll be easier for you to get a handle on your situation. In return, I need you to help me out a little. Not that you don't seem like a good kid, but do-gooding don't pay the landlord. I need an extra pair of hands. You game?"

Why not? My voice squirmed free. "Sure." Why not? Forced to choose between schizophrenic hallucinations and the spectral dead, I chose to believe in souls being sold for sex, serendipitous psychics, and friendly ghosts. "What now?"

"Let's go Outside," he said, holding up his hands. The glow on them intensified, and between them I saw a rainbow circle, like when I used to play with the garden hose instead of washing Mom's car. Oskar stretched his hands apart, and the ring widened. "Step through the Gate, Mike. I'll be right behind."

Chapter 2: The Real World and the Spirit World

I hesitated then, until I felt the breeze blowing from the ring, fresh and clean and warm. Comforting warmth. Not like the cold, cold world I had awoken into since that night.

I stepped through the Gate.

The *Real World* is what you see outside your window, mostly. There are some strange things scuttling in the dark corners and under the bed, and most Average People never brush up against them (they are sealed against the strangeness because they possess "just enough" soul-energy), unlike Dead Inside (who don't have enough soul-energy), Sensitives (who have more than usual), and Magi (who have a *lot* more). The Real World is sturdy and solid, but spiritual (or magical, if you prefer) Powers are weak there.

Imagine the level of environmental soul-power as ambient temperature. The Real World is near freezing. Average People are wearing parkas; the Dead Inside are almost naked, shivering in their BVDs. To those with spiritual senses, the material world is bone-chillingly cold – yet another reason why Dead Inside, Ghosts, and Zombis cross-over as soon as they find a way.

Strange Beings in the Real World

Those with the gift of seeing – *Second Sight* – will notice different types of beings lurking in the Real World. Here's some basic information on each type:

Average Person

Average People: Average people – also called the *ensouled* – are living bodies with souls. To Second Sight, they appear "solid" and "smooth." They are everywhere. Unless something interferes, when the ensouled die, their soul returns to the Source via the Spirit World (which they cannot otherwise enter). They are protected in large part from most spiritual Powers and dangers because they are stuffed full of their own soul; the outer layer of their soul-blood hardens into a thick shell, leaving no crannies for enemies to attack or openings to express Abilities or Powers (see below and *Chapter 4*). They are blind, deaf, dumb, and numb to the wonders that walk among them daily. Still, a dedicated assailant can crack their shell, and make an Average Person into a Dead Inside.

Dead Inside

Dead Inside: Dead Inside – sometimes called the *soulless* – are living human bodies lacking a complete soul. Many have no idea why they feel so lost, alone, wasted. Those which do realize their deficiency either throw themselves into searching for ways to (re)gain a soul or squander what little essence they have left following momentary pleasures to ease the pain of their existence. To the Second Sighted, they appear "empty" and "jagged." Found everywhere in both Worlds, they have limited mystical Abilities and Powers, powered by any soul-energy they manage to scrape together (see *Chapter 4*). Often, this combination of weak Powers and limited soul-blood means that they cannot use these abilities in the Real World at all. The Spirit World is more welcoming to spiritual gifts, and more conducive to the soulless for collecting soul-energy. Thus, once most become aware of the Spirit World, they try to get there. If a Dead Inside regains his soul, he becomes a Sensitive; if he loses the last dregs of his essence, he becomes a Qlippoth (see below, *Spirit World Inhabitants*). When a Dead Inside dies without regaining a soul, he becomes a Zombi.

Ghost

Ghosts: A Ghost is a dead soul, lacking a body. All Ghosts feel an internal call, urging them to rejoin the Source, but they are too attached to individual existence, to memory, to unfinished business. They squat and dig in, standing fast against the pull through force of will, until they either resolve their issues or lose their grip on unlife. They are the favored prey of Zombis, and avoid them if possible. To Second Sight, Ghosts are "transparent" (and they cannot usually be seen by Average People at all). Ghosts are insubstantial in the Real World, but possess several Abilities and Powers. In the Spirit World, they gain a modicum of substance, similar to gelatin. If a Ghost is "killed," its hold on the world slips, and it immediately goes to the Source. If eaten, the Ghost's energies are

incorporated into the consumer. (Sensitives who die become Ghosts.)

Magi: Magi are living bodies with a double-soul, which means they have substantially more spirit-energy than Average People or even Sensitives. They utilize soul-blood (their own and sometimes the essence of others) to do magic. A Mage can also be known as shaman, warlock, druid, sorcerer, medicine man, witch, necromancer, wizard, enchantress, smith, bard, priestess, marabout. The Second Sighted see Magi as "dense" and "burnished-bright," and will also notice that many Magi do not cast a shadow. They have a wide range of powerful abilities, can be incredibly durable, and are known to pursue True Immortality. Most Magi reside entirely in the Spirit World, since their magic is more powerful there, though some visit the Real World regularly. If a Mage is killed, he splits into two beings – a Ghost and a Zombi. Rumor claims that reuniting these two entities allows the Mage to come back to life; however, out of the other side of its mouth, Rumor mentions catastrophic explosions of soul-power if the "siblings" come into contact.

Sensitives: Sensitive are living humans with more than the usual share of soul. This gives them special insight into the nature of the Spirit World. Some Sensitives are born, others are made: if a Dead Inside regains his soul, he will be a Sensitive henceforth. Only Sensitives can learn the secrets necessary to become a Mage. To those with Second Sight, they appear "thick" and "dimly glimmering." In the Real World, they are seers, mediums, channellers, fortunetellers, and psychic healers. In the Spirit World, they are the average commuting citizen, with business and personal connections with other entities. Sensitives have a number of Abilities and Powers they can draw upon. Since these Powers are hampered by resistance in the Real World, many save their soul-energy to use solely in the Spirit World. When a Sensitive dies, he becomes a Ghost.

Zombis: Zombis are dead bodies lacking souls. Most Zombis get out of the Real World as fast as possible. They do not decompose as quickly in the Spirit World. If they cross-over, they have virtual centuries of unlife to spend shambling around, pursuing their private interests without undue interference from the ensouled. Zombis appear "washed with gray" to Second Sight and speak in a monotone. Not mindless hulks, Zombis are exceptionally strong and smart – they have no emotions, no prejudices, no soul to get in the way. They retain the barest sliver of spirit-force that keeps them animate and well-preserved. They eat Ghosts, Free Spirits, and Tulpas to fuel their their Abilities and Powers. A Zombi drained of his last animating spark while in the Spirit World becomes a Qlippoth; if this is done in the Real World, he simply falls over, lifeless. If physically destroyed in the Spirit World, his spark flies back to the Source, and his body dries and decomposes at great speed. (Dead Inside become Zombis when they die.)

Mystical Powers in the Real World

Mystical abilities operate against a lot of resistance in the Real World. Whether this resistance is caused by the disbelief of Average People, gross matter acting as a "spiritual insulator," lack of ambient soul-energy, or something inherent in the fabric of the Cosmos is unknown. Increased resistance means that a greater amount of soul-blood must be "burned" to cause the magic to happen; furthermore, mystical talents are harder to use in the Real World. For most Dead Inside and Sensitives – and even many Magi – the higher cost and reduced chances of success means that they reserve their wonder-working to the Spirit World. The only abilities that do not seem to suffer in the Real World are those of Second Sight and Open Gates (but only to the Spirit World; see below). Also, while a few rare enchanted items (especially those with "invisible effects") function exactly as intended in the Real World, most do not.

WHAT ABOUT "REAL" MAGIC OR PSYCHIC POWERS?

Like astral projection, crystal reading, astrology, ESP, chaos magick, Reiki, Tarot, etc.?

They don't work. Period.

However, characters in a *DI* campaign can know all about them and "use" them, so long as they operate as they do in the Real World as we understand it: vaguely and with limited impact.

The real deal is the Abilities and Powers noted in *Chapter 4*. Characters who are not Average People may, in fact, be using these Abilities and Powers effectively in the Real World, but are misattributing the source of those effects: it don't come from no crystal, it comes from *them*.

REAL WORLD MACHINATIONS

Most Types of character in *DI* have access to great power, security, safety, and the basic necessities in the Spirit World. Plus, Powers are harder to use in the Real World. For these reasons, many characters tend to stick to the Spirit World, leading to a negligible "magical" subculture in the Real World (but see *Chapter 5* and the upcoming supplement *Cold, Hard World*).

Notable Locations in the Real World for the Dead Inside

While on the whole, the Real World is pretty firm, there are a number of sites where the boundary between it and the Spirit World softens. In these places, it is easier to access spiritual forces and perform magic. Some of these places include:

Gates: Gates appear as free-floating circles of rainbow light. One may pass bodily through them, passing from Real World to Spirit World and back. Natural Gates open in a regular cycle of times and places; artificial Gates can be opened anywhere, at any time.

In-Between Places and Times: The bank of a river, the shoulder of a road, or the shore of a lake. Dusk and dawn. Midnight. Noon.

Rites of Passage: Baptisms, birthdays, puberty rites (Confirmations, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs), weddings, ordinations, funerals.

Haunted Houses: Some creepy old houses become suffused with spirit energy from heavy Ghost traffic or other mystical events. Sometimes, even Average People can see Ghosts in these places.

Sacred Geometry, Indian Burial Grounds, and Feng Shui: If you build it, power will come. Cathedrals, temples, the sanctuaries of the Sensitive may have been consciously built to collect soul energies, or were unconsciously erected over areas already soaking in them.

Places of Loss and Suffering: Funeral homes, some parts of hospitals, accident sites – escaping souls and/or the presence of numerous Ghosts and Zombies weaken the walls between worlds.

Places of Joy and Delight: Nurseries, schools, museums, some parts of hospitals, musical halls, theaters – any place full of laughter, love, and life – can punch right through the terminator. However, such penetration tends to be short-lived and localized, in contrast to the more languid and sprawling effect of the Places of Loss and Suffering.

IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

Through the rainbow Gate stood a forest. A Robin Hood forest, big trees and adventure. Afternoon sun slanted through the trunks and lit everything up nice. The leaves carpeting the forest floor did not match the trees above.

I didn't care. I felt better than I had in months just being there.

"We are in the Spirit World now," said Oskar. "We are in the Wood."

"Why?" I asked. Branches creaked in the breeze. A squirrel chattered nearby. The tightness in my shoulders eased.

"I need to gather blood-berries for a Mage in the City. You're gonna help me pick 'em and carry 'em back." He pulled a handful of plastic grocery bags out of his pants pocket and handed me a few. "Then we're going to try and find out something about your soul-thief, Little Miss Lucy."

We walked a long time. The air smelled like oak, pine, cedar. Birds sang. Oskar talked.

He told me about growing up in Mobile, Alabama, rich and mean. He told me about the

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cars, the women, the booze, the drugs. He told me how he ground into powder his inheritance, his family name, and his very soul. He told me about the woman who saved him: a woman named Violet. She taught him how to grow a new soul to replace the one he'd squandered.

"She was a Sensitive then -- like I am now -- but I was Dead Inside at the time. Now she's a Mage, I'm a Sensitive, and you're the Dead Inside, Mike."

"Was it hard? Growing your soul?" I asked.

"Yes," he said simply.

Oskar pointed at some bushes, gleaming with sapphire fruit the size of a kiwi. "Blood-berries. Their skins are blue, but their flesh is crimson. They also taste like hell." We started picking.

"God only knows what she needs 'em for. But she needs 'em for something. It's none of my concern." He stopped picking, his fingers stained red. "This isn't a patch on what she did for me, Mike. Nothing I can do, for the rest of my life, adds up to how she helped me. All I can do is pay it forward by helping you. And, if you make it, if you get your soul back or build a new one out of your pieces, you can do the same."

"All right," I said, and kept picking. The bags were almost full when a question occurred to me. "Oskar, why doesn't Violet come here and pick these berries herself?"

He started tying off his last bag of fruit. "Things prowl around these bushes. Dangerous things, at least to people with a lot of power. I don't have much to speak of" — I thought of the rainbow ring — "and you're pretty well empty. So it should be safe for. . ."

His voice trailed off, his eyes widened, and his hands dropped the bag. His mouth worked twice before he said, "Run!"

"What is it?" I asked, turning to look behind.

A giant eyeball with a radioactive green iris hovered over a nearby bush. It was staring at us. Malevolently.

"It's one of the Eyes of the Dead God. The other one can't be far away." Oskar pulled at my shoulder and set me on a path. "Run! Make for Wyld Park! Follow the dead branches of the pines. Go!" He pushed me. I ran.

I looked back to watch him snatch up the fallen bag and wave it crazily in front of the Dead God's Eye. He was teasing it. Luring it down the other path. Away from me.

I ran, looking for dead branches.

The *Spirit World* is Elsewhere. Some people call it the Astral Plane, others the Dreamlands, still others the Collective Unconscious. It is jam-packed with wonders and horrors, dreams and nightmares, monsters and magic. It is mutable and mercurial. Soul is strong here.

To the Dead Inside, the Spirit World is quite attractive. It feels warmer. Social interaction doesn't seem so difficult. They feel a stirring deep inside, as if their hearts were beginning to beat again. It feels good to breathe; the air fairly crackles with potential. Each and every choice feels more consequential, more meaningful, more dynamic. There are wonders and mysteries around every corner. In the Spirit World, they can save themselves. And the cherry on top is that they get magic Powers (see *Chapter 4*).

What's not to love?

Does one day in the Spirit World equal one day in the Real World?

Sometimes.

Sometimes not.

Do Animals and Plants Have Souls?

Maybe.

Maybe not.

Mystical Powers in the Spirit World

Most Types of being in *DI* possess Abilities and Powers.

Abilities are things that they can just do by virtue of being opened to the flow of soul-energy. Examples include seeing soul-energy, prophetic visions, navigating the ever-changing landscape, and absorbing soul-blood from other entities (see *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4* for further details).

Powers are more potent capabilities, which require the expenditure (called "burning") of soul-energy to

work. Some examples are healing wounds, increasing luck, and guarding against another being's Powers. There are many others, but these are the most ubiquitous among the Dead Inside (see *Chapter 4* for more details).

Spiritual Geography

In the center of the Spirit World sits the City, bounded on all sides by strange landscapes. To the east lies the Wood, full of huge trees older than Time and the rich aromas of the forest. To the south, the arid Waste opens up to the horizon, dappled with sands of a thousand colors. To the west lies the Sea, with sweet gray-green waters and foam-capped waves. To the north, the Mists cloak all in cottony fogs; distant mountain peaks bob up and down through (on?) the cloudy canopy.

Strange flora, fauna, and folk walk these lands. Some are species from the Real World who have accidentally or on purpose crossed through a Gate. Some are Free Spirits, tired of their existence of play (see below), who have settled down for a long "vacation" as an animal or plant. Others are the victims of the powerful, trapped in a form not their own.

Be warned, however: the wise traveler in the Spirit World sticks close to the City, unless it is necessary to seek out the hidden secrets and eerie wonders of the untamed regions. These treasures are protected by fell guardians.

Spiritual Climate

"The whole world is a circus if you know how to look at it."

– Dr. Lao, *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao*

The countryside is not solely physical – it is metaphysical, too. The Spirit World is the Astral Realm, the Golden Land, the Collective Unconscious, the Kingdom of Sleep. Depending upon the mental and emotional state of the viewer, a rock is not simply a piece of stone, it is also a psychic weight, a symbol of something, an obstacle, or a tool. While the *nature* of Spirit World terrain doesn't change, the *aspect* and *interpretation* of it does.

All is suffused with a dreamlike patina; landmarks and vistas shift and change as one watches. For example, while the Wood always remains the Wood, it can range from a parkland full of shady lanes and sighing trees to a monsoon-wracked jungle of tangled undergrowth. Likewise, the Sea can shift from calm sun-speckled rolls to brutal, icy breakers. The undulating sands of the Waste lazily drift into dunes one second, and flense skin away from bone in the next. The Mists roil, becoming acidic black smoke that swallows the unwary forever, then changes into perfumed haze, swathing the landscape in gauzy drowsiness.

Spirit World Inhabitants

The Spirit World flickers as entities circulate within it. Dead Inside, Sensitives, Magi, and stranger beings wander, freed of the fetters of the Real World.

In addition to the transient inhabitants mentioned above, there are a few beings that rarely enter the Real World, preferring to stay in the Spirit World. These include:

Free Spirit

Free Spirits: Tulpas (see below) who have won freedom from their creators become Free Spirits. They are a twist of soul-power with will and personality; as such, are prey for any who hunger for essence. They strive to improve themselves, to become whole, so that they will feel the call of the Source as Ghosts do, and be drawn across the Sea to whatever new life awaits. They can appear in almost any shape and size throughout the Spirit World; Second Sight may reveal their hidden talents and abilities. They have many of the same abilities that Ghosts do, but are neither alive or dead. If a "killed," a Free Spirit evaporates; if eaten, the Free Spirit's energies are incorporated into the consumer.

Imago

Imagos: Imagos are mysterious entities, in many ways unlike other Spirit World inhabitants. Their nature is not clearly understood (see below).

Qlippoth: Human-shaped nothings, black holes of soulnessness, Qlippoth hate everything. They wish the destruction of the Source itself, in order to end their suffering. They are husks of what they once were, and hunger for the bright light of others to fill their darkness. They glide through the shadows of the Spirit World like demonic sharks, keening as they stalk prey – and to the Qlippoth, all other beings are prey. They consume entire souls, seeking the peace brought as the consumed essence momentarily chokes their funnel-like being, easing the agonizing pull of the Void. But it never lasts – and they must feed again. All others revile them as abominations. Some Qlippoth may temporarily disguise themselves as Dead Inside while hunting; Second Sight will reveal their true horrific nature. Their other Powers are shrouded in mystery. If a Qlippoth is destroyed, the hole in the cosmos it represents fills in and smooths out.

Tulpas: A shard of soul, given mild intelligence and limited independence, Tulpas are the servants and messengers of the Spirit World. Wearing whatever fantastic shape their maker sculpted them in, Tulpas flit about, doing their master's bidding. Tulpas appear exactly the same to Second Sight as they do to normal sight, but share many of the same abilities as Ghosts. Those which somehow gain their liberty become Free Spirits. Like a Ghost, they can be eaten to absorb their soul-energy. If destroyed in any other way, they evaporate.

THE IMAGOS

When running from the giant Eye of a Dead God, it's difficult to tell the type of tree a dead branch hangs from.

I got lost. Real lost. Real damn lost. The trees seemed closer together; the path, more twisting and root-hurdled. The sun was setting in front of me, red-gold and huge. I thought of the Eye, and shuddered.

I stopped and kneeled at a brook in my path. Its cool, glassy waters refreshed me. Maybe I should wait here, in case Oskar got away from the Eye.

The voice that then spoke came from the brook. "Michael, you can't stay here."

I looked around, and saw nothing. I looked into the waters, and nothing was there. Nothing but my own reflection looking up at me.

"Michael, the Eye will be back here after dark. We have to go."

"Who are you?"

My reflection's lips moved, mouthing the words I heard in my head: "I'm your Shadow. Look behind you."

I turned, and saw the setting sun had painted my outline against a tree trunk. My Shadow lifted its hand and waved, while my hands still cupped water. All right. I turned back to the brook and my Shadow's face. Good-looking guy.

"Listen," he said. "Go upstream until you find the pine on the west bank. It's not far. Go in the direction the dead branch points. You'll be in Wyld Park before you know it. But get out of there before it gets dark."

"How do you know all this? Didn't we just get here?"

My Shadow's face smiled. "You just got here, Michael. I've always been here."

I stood up, hoisted my bag of blood-berries, and walked upstream.

Are they forgotten gods, dreams that have broken away from their dreamers, sapient and mobile outcroppings of the Spirit World itself, conglomerations of hazy memories, angels or demons, personified archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, or the projections of a godhead from beyond the Horizon? Or are they common patterns that all entities formulate? A cloak that anyone can don at need?

Whatever they are – divinities, supercharged Ghosts, animate elements of the Spirit World, fusions of human memories, or the effect of pattern-matching and cognition on unconscious instincts – the Imagos act as guardians, guides, and obstacles for the denizens of the City. They can offer knowledge or block understanding, point the way or cloak necessary secrets. The real difficulty is discerning whether someone is an Imago or not…

They are usually called by need; sometimes by invocation. But they appear only when they must. (Which, in the Spirit World, is pretty often.)

The eyes of an Imago twinkle and glitter with their own light; the Second Sighted can identify their precise nature with some effort. If "killed," they vanish, only to return at a later time. Something so fundamental cannot be destroyed.

Personal Imagos

Personal Imagos are part of (or a projection of) the vital nature of a being. Everyone has their own set of personal Imagos.

Anima/Animus/Syzygy: The *Anima* is the female aspect of the male's unconscious, while the *Animus* is the male part of the female's. Together, they are called *Syzygy*. The anima or animus is one of the primary guides (along with the Wise Old) for understanding the cosmos and the nature of desire. They're also responsible for a being's relationships, especially romantic ones. Coming to terms with the Syzygy is a key part in transforming from a Sensitive into a Mage.

Shadow: The animal part of a being's unconscious. Sometimes bestial or primitive, at other times graceful and refined, the Shadow is usually concerned with simple instincts and drives: *hunger*, *sexuality*, *activity (play)*, *reflection (curiosity)*, and *creativity (making)*. Note that these drives are at the level of physical urges (e.g., the Shadow represents being horny, where the Anima represents a longing for friendship, love, and romance).

This Imago often serves as a collection point for all of the feelings and impulses termed the "dark side" or "evil" – when someone's soul-energy is lost to soul-rot, his Shadow gains it and becomes stronger. But the Shadow is in truth neither good nor bad, just amoral. It is primarily concerned with survival and appetite, with few cares outside of those two drives. It can lend a being power in pursuit of these two goals, and aid him with advice for survival, sating of appetites, and gaining more power, to its utmost. After all, the more powerful the being, the more powerful their Shadow has the potential to be. For these reasons, the Shadow is often perceived as negative, since it represents aspects of a person that he's not comfortable admitting to. Conquering the Shadow is the goal of the Mage, and leads to True Immortality.

Collective Imagos

The following Imagos are images and archetypes held collectively, shared by many. Unlike personal Imagos, which can be different for everyone, a single set of collective Imagos may be shared among friends and associates.

Child: Children usually represent the irrevocable past, the approaching future, rebirth, and salvation; particularly negative depictions may illustrate alienation, self-pity, or feelings of abandonment. May be united with the image of the *Maiden*, a symbol of purity, innocence, and naiveté. They appear as signs or warnings, hints to deeper usually unknown truths.

Father, Mother, and **Family**: The *Father* generally represents authority and willingness to become part of a structure for men; for women, the Father is a spur to lively intellectual and spiritual pursuits. The Father offers decisive convictions, prohibitions, and wise counsel; it is also connected to the *Animus*. The *Mother* corresponds to feelings of nurturing, as either the search for such support, or the feelings of intimacy in such a relationship. The Mother also has a strong connotation of sexuality, which can be exacerbated to extremes in either direction – lecherousness or frigidity. It is also connected to the *Anima*. The *Family* in toto (sometimes incorporating the Child) illustrates hidden ties and relationships that are deeper and more important on a spiritual level than what may be realized consciously. They appear in times of need related to structure.

Trickster: The Trickster symbolizes those tendencies that the individual finds ambivalent or mercurial, rather than amoral or reprehensible (like the Shadow). Often clownish, the Trickster causes trouble – and when that trouble is dealt with, it might lead to enlightenment through a series of "happy accidents" or "meaningful coincidences" (synchronicity). He is both sub- and super-human, monster and god, fool and wise one, male and female; thus, the Trickster may be related to the Syzygy. The Trickster appears when extreme risks must be weighed.

Wise Old (Graybeard/Crone): Generally an aspect of the individual's *Anima* or *Animus*, the Wise Old represents wisdom, meaning, and revelation of the unconscious to the subject. The Wise One unearths lessons for study and poses questions to be answered. Usually, a man learns such lore from a *Crone*, while a woman learns from a *Graybeard*, but this is not a hard and fast rule – the situation depends strongly on the individual's relationship and understanding of their own Anima/Animus/Syzygy.

Special Imagos

Special Imagos are those that seem to impinge from either outside a person's experience, or from deep within it. They are *odd*, seemingly both incredibly personal yet somehow separate. They are thus worthy of individual discussion.

The Voice

First and foremost: what the Voice says cannot be disputed. Whatever it says is true; the Voice cannot lie. Its commands revolve around what one needs to do, as opposed to what one wants or thinks they should do. The listener can choose not to listen or ignore the dictates of the Voice, but this course of action rarely ends well. The Voice speaks only when it's most needed, not when it's most convenient. It could come from a phone, a television monitor, a public address speaker, the sighing of the wind through the trees; it may slide through a confessional screen, hiss up through a steam vent, or boom down from a thunderstorm. The Voice is always audible, its speaker always hidden, and is always strangely familiar. When asked to identify itself, it is always evasive. Is it the voice of conscience? The unconscious? God? Its nature is unknown, but its advice is always sound.

The Nemesis

An unfortunate number of City dwellers have a Nemesis – an individual who opposes them at every turn. The Nemesis is the player on the other side of the chessboard of a being's life. Its fondest wish is to see its enemy humbled, hurt, thwarted, destroyed. It circles, waiting for weaknesses to exploit.

For the Dead Inside, their Nemesis is often the person who has stolen their soul or who opposes

their attempts to cultivate a new one. Sensitives square off against one another and the occasional Mage. Ghosts' Nemeses are usually Zombis, and vice-versa. Magi generally have Sensitives, other Magi, *and* their Shadows as foes.

Finally, one's Nemesis can change – after a Nemesis is defeated, a new one may rise. If a character manages to wrest their stolen soul away from the thief who took it, perhaps another covetous being has now set her eyes on the prize.

> NOTE - *The Nemesis vs. the Shadow*. One's Shadow – indeed, or any other Imago – is not usually one's Nemesis, unless one is a Mage. Having your Shadow as your Nemesis is exceptionally dangerous: it means your base nature is your own enemy, and wishes to destroy you utterly. Thus, Magi use their vast Powers not just to search for True Immortality, but also for simple survival.

WHAT DO THE INHABITANTS OF THE SPIRIT WORLD DO?

Here follow quick thumbnails on what the various beings of the cosmos typically do in their day-to-day lives:

Dead Inside: Strive (see also *Chapter 1*). The Dead Inside work hard and take risks, scrambling to regain what they've lost (or develop what they've never had).

Free Spirits: Play. Created into slavery and knowing only toil until their liberation, Free Spirits are dedicated to recreation, entertainment, and having fun. Only by pursuing their bliss will they discover who they truly are.

Ghosts: Remember. Ghosts are dead and bodiless, and tend to reflect upon their works and days, worrying them like a dog with an old sock. If they untangle the snags and snarls that hold them fast, they can then relax and slip back to the Source.

Imagos: Help. An Imago offers other beings what they *need*. Sometimes people need a hug, sometimes they need a quick kick in the pants, and sometimes they need to be pushed beyond their limits in order to grow.

Magi: Plot. Magi plot and plan against each other – their allies as well as their enemies. Each works to set the odds in their favor for their day of reckoning, when they will meet their Shadow to war for True Immortality.

Qlippoth: Hunt. These beings of nothingness are merciless and cunning predators . They perform the dance of hunter and quarry with consummate skill, seeking satiation or destruction – either is preferable to their nightmare existence.

Sensitives: Seek. Sensitives search – for power, for companionship, for healing, for knowledge, for love. Eternal students, they follow wisdom's traces wherever they lead.

Tulpas: Serve. Almost a limb of their creators, Tulpas obey and assist their masters in all of their efforts, for good or for ill. They know nothing else.

Zombis: Pretend. Zombis clutch to existence by repeating what they can of their breathing lives. They are going through the motions, trying to find or create some meaning in their unlife, but are limited in this quest by their lack of emotions. While Dead Inside can hope to regain empathy with others since they yet live, this possibility is closed off from Zombis, who are dead. Yet they continue to pretend as if it's not a lost cause – what else can they do?

THE CITY

My Shadow spoke the truth. I found the pine and turned, letting the dead branches point my path. Within a few hundred yards, the quality of the forest had changed. The air smelled slightly different. I heard people in the distance.

I stepped out of the underbrush into a clearing — and found myself within a park, obviously deep within a city of some sort. The sun seemed to be higher than it had in the Wood. People were tossing Frisbees, packing up picnic baskets, and walking arm-in-arm.

I saw skyscrapers looming, peering down into the green meadow in which I stood. The buildings slowly slid around the perimeter: some shed finials and shrank below the tree line, while others sprouted gargoyles and grew heavenward.

A shining lake sprawled out in front of me, with a skinny bridge leading to an island. People conglomerated around the bridge and nearby food carts. I whirled around to find an iron fence behind me, which I was sure that I hadn't walked through. What made me doubly sure was that beyond the fence lay a city sidewalk, and beyond that, a city street. I had come straight from the depths of a trackless forest into the heart of an otherworldly Central Park without even noticing it.

Teleportation and a Dali-esque cityscape probably would have made me question my sanity that morning. As it was now, it just made me hungry. Tying my bag of blood-berries through a belt loop, I started walking towards the food carts looking for something more edible.

The City is the cynosure of the Spirit World: almost all events of import happen within its walls. Like a Real World city, souls congregate here. Day and night, season by season, it hums with the activity of Dead Inside, Sensitives, Magi, and others who walk its streets.

The City's architecture is a mad fusion of every type of dwelling man has known (and some say, *will* know) – sweat lodges and log cabins in the shadows of 23rd Century steel and glass monstrosities, yurts beside Victorian houses beside pagodas, and Art Deco skyscrapers looming over a host of squatting

Chapter 2: The Real World and the Spirit World

Classical, Neo-Classical, Retro-Classical, and Anti-Classical piles of marble. Streets full of Renaissance and Elizabethan Memory Palaces, empty temples to lost gods next to ramshackle tenements, fairy castles, cliff dwellings, and hobbit-holes refurbished for rent, lease, or sale. . . cheap.

It's crazy and beautiful.

A quick rule of thumb – the higher you go in the City, the newer the buildings and furnishings are. Cell-phones, television, firearms, telephones – all work fairly reliably in the penthouses. Things are more rational on the heights. Logic is recognizably stronger and clearer the farther up from street level you go. (Of course, what's logical even at altitude in the City might still be completely whacko in the Real World.)

On the other hand, the lower you go, the older the structures and appointments become. At street level, everything's about ten years out of date, and the world operates with a dreamlike causality. Talking dogs chatting with manhole covers, vendors selling steaming hot philosophies slathered with mustard and kraut, trashcans full of discarded dreams, and butterfly nets able to scoop words out of the air are pretty typical sights.

It gets more and more ancient and irrational the deeper belowground you go. Logic breaks down; instinct and emotions rule. It's all about the primal drives of food, fear, safety, and sex. The deepest caverns are lit with smoldering pine knots, sending shadows flickering over cave bear skulls lining ochre-daubed walls.

The Train stitches all points of the City together, from low to high. Beneath street level, it is the *Underground*, its cars covered with green reptilian scales, slithering over the tracks. Above, it's *the El*, gleaming with shiny chrome as it skims golden rails. Business-suited Magi rub shoulders with shamans in weasel skins as they ride. The Train is cheaper, safer, and a bit slower than Dream-Leaping, True Flight (see *Chapter 4*), or the City Taxis, which are run by any denizen able to get hold of a vehicle in the Spirit World.

Every door, every window, every staircase, every elevator can suddenly change into a Gate. Sometimes they take you where you think they'll go, other times they take you where you want to go, and occasionally, they'll take you to where you *don't* want to go.

Things morph over time, nothing is stable: all is in slow flux. Small buildings grow into skyscrapers. Revolving doors warp into French windows. Ramps become staircases, only to shift into escalators. The streets go from pavement to cobblestones to dirt to gold. Streets writhe like mating snakes.
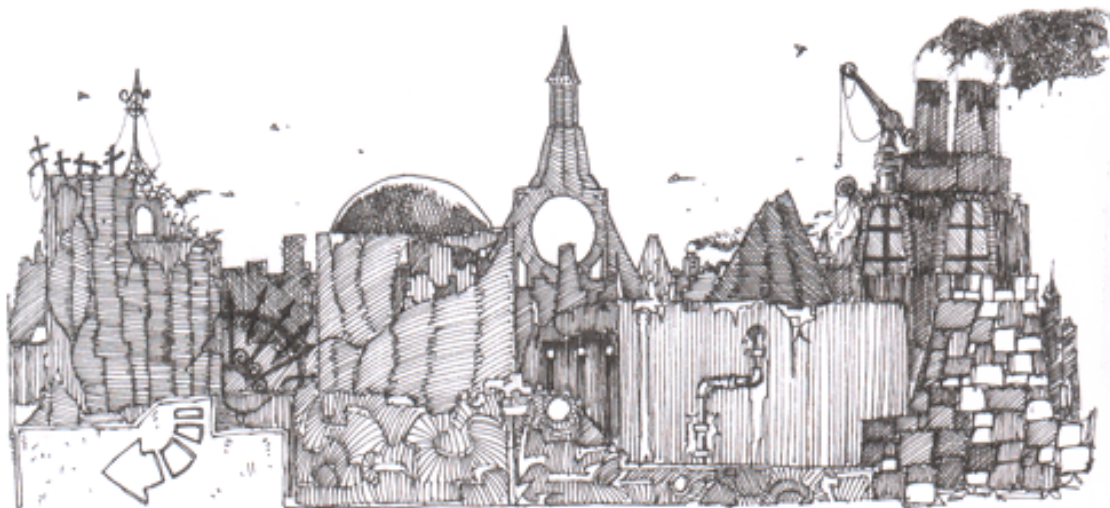
Neighborhoods can be cozy and quaint, but can change to threatening and alien. Like most of the landscapes of the Spirit World, while they retain their *nature* (for the most part), they change their *image*.

The City's personality is deeply affected by the visitor's frame of mind. If you are frightened, the City is scary. If you are peaceful, the City is serene. If you are depressed, it begins to rain, while across the street, happy lovers sit in a street-front café, bathed in sunlight. The alleys go from dirty, dingy, rat-infested cobblestone to clean, bright, friendly paved boulevards as the visitor resolves his own inner turmoil.

And, as the tourist becomes familiar with (and to) the City, he will learn not just how to get from here to there in a shifting landscape, but he shall discover the secret ways of reshaping it into patterns that fit his desires or needs. But the City must be cajoled, flattered, begged, or forced into changing to meet a single being's whims.

The City is what you make it, unconsciously or consciously.

Notable City Locations

While the City is fluid, there are a number of locations that are relatively stable (at least in regard to each other), and have been for as long as anyone can remember. Here's a short list:

The Academy: This building, near the City Library, is all schools in one – from nursery to University. This is the place to learn: to re-experience and re-integrate learning that went wrong the first time. Anyone may be called upon to be pupil or instructor in its halls.

Archaic Café: The most popular eatery in the City, the Archaic Café has a menu boasting everything from the basic memories of sustenance to the high-ticket dreams of death by poison. The Café's kitchen is a place of transforming power for the unconscious through physical experiences; a few hours behind the grill (or even the scullery pan) has been known to help bring unknown truths to the surface. All that, and the wine list is pretty good too. The Archaic Café is always located "across town" from the Theatre des Loups, and has a cellar passage that leads down into the Deep Caverns

The Bridge of Souls: Thinner than a hair, sharper than a razor, the Bridge of Souls is always located within Wyld Park. It stretches from the shore of Moon Lake to the small island called Spectral Point. Only Ghosts, Tulpas, and Free Spirits can use the Bridge without grievous harm; this helps guard the spirit neighborhood of Spectral Point from Zombi depredations. Unless otherwise desired, all Gates into the Spirit World open at the park-side foot of the Bridge, making it the most common arrival point for visitors. Indeed, many inhabitants set up small kiosks and vendor carts here during the day, eager for new customers. But at night, the area is deserted due to the dangers of the Park.

City Library: Books. Lots of books. Some say, every book – written or unwritten – lurks in its stacks. The City Library is the home of knowledge and memory. It is a place to listen to what has gone before and learn what you did not know. It is usually located near Tower Row.

Deep Caverns: Far under the City lie the Deep Caverns, home to all subconscious instincts and desires. It is a highly-irrational region, where causality totally breaks down; few beings go sightseeing there without strong need. Qlippoth and Shadows scream in the dank, dark chambers. It is connected to the Archaic Café and Sewerland by twisty passages, all alike.

Chapter 2: The Real World and the Spirit World
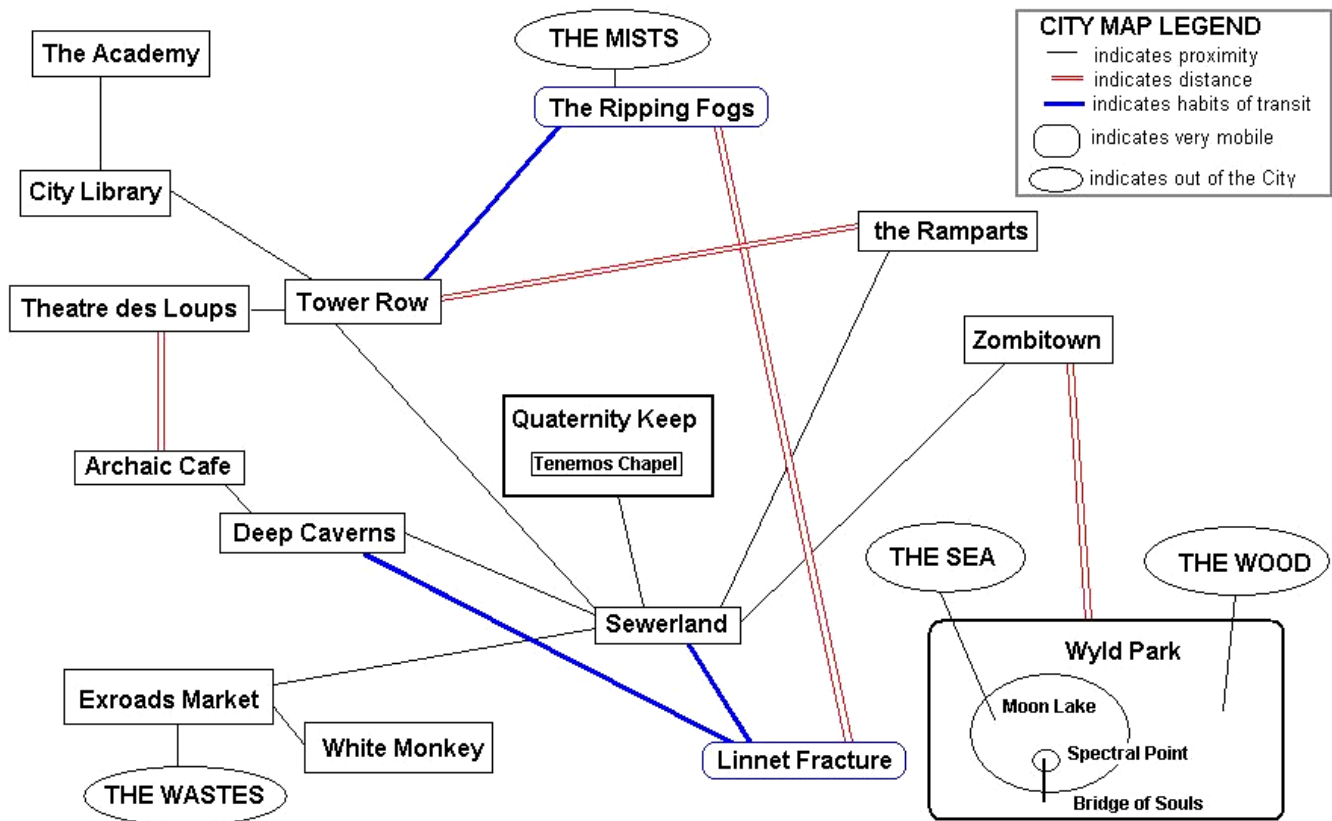
Exroads Market: Situated at a crossroads – and if one knows the right way to walk, *every* crossroads – is a market of wonders. All is negotiable at Exroads, where strange wares bring stranger coin. Lost loves, forgotten nights, goblin statuary, mama's meatloaf recipe, and the burgeoning future – all on sale for prices ranging from the reasonable to the irrational (see boxed text, *Spirit World Commerce*). Exroads is always close to the White Monkey. The Market also connects directly to the Wastes, and often displays the goods from caravans hailing from beyond the fields we know.

Linnet Fracture: It moves, more often and faster than any other place in the City, slithering like a worm through the dirtiest and scariest districts (like Sewerland). The Linnet Fracture is a place of danger, a weak spot in the fabric of the Spirit World. As such, it's a site for fell rituals and dark revelations. Some say that it's an exit into the Real World for those otherwise consigned to the City, like Free Spirits and Qlippoth. Some say it leads nowhere: a

deep crack in the universe leading directly to the Void. Others claim it's a path (though dangerous) to the Source itself. The truth is unknown, but rumor whispers that that the Fracture is not only one of the places where Sensitives become Magi, but also where Qlippoth enter the Spirit World from the Void. The Ripping Fogs avoid the Fracture for some reason; this sometimes leads to weird "chases" along the City streets between the two phenomena. No one knows what will happen if they ever meet.

Moon Lake: Always inside the boundary of Wyld Park, Moon Lake is a body of cold, placid freshwater. Some say that tunnels beneath its calm surface lead directly to the Sea. It is a place of reflection and contemplation, a place of peace and romance. The serenity evoked by the Lake make its shores a sanctuary from the dangers of the Park; this is the reason, many feel, why many Gates open there, at the foot of the Bridge of Souls.

Quaternity Keep: The smooth, black stone walls of this fortress promise safety. And they deliver – no army has ever breached them with force, and its interior Maze defeats the sneak thief and the assassin. While secure, there *is* danger within – the danger in getting lost in the labyrinth of stasis, unable to move forward or back. It is a signpost as well as shield, pointing the way to its protected navel, the Temenos Chapel. Always found in the center of the City, Quaternity Keep is the single fixed landmark for all travelers' directions.

The Ramparts: Dead Inside and Sensitives who take up residence in the Spirit World tend to rent (or buy) apartments, longhouses, townhouses, or yurts in this neighborhood. Transients can even contract for small storage units to hold their spiritual goods when they return to the Real World. Usually located across the City from Tower Row, the Ramparts has a plethora of specialty shops catering to living inhabitants of the Spirit World.

The Ripping Fogs: The acrid and viscous Ripping Fogs ooze along the side-streets and alleys of the City, scouring away debris and refuse. While usually not dangerous to most City-dwellers, the Fogs are often used by Qlippoth to hide their approach from their intended prey. Sometimes, portals open inside the Fogs, connecting to the Mists. The Fogs rarely flow into Sewerland. Oddly, the Ripping Fogs never come within a block of the Linnet Fracture; this sometimes leads to weird "chases" along the City streets between the two phenomena. No one knows what will happen if they ever meet.

Sewerland: The gutters and drains of the City empty into Sewerland. Shadows and Qlippoth are know to haunt its pipes and channels, scuttling amongst the broken dreams and lost hopes. Sewerland is the most publicly-accessible route to the Deep Caverns, where subconscious powers sport and play. The Ripping Fogs rarely venture here, but the Linnet Fracture often slithers through.

Spectral Point: Located on an island in the middle of Moon Lake, Spectral Point is a small but tightly-knit enclave of Ghosts and Free Spirits. While the width of the Lake and the Bridge of Souls protects dwellers from most Zombi incursions, some fanatical invaders manage to leap or run across the lake – and are immediately set-upon by all insubstantial bystanders. Though Dead Inside, Sensitives, and Magi are grudgingly permitted if they manage to cross (or bypass) the Bridge, most Spectral Point residents prefer to keep the "embodied" out of their district.

Temenos Chapel: In the center of the maze of passages within Quaternity Keep lies this sacred space. Within its peaceful confines, all becomes centered and calm. Conflict is impossible when standing within it. A font of growth for those who are ready, the Chapel is said to be the place that the lucky Dead Inside can seal their regained spirits to simultaneously ensoul and become Sensitive.

Theatre des Loups: "The Theater of Wolves" is a Palace of Dreams, where fantasy and truth collide on stage, where audience is actor, and actor, guide. If one is not mad upon entry, one may go mad during the performance, and the fortunate manage to regain their sanity before the last curtain call. The unfortunate are doomed to take the stage and play their roles until letter-perfect, until the scripts dissolve into truth. As the kitchen of Archaic Café is for the unconscious, the Theatre is the transformative crucible of the conscious. It's a hell of a show. Like Linnet Fracture, the Theatre is rumored to be a place where Sensitives evolve into Magi. The Theatre des Loups is always located "across town" from the Archaic Café and is usually close to Tower Row.

Tower Row: Across the City from the Ramparts is Tower Row, the neighborhood of the Magi. A profusion of palaces, towers, temples, and even weirder edifices sprawls along its broad avenues. The atmosphere here is Byzantine yet businesslike: after all, Magi are plotting and maneuvering against their neighbors in pursuit of True Immortality, and few have time for idle chit-chat and folderol. The streets are utterly clean of trash; the Ripping Fogs often coil here, like a cat napping in a patch of sunlight. Tower Row is also close to the Theatre des Loups and the City Library.

The Underground: The serpentine rails snake up and down, sewing the City together, uniting high and low, conscious and unconscious, fair and foul. It can take you anywhere – not only where you wish to go,

but where you *need* to go. Fares are cheap (the more valuable the coin you pay in, the shorter your journey), but the ride can be long, slow, and dangerous (depending upon your fellow passengers). Stations sprout everywhere; the common rule of thumb is "Make three lefts in a row, and to the Station you will go."

The White Monkey: Also known as "the Monkey Bar," this is *the* watering hole for Dead Inside, Sensitive, and Mage alike. It is always located near the Exroads Market. Gossip rains from all lips, a torrent of information to be caught by the waiting ear. It is always loud and crowded (especially during the daily "Happy Thought Happy Hour"), but no one has a problem getting a glass of their personal poison. The White Monkey is the real social hub of the City; where other notable locations deal with the past or future, this place is the *now*.

Wyld Park: In the midst of the City lies a patch of wilderness bounded by wrought-iron gates topped with glimmering quartz spears: Wyld Park. Portals open between the Park and the far Wood often, allowing strange creatures to enter the City. During the day, the Park is full of beauty and the buzz of life; at night, it seethes with terrors and howls of mystery. At all times, energetic adventure can be found. Unicorns snort in its glades and sabertooths lair in its caves. Moon Lake, Spectral Point, and the Bridge of Souls lie within its confines.

Zombitown: Located far away from Wyld Park is Zombitown. Chock full of vaults, mausoleums, and tasteful garden apartments, this neighborhood caters to the bodily undead (and those living beings who cannot – or choose not to – pay Rampart prices). Ghosts, Tulpas, and Free Spirits avoid Zombitown upon pain of being eaten. Still, it's not a particularly

bad place to live, if one can stand the endless intellectual debates, the clatter of gymnasium equipment, and the din from the embalming fluid "bars."

Who's Who in the City

The following list is of the most feared, respected, and/or loved beings found in the City, and gives the basic information the average person on the street would know.

Evie: The manager of the Archaic Café is a Sensitive named Evie. Though her face and form has changed through the years, her name and green eyes have always remained the same. Depending upon the customer, she can be annoyingly intrusive or comfortably friendly. She's known to love a little tipple, and if plied with a small glass of wine, will offer the latest gossip overheard in her Café.

Gnomon: Gnomon maintains the City Library and aids those seeking knowledge in its stacks. A Dead Inside who has taken up permanent residence in the Spirit World, he is the latest in a long line of Librarians. He is amiable, if a little pedantic and patronizing. He is a devotee of comedic authors – a rousing discussion of Wodehouse will allow one to get on Gnomon's good side quickly.

Herman: Herman is the most feared Ghost in the City. He hunts Zombis; no less than two dozen have been dispatched by his transparent hand. He often prowls the shores of Moon Lake, guarding against those who would try to gain Spectral Point. He doesn't like Dead Inside much either, but is friendly with Sensitives and Magi.

Manny: Manny is the owner, proprietor, and bartender of the White Monkey, which is named for him. His body is that of a tailed chimpanzee with immaculate white fur; while working, he often wears a dingy paper hat on his head and a stained apron around his waist. Exuberant and affable, his ringing laugh is known throughout the City as a tonic for the

blues. Whispered rumors claim that he is a Tulpa who won freedom (and existence as a Free Spirit) by killing his creator in a particularly messy fashion. Manny will not confirm nor deny these rumors, offering only a toothy smile. If asked, he'll offer his opinions on a topic to a paying patron; this advice is often valuable, generally funny, and always blunter than a bowling ball.

Mary: Mary is a large woman, chunky and tall, with long blond hair done up in braids. She exudes a feeling of safety and solidity. A Sensitive, she spends most of her time in the Spirit World sweeping up around Quaternity Keep. She's sort of an unofficial "curator" for the structure, and is said to know the best paths through its labyrinths. She doesn't speak much, but prefers to listen, responding with nods, head shakes, grunts, and monosyllables as appropriate. She loves roses, and has a garden with a hundred varieties near the Keep.

Samuel: Samuel – never "Sam" or "Sammy" – is an old, old Mage with a dark reputation. Nothing matters to him except his quest for True Immortality, and he's willing to do anything to get it. Charles Manson and Ebenezer Scrooge look like the Hardy Boys next to Samuel. He's the most hated being in the City because of his greedy and violent machinations, but he is feared because of his incredible power. Samuel is the master of balancing the cost-benefit ratio between soul-decay and soul-acquisition to his advantage. He is known to possess rooms full of Soul Eggs, each fill brimful of stolen soul-blood. No burglary attempt has ever come close to succeeding, and the ravaged bodies of the thieves decorate the spiked exterior of his tower as grisly bas-reliefs. Paradox intrigues him – the avowed coward displaying bravery, the eloquent speaker caught tongue-tied, the fearless hero reduced to a mass of jelly, as well as the typical logical and literary examples; displaying paradoxical thoughts or opinions is an excellent way to stave off this Mage's wrath.

Trader Nicholas: Trader Nicholas is a well-preserved Zombi, known for his forays into the Real World for needed goods. Uncommonly generous, he often passes out small gifts to customers and even random passersby. "Munificence leads to good business," he says pragmatically. He is a very skilled merchant, and is known for his ability to get just about anything a customer wants... for a suitable price. He has a small office/warehouse in Zombitown, but often sets up a stall in Exroads Market to drum up new business. He's also rumored to be the second strongest being in the Spirit World (who is the *strongest* being is a matter of some debate amongst those who care about such things).

The Triangle Council

Once a week, the three members of the Triangle Council don the green robes and meet within Quaternity Keep. While they have no official power, the office of Councilor commands respect from most denizens of the Spirit World, and are listened to when speaking in that role.

They discuss matters of import within the City, ranging from herding the Ripping Fogs down particularly filthy streets to dealing with intensive Qlippoth incursions. If a problem cannot be handled by any of them singly, they contract out for solutions and split the costs. But their primary and most extensive service to the Spirit World is in serving as a panel of judge-mediators for its denizens.

Members serve for five years at a time, and select their successors to their position. By tradition, a Dead Inside, Sensitive, and Mage usually fill its seats, though Ghosts and Zombis sometimes serve out a term. No Free Spirit has ever yet become a Councilor. The current Triangle Council consists of Gnomon, Mary, and Samuel.

"Deep fried bees' knees! Get 'em while they're hot! Sweet and tangy, crunchy and munchy! Bees' knees!"

"Soul cream? Have a soul cream? Sharing a thin memory of a winter gets you a frosty soul cream!"

Awash in the vendors' calls, I walked to what looked like a hot dog cart. As I got closer, I saw the letters on the umbrella spelled out "Dragon's Tails." Whatever. Any port in a storm. "Gimme one –" I began, and choked when I saw the vendor's face under the striped umbrella. The man had an elephant's head.

He saw me goggling, and made a snorting trumpet of annoyance through his trunk before replying. "Gotta getoutda Park at sunset." He

wore a Steelers' baseball cap, and the short hairs along his proboscis gleamed with the last of the sun's rays. "Maket fast. Whaddaya want?"

"G-Gimme one with mustard," I said.

Lickety-split, a dragon's tail - slathered in brown mustard, wrapped in a bun - sat in his hand. "That'llbeyer last firstdate."

The words didn't seem to make any sense.

He trumpeted again in a slightly-cheesed-off tone. "New here, amiright?"

"Yup."

"Holdout yerhand." As I did so, he continued. "Tinkofda lasttime youwuz onna firstdate."

Myra from accounting: cute smile, great legs, no personality. Saw an Oscar nominee at a matinee, had Dim Sum for dinner. Home by ten. Nice enough time, no great shakes, no follow-up dates yet.

And suddenly, there was something in my hand. A black fortune cookie. Ominous.

The vendor's trunk bounced up and down as he nodded. "Awright. Just tinkabout sharing dat memory widdme, and I'll tinkabout sharing dis memory widdyou."

I felt a quiver, a shimmy, and a snap, and in my hand was the dog. The vendor held the cookie.

"You still remember her, Myra, right?"

"Why wouldn't I?" I took a bite of the tail. Tasted like tandoori chicken. On a bun. With mustard. Not bad.

"You'll learn, buddyboy. Just makedamnsure yadon't sell what you're supposed to share, awright?" He pocketed the cookie. "Pleasuredoin'bidnesswitcha." Stubby fingers on stubby arms reached up to close the umbrella. The sun was setting again.

I swallowed a mouthful of dragon tail. "Hey, do you know where would I find a Mage named Violet?"

"Tower Row." His hands full of umbrella, the vendor pointed with a jerk of his head. "Luckyguy: go oudda dagate and crossda street. It's righttherenow."

I thanked the elephant man, complimented his wares, turned, and walked out the Park's gate.

SPIRIT WORLD COMMERCE

There is no money, per se, in the Spirit World. Instead the primary mode of trade is barter – exchanging objects (of either World provenance), dreams, memories, and experiences for other objects, dreams, memories, and experiences. Intangibles coalesce into a small, portable representation, usually related to what they are concerned with. A favorite childhood daydream could take the shape of a old toy; the memory of a night of passion could be a dark gem with a tiny flame within; the sensation of cool wind on an upturned face could be a baseball-sized sphere of blue; and the smell of winter, contained in a plastic snow globe.

Most transactions within the City are *sharing* ones. If Joe wants a pretzel (a dream of sustenance) from Jane the Vendor, he can offer her a small porcelain Scotty (a memory of playing with his pet dog). If she deems this worth her wares, the trade is made. Joe walks away with his pretzel and the memory intact, while Jane gains a new memory to sample (and retains her pretzel).

However, there are exchanges that are *selling*, in which the items are traded for "keepsies." Generally, only goods of high importance are sold in this fashion – enchanted items, secret information, soul-blood, Tulpas, even talents or skills. Such trades do not necessarily have to be reciprocal – one party may opt to retain their dream, memory, or experience, but demand a selling price to share. Say that Joe wants to buy the knowledge of the location of a Mage's hidden sanctum from Jane. Jane, who won that information in a riddle game from the Trickster, refuses to share, but she'll *sell* it outright for a piece of Joe's soul. If Joe meets her price, he gains the knowledge, while she loses it. Jane could have decided to keep that information and still demand a high price, but knowing a Mage's secrets can be distinctly unhealthy. (See *Chapter 4* for rules describing Spirit World Commerce.)

Creating *DI* Player Characters

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

"In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."

– Albert Camus, *Actuelles*

What sort of character would you like to play? In *DI*, characters can be anything from successful doctors to homeless vagrants. The most important thing is making your character more than a simple token or playing piece.

Is she a calculating upper executive whose soul has been taken by a business rival? Is he a washed-up celebrity, his spirit broken by debauchery? How about a troubled college student, born soulless, searching for a meaning to his life? While all are Dead Inside, they'll have starkly different feelings about, reasons for, and methods to use in their soul-quest. The main thing to keep in mind is to come up with a character that interests you, one that you'll care about and want to explore.

A *DI* character is made up of 8 main elements:

1. Personality (Who Are You?)
2. Backstory (Where Have You Been?)
3. Soul Loss (Why Are You Dead Inside?)
4. Discovery (When/How Did You Realize You Were Dead Inside?)
5. Qualities (How Are You? What Can You Do?)
6. Type (*What* Are You?)
7. Soul Point Pool (How Much Soul?)
8. Miscellany (What Do You Look Like?, etc.)

The first four elements of a character don't have to be completed in any particular order; each could provide ideas for the other elements. *Personality* and *Backstory* provide the foundation for determining a character's *Qualities*; *Soul Loss* and *Discovery* often point the way for how a character enters play; a character's *Type* (Dead Inside, Sensitive, Mage, Zombi, etc.) determines their *Soul Point Pool*. Finally, *Miscellany* rounds out the character to whatever level of detail you're comfortable with.

Two example characters will be generated step-by-step in boxed text alongside the following discussion to illustrate this process.

Personality

Personality answers the questions of "who is your character, really, and how do they approach things?" Try to come up with a single word or phrase that mostly explains the character's basic nature. This doesn't mean that the character's temperament is solely that word or phrase – to paraphrase Whitman: characters are vast, they contain multitudes. This single word is merely to give a general feel for who the character is.

Below is a short list of sample personalities to jumpstart your characters, but do not feel limited by it. Indeed, one could base a character's personality on other templates (like Zodiac signs; characters from reality, history, fiction or film; a core personality trait – impulsive, curious, cautious, etc.).

– **Empathic**. People with strong empathy primarily evaluate information by weighing their emotional responses to – that is, their feelings about – issues. Relationships and connections with other people are important to them.

– **Instinctive**. People with strong instincts make judgments based on an irrational, perceptual, and complex integration of large amounts of information: in a word,

hunches. They're good at "seeing around corners" and making intuitive leaps.

- **Sensual**. A sensual character is mostly oriented on their sense perceptions – what they can see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. They are comfortable with tangible objects and intangible experiences.

- **Thoughtful**. Thoughtful characters evaluate and make judgments on information through the rational use of logic. They are intrigued by ideas and philosophies and the life of the mind.

A character's Personality has an effect in *DI*. People with the same Personality will understand at a basic level how their peers think and this grants a small bonus in communicating (or thwarting) each other (see *Chapter 4, Conflict Between Similar Personality Types*).

Example Character 1: Zandra Grace

Pat thinks that a professional type would be a neat character concept to flesh out. But should she be a doctor, a lawyer, or a business-person? She settles on a quickly rising marketing executive named Alexandra Grace. Thoughtful by nature, "Zandra" uses her brains to analyze popular trends and come up with the Next Big Thing.

Example Character 2: Kristov Wolff

Chris generally likes playing artistic types, and having just finished watching a Behind the Music marathon, the idea of a burned-out musician came readily to mind. Kristov Wolff is a former teen heartthrob on the skids, after a long decade indulging his Sensual pleasures.

Backstory

A character's *Backstory* explains "what has the character done with their life, where has he been, and who did he meet along the way?" Where were they born? What was their family like? Where did they go to school? What do they do for a living? Do they have more acquaintances than friends and more enemies than both? You don't need to condense this part into a single word or phrase like you do above with the Personality. Spend as many or as few words on describing the character's

experiences as you feel comfortable with. Whether a single sentence or four pages, it's all fine.

Tied to the Backstory is the selection of the character's *Virtue* and their *Vice*. A Virtue shows where the character has been spiritually strong, and a Vice shows where the character has been be tempted to stray. For example, if a character has a Virtue of Courtesy, they have in the past rarely been rude on purpose. Virtues and Vices should have an influence on the character's Backstory, and may be connected to their Soul Loss (see below).

A character's Virtue and Vice can, and probably will, change during a *DI* game. (They are *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*; it's "how they are" instead of "how they must be.") As your character does things in the game, those words, deeds, and omissions of words and deeds will have a spiritual effect on the character. The character, by following his current Virtue and resisting his current Vice, encourages his soul to grow; by going against his current Virtue and embracing his current Vice, the character encourages his soul to rot. (The game mechanics for Soul Cultivation and Soul Decay appear in *Chapter 4*; there are also additional guidelines and relevant discussion in *Chapter 5*).

Players are recommended to select Virtues and Vices that will be fun to play, even if a character is carried away by one of them. For instance, if you the player would find it annoying for your character to give mercy to an enemy that will probably try a double-cross as soon as possible, don't take a Virtue of Generosity for your character. If you would find it annoying if your character is unable to pass by wealth or goods, even if to do so would be a good idea, then don't take the Vice of Avarice.

The Virtues are:

- **Integrity**. Honesty; truthfulness; fair play; trustworthiness.

- **Hope**. The ability to trust in someone or something else; to expect with confidence; to look to the present and future with joy.

- **Fortitude**. Courage; perseverance; zeal; ability to risk.

- **Generosity**. Donating time, effort, money with little thought to personal cost; being merciful.

- **Courtesy**. Grace, in word and deed; politeness; consideration and compassion for others.

The Vices are:

- **Hypocrisy**. Dishonesty, lying, cheating.

- **Despair**. The inability to trust in anything; to worry overmuch; to dwell on the present and past with misery.

- **Cowardice**. Allowing fear to dictate actions; lack of resoluteness; sloth; timidity that refuses to take a chance.

- **Avarice**. Insatiable greed; desiring more than your fair share; envy.

- **Cruelty**. Causing injury, grief, or pain for the joy of it; lack of compassion; rudeness.

NOTE - Virtues and Vices each have a strong tension with their opposite – Integrity vs. Hypocrisy, Hope vs. Despair, Fortitude vs. Cowardice, Generosity vs. Avarice, and Courtesy vs. Cruelty. While a character usually has a Virtue and a Vice that do not oppose the other, picking a "matched set" can lead to an intriguing personality. This means that the character is exceptionally torn between the two extremes: imagine a character who is Generous and Avaricious at turns – why does he shuttle between these two poles, grasping at pennies with one hand while casting alms with the other?

Example Character 1: Zandra Grace

Zandra is a hard worker who loves her job: her Virtue is Fortitude. This ardent nature contributed to her speedy rise through the ranks of corporate structure. However, she's a bit too overconfident: her Vice is Cruelty – her arrogance has made her many enemies.

Example Character 2: Kristov Wolff

Chris is having problems selecting Kristov's Virtue and Vice. He decides to look at the Vice first, since his character has a history of sketchy activities. He's torn between Avarice and Despair. Chris weighs the options – he likes the Avarice combined with Kristov's Sensual Personality, making him greedy for sensation: sexual promiscuity, eating like a pig, Herculean drug use, fast cars, the whole deal.

For a Virtue, Chris is still stumped. He likes both Generosity and Courtesy; Kristov is supposed to be a good guy at heart whose desires got away from him. He decides that Kristov is more likely to be Generous, and gave away staggering sums of money to family, friends, hangers-on, backstage betties, random fans, and his dealers.

Soul Loss

Soul Loss explains "why is the character Dead Inside?" Any of the options listed in *Chapter 1, Why Are You Dead Inside?*, can be used. Preferably, Soul Loss should be tied to Personality and Backstory; these elements (along with *Discovery*, see below) should reinforce and support one another.

Example Character 1: Zandra Grace

Pat decides that Zandra's soul was stolen from her by a business rival, but she's not sure who. The GM agrees to make up the character of the rival. It could be another Dead Inside, a Sensitive, a Magi, or something else. (This NPC might also serve as Zandra's *Nemesis*; see *Chapter 2*.)

Example Character 2: Kristov Wolff

During his slide into the gutter, Kristov bit his soul down to the quick before the money ran out. He stopped listening to his conscience, lashed out at those close to him, and generally isolated himself. Drowning his sorrows in overeating, drinking to excess, and tremendous amounts of drugs, he woke up one day to find nothing inside.

Discovery

Any of the options listed in *Chapter 1, Realizing You're Dead Inside*, can provide moments of *Discovery* for a *DI* character, or you can make up your own. This is the flashpoint for why the character is suddenly thrust into the strangeness of the game. Perhaps they've just realized that their problem is not simple (or chemical) depression, but that they've never *really* possessed the drive everyone else does. Or they wake up and feel empty after a wild night of passion with a mysterious stranger. Or they were an innocent bystander at (or in) a spiritual event, and are now bereft. Or they realize that "too good to be true" mortgage agreement for their dream house had a big catch hidden in the fine print. Important things to keep in mind when figuring out a character's Discovery are to provide reasons for why the character is "entering play" at this point in time, understanding where the character is coming from at the start of the first gaming session, and set the scene for how multiple PCs can come together.

Qualities

Qualities help further describe your character's particular talents, skills, and flaw(s). They also provide game mechanics for how those abilities or disabilities work in play (see *Chapter 4*). Qualities should grow out of the Concept, Personality, and Backstory described above.

Qualities represent a broad field of knowledge about the topic; if a particular Quality is as relevant at all to an action or field of knowledge, the character may apply that Quality when attempting that action or using that field of knowledge. This is called the *penumbra* (or "shadow") of the Quality. Therefore, a player shouldn't choose Qualities that are too narrow or its penumbra will cast too narrow a shadow; too broad, and identifying the sorts of things that should fall under the penumbra becomes pointless. The parameters for what's "too broad" or "too narrow" are up to the individual GM.

For example, consider a character who has the Quality of "Teacher." For some *DI* games, that will be perfectly fine; for others, too broad. The GM might ask the player to refine the Quality, to give a better idea of the sorts of things that will fall under the Teacher Quality's penumbra. So: "Teacher" could become "College History Prof," "High School Chemistry Teacher," or "Grade School Teacher." While all would cover the basic concept of education, each individual choice will bring different skills under the Quality penumbra – not just their fields of interest, but also supplementary knowledge: the College History Prof would have more experience with (academic) politics, the High School Chemistry Teacher would know more about

adolescent fads, and the Grade School Teacher would be better at dealing with kids on a sugar high.

Take another example: "Gunplay." This Quality would be useful not just in shooting at things, but also in cleaning and repairing guns, discovering the location of nearby gun dealers and shooting ranges, knowing the history of firearms, and so forth. If the player had instead selected a Quality of ".44 Magnum," the Quality would only be useful in shooting that individual model of gun, and involve knowledge surrounding .44 Magnums exclusively.

Qualities are often drawn from five general areas:

- **Physical**. Having to do with the body, athleticism, or natural talents;
- **Mental**. Areas of study, intellectual acuity, education;
- **Social**. Groups the character is a member of or associates with, skills in dealing with people;
- **Professional**. Knowledge and skills picked up on the job; and
- **Spiritual**. Esoteric, weird talents or Abilities (see also below, *Type*).

Quality Examples

Physical: Gunplay, Kung Fu, Roguishly Handsome, Weightlifting, Ballroom Dance, Perseverance.

Mental: Oriental Philosophy, Fine Food and Drink, Sports Trivia, Speed-reading, Strategy & Tactics, Computer Programming.

Social: Wu-Shen Monks, MI6, Football Team, Conversationalist, Intimidating Guy, Charmingly Effusive.

Professional: Teacher, Martial Artist, Spy, Professional Athlete, Freelance Writer, Bounty Hunter, Mad Scientist.

Qualities have Ranks, which indicate increasing proficiency. From lowest to highest, the Ranks are:

- **Poor [-2]**;
- **Average [0]**;
- **Good [+2]**;
- **Expert [+4]**; and
- **Master [+6]**.

Players have several options when designing the Qualities of their character. They may choose between having more Qualities at a lower level of competency, or having fewer Qualities at a higher level of competency. Choose between the following packages:

A.   4 Good [+2] Strengths and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.

B.   1 Expert [+4] Strength, 2 Good [+2] Strengths, and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.

C.   2 Expert [+4] Strengths and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.

D.   1 Master [+6] Strength, 1 Good [+2] Strength, and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.

> NOTE - Characters who are Dead Inside should strongly consider whether or not to take a social Quality like College Buddies as their Weakness. As detailed below under *Type*, Dead Inside are penalized in social interactions while in the Real World. Starting with a Rank of Poor and then suffering this additional penalty means that the character will automatically fail in social situations related to that Quality. Depending upon the sort of *DI* game you'll be playing in, this could be a feature or it could be a bug. Talk to your GM.

The numbers in square brackets following the Rank of the Quality show the Rank's Modifier – how much is added to or subtracted from a 2d6 dice roll (see *Chapter 4*).

Characters have some things going for them (Strengths), and at least one thing working against them (Weakness). At everything else, characters are neither noteworthy nor inept – that is, they're Average [0].

A *Strength* is an inherent positive aspect (benefit, skill, talent, attribute, or power) of a character. Come up with a word or a pithy phrase to sum up the Strength. Examples include Fighting, Credit Rating, Fly Like A Bird, Find Bargains, and Run Away!

A *Weakness* is an inherent negative aspect of the character, stemming from ignorance, flawed understanding, physical or mental incapability, or some other vulnerability. A word of advice: pick something that will be fun or entertaining (for you the player, not necessarily you the character) to flub at! Come up with a word or a pithy phrase to sum up the Weakness. Examples here include Glass Jaw, Bad Credit Rating, Slow As Molasses, and Wallflower. Weaknesses are always Poor quality.

Never fear: if after play begins, a particular Quality sees no use and doesn't really add to the characterization of the PC, feel free to change it to something that fits better after talking to the GM.

Example Character 1: Zandra Grace

Zandra decides to go with package B, giving her 1 Expert Strength, 2 Good Strengths, and 1 Poor Weakness. She decides that she's an Expert [+4] Marketing Executive, Good [+2] at Self-Defense, has Good [+2] Business Contacts, and Poor [-2] at Taking Criticism.

Example Character 2: Kristov Wolff

Kristov goes with package A, giving him 4 Good Strengths, and 1 Poor Weakness. He picks the following Qualities: Good [+2] Rockstar, Good [+2] Songwriter, Good [+2] Dirty Fighter, Good [+2] Sex Symbol, and Poor [-2] at Accounting. When the GM notes that the Qualities of Songwriter and Sex Symbol could easily fall under the penumbra of "Rockstar," Kristov disagrees about Songwriting, but concurs with changing Sex Symbol. Instead, he wants to have an Ability (see below) as a Good [+2] Quality. The GM agrees to this... (continued).

Chapter 3: Creating *DI* Player Characters

Types

In addition to normal Strengths and Weaknesses, *DI* characters have a special Quality called *Type*, indicating the kind of being they are (Dead Inside, Sensitive, Mage, Ghost, Zombi, etc.). A character can be only one Type at a time, though it can change during the course of a game (like a Tulpa becoming a Free Spirit, a Sensitive becoming a Mage, or a Dead Inside becoming a Zombie). No Ghost Magi or Zombi Sensitives, please.

> NOTE - For a first *DI* campaign, it is suggested that all PCs be Dead Inside.

> OPTION - If a player wishes to create any other Type of character in a *DI* campaign, they should talk to their GM (ideas on how to integrate different PC Types in a single game are provided in *Chapter 5*).

Type combines several "sub-Qualities" called Abilities (and Disabilities, for some Types); furthermore, it is the relevant Quality for the use of Powers (see *Chapter 4*) and for Virtue or Vice Checks (see *Chapters 4* and *5*). The Rank of Type for a new character starts at Average [0].

Dead Inside. Living bodies lacking a soul; they are driven by a need to regain one. Dead Inside have problems interacting socially in the Real World (all social uses of Qualities suffer a *Downshift* in this case; that is, they act as if they were one Rank lower). They have limited access to mystical abilities. If a Dead Inside dies, he will come back as a Zombi. If a Dead Inside regains his soul, he becomes a Sensitive.

Abilities

By virtue of no longer being just Average People, the different Types of being in *DI* have access to inherent spiritual gifts based on their nature called *Abilities*. If a character observes any other being using one of these Abilities – or is told in detail how to activate one of these Abilities – they will then know how to use it themselves. They may be used actively and consciously or passively and unconsciously. Indeed, some characters may choose to pick an Ability to fill in one of their Quality selections (with the GM's permission; see *Chapter 5* for a fuller discussion of the ramifications of permitting this option).

To use an Ability, characters must roll against their Type Rank – or Quality Rank, if their GM allowed them to take an Ability as a Strength or Weakness – with any relative Downshifts as shown on the chart below. (Recall that there is an *additional* Downshift – and possibly a cost in Soul Points – when attempting to use an Ability in the Real World.)

> NOTE - Characters also have other gifts called *Powers*, which must be deliberately activated and require spirit-force (i.e., Soul Points) to operate; see *Chapter 4*.

ABILITY	TYPE: DEAD INSIDE
Change Landscape	3 Downshifts
Change Self	2 Downshifts
City Navigation	1 Downshift
Movement (Dream-leap/True Flight)	2 Downshifts/3 Downshifts
Open Gate	2 Downshifts
Second Sight (Passive/Active)	At Rank/1 Downshift
Soultaking	1 Downshift
Special	Downshift to all social uses of Qualities in Real World; become a Zombi after death.

Here's a quick thumbnail description of each of these Abilities (*Chapter 4* goes into greater detail):

- **Change Landscape**. Make subtle, short-lived changes to the immediate locale (construction, elevation, climate, temperature, etc.), including moving or "floating" small objects through the air.

- **Change Self**. Temporarily alter one's body slightly (change height, weight, features, skin tone, hair color or length, etc.), with a greater scope at higher Ranks of skill.

- **City Navigation**. Identify the shortest path to a given Notable Location in the City; useless in the Real World.

- **Movement**. The character has two special modes of Movement: Dream-leaping and True Flight. *Dream-leaping* allows the being to act as though weightless: making "moon-

bounce" jumps, running up walls, or lightly walking across treacherous footing. *True Flight* allows the being to temporarily take to the air like a bird.

– **Open Gate**. Creates a portal between the Real World and Spirit World, allowing characters to pass from one to the other. Gates appear as circular or semi-circular rainbows of weird colors. (Average People cannot normally see or pass through a Gate.)

– ***Second Sight***. The Ability to see soul-blood and spiritual beings (that is, Types); suffer clairvoyant visions or precognitive dreams; or read the "vibes" off a person, place, or object. Passive use of Second Sight is uncontrolled (i.e., under the GM's control), but it can be actively called upon.

– **Soultaking**. Sucking away soul-energy from another being. Due to its difficulty (and extra energy costs) in the Real World, Soultaking is a zero-sum (or worse) game there. However, in the Spirit World, it can be "rewarding" to the unscrupulous. This is the Ability used to "eat" a Ghost.

> NOTE - Soultaking is spiritually corrosive, and counts towards Soul Decay – be warned! (GMs see *Chapter 5*.)

Example Character 1: Zandra Grace

Zandra is an Average [0] Dead Inside.

Example Character 2: Kristov Wolff

Kristov is an Average [0] Dead Inside, but has an undetermined Good [+2] Quality (continued from the last step). He wants to fill that slot with Second Sight. The GM agrees. This means that instead of rolling against his Type Rank of Average [0] for passive uses of Second Sight (like, to notice a Ghost), he's at a Rank of Good [+2]; and instead of being unable to force a vision (Average [0] with two Downshifts falls off the bottom of the scale and becomes impossible), he can actually do it at Poor [-2] Rank... in the Spirit World, or at powerful places or times in the Real World. "Yeah, man, the concert we had at Stonehenge *blew my mind*!"

Soul Point Pool

The initial Soul Point Pool of a character depends on their Type. The Soul Point Pool will increase or decrease based on the characters' actions within the game. Simply, the more one strives to grow in word and deed, the more Soul Points gained; the more one stops others from growing, the more Soul Points lost. When a Soul Point Pool goes *below* zero, the character's Type is "broken down for change." That means Rank is reduced by a level to get 2 Soul Points back.

Dead Inside. Start with one Soul Point.

> NOTE - Technically, all characters with an Average [0] Rank in Type and a zero Soul Point Pool have 3 more Soul Points to lose before it's all over. (The Average [0] Rank Dead Inside becomes Poor [-2] Rank Dead Inside, with 2 Soul Points. If those 2 points are lost, leaving the character at Poor [-2] Rank and zero Soul Points, losing another point forces another "breakdown." Since there's no Rank below Poor [-2], the character *husks*, becoming a Qlippoth: an NPC monster.
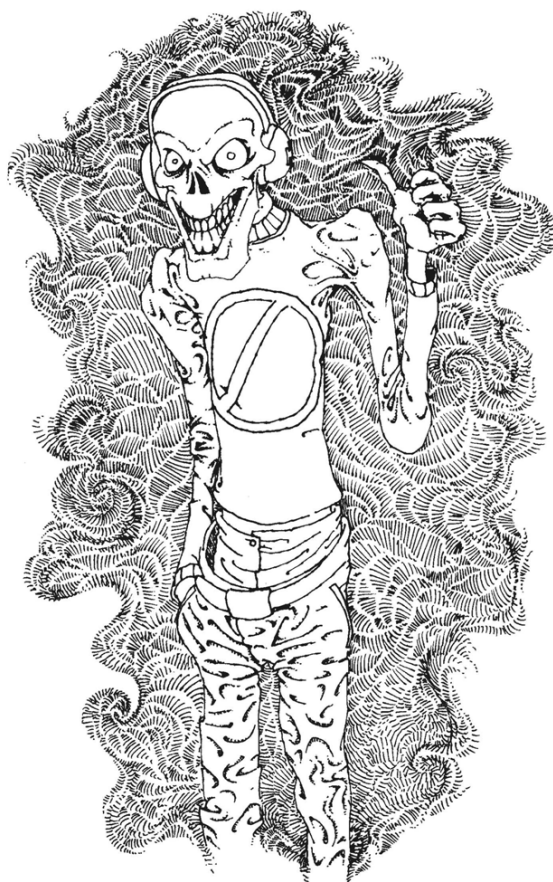
Miscellany

And that's about it for generating a *DI* character. Players should feel free to describe the character's physical description if they want, even if it's a quick thumbnail like "young Harrison Ford, only Indian" or "tall, blonde, and stacked." Backstories can be fleshed out further, names of friends and enemies filled in, whatever floats your boat. But the character's got everything necessary for you to start playing.

Here are the full character sheets for our example PCs:

Example Character 1:
Alexandra "Zandra" Grace, Rising Exec

Personality: Thoughtful. Zandra understands the world through rational thought.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Fortitude. *Vice*: Cruelty. Smart as a whip, Zandra parlayed a college internship with an Internet start-up into a paying job, and quickly rose through the ranks. She jumped ship to a publishing company before the dot.com bust, and managed to stay ahead of the game. Her sharp mind and supreme confidence make her seem capable beyond her years.

Soul Loss: Someone – either a rival in her company, or an agent in a competitor's organization – didn't like the swath that Zandra was cutting through their client list. This secret rival arranged for her soul to get stolen. Now Zandra just wants it back... before her career implodes.

Discovery: It happened at the Holiday Party for employees and clients, Zandra was sure of it. She was getting a glass of eggnog, felt someone touch her elbow, and blacked out. When she woke up, she was out of sorts, depressed, hollow. And over the next few weeks, the feeling didn't go away; it just got worse.

Qualities: Expert [+4] Marketing Executive, Good [+2] at Self-Defense, Good [+2] Business Contacts, Poor [-2] at Taking Criticism.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Zandra is a stocky and attractive woman in her mid-thirties with brunette hair and glasses. She describes herself as "sort of a cross between Camryn Manheim, Kate Winslet, and Hedy Lamarr."

Example Character 2:
Kristov Wolff, Has-Been Rock-and-Roller

Personality: Sensual. Kristov understands the world through his senses, especially hearing, touch, and taste (all of his hit songs drew strongly on at least one of those elements).

Backstory: *Virtue*: Generous. *Vice*: Avarice. At age sixteen, Kristov Wolff was on top of the world with two platinum albums, a legion of screaming fans, sold-out concerts, and more money than a small bank. After a ten-year whirl of drugs, drinking, promiscuity, and CPT (Caviar, Paté, & Truffle) sandwiches, the albums aren't selling like they used to, and now the fans, the concerts, and the money are gone.

Soul Loss: Kristov let his soul rot first by the cruddy things he did to get to the top, and then chipped away big chunks of it as he indulged in celebrity-scope excesses. As things started falling apart, instead of taking control, he numbed himself with drugs, food, and mindless television. One day, his soul was just gone.

Discovery: Between drunken binges, Kristov ran out of vodka. On the way to the corner liquor store, he passed a fortune teller's shop. Thinking it'd be a hoot, he decided to drop in and see if the palmist recognized him: maybe she'd be a cute Gothy-type owned his albums before Sisters of Mercy took its place on her turntable. He got more than he bargained for.

The old woman with the scarves on her head threw him out before he even sat down, calling him names like "demon," "dybbuk," and "monster." He was so shocked, he almost forgot to get his Stoli. Almost.

In the checkout line, a young guy with tats covering his bald head touched him on the shoulder. "I know what's wrong with you, buddy. You're Dead Inside. I can help."

Qualities: Good [+2] Rockstar, Good [+2] Songwriter, Good [+2] Dirty Fighter, Good [+2] Second Sight, Poor [-2] at Accounting.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Kristov's a short guy with long ratty blonde hair. He's got a skinny frame, but is growing a little potbelly. His band was called "the Wolff Pak," and was made up of 4 guys: Kristov, "Chubby" Bill Boro, Jimmy Carlosi, and Sammy "SoCo" Rogers. SoCo's gone on to a successful solo career. The group's biggest #1 was "Be My Love Bunny, Honey."

DI Game Mechanics

I stepped onto the sidewalk outside Wyld Park, and the first thing I noticed was that there were few pedestrians, cars, or trucks. Looking down the wide avenue – which began to *curve*, bending around the Park as I watched – I saw a guy on a bicycle about six blocks away. Not what I'd call bustling for such a large city; more like a lazy autumn Sunday afternoon, after all the tourists had flown south for the winter.

Then, I saw a chunky lady about a block away *jump* across the street, from sidewalk to sidewalk. A thirty foot standing broad jump. And as soon as her chubby little feet hit the concrete, I knew how to jump like that myself... only I didn't have the oomph to do it yet. It was just like when I saw Oskar open the Gate. My soul was too weak to do stuff like that right now.

I walked down towards the crosswalk at the corner, looking at the buildings. The street sign said it was Tower Row, and there were certainly a bunch of towers along it – ranging from the medieval to the science-fictional – as well as domes, manors, skyscrapers, and buildings shaped like mythological animals. I saw weird beings like the elephant-headed vendor walking in and out of some of them; I saw a white-bearded old guy in star-spangled robes step out of a pure black cylinder and fly away. Again, I quickly understood how he did it, and was crushed to realize that I didn't have anywhere near the soul-juice to be able to fly.

I came up on the crosswalk at the same time as another pedestrian: an old lady in a green shawl, just like the one my grandma used to wear. She looked like me, all jagged and cracked and hollow: another Dead Inside. Her green eyes twinkled at me as she asked, "Do you need to cross here, too?"

Now that you have a character for a *DI* game, how does he do things like win friends, impress people, cut deals, climb walls, or throw punches? This chapter explains how you and your GM will use the information on your character sheet to figure all that out.

Let's add a third character along with Zandra and Kristov (from *Chapter 3*) to use in examples throughout this chapter.

Example Character 3: Jefferson, Biker Bruiser

Personality: Grizzly Adams. Live and let live, or else.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Integrity. *Vice*: Cruelty. Jefferson's a big bear of a Hell's Angel: while most of the time he's like Gentle Ben, he'll flip out Kodiak-style on someone who pushes him too hard. Luckily, he can take a lot of guff before snapping.

Soul Loss: Jefferson sold his soul to get out of a tight spot that he doesn't discuss: he almost killed his own brother in a bar fight, and traded his soul to a man who had no eyes to heal Stevie. The next day, Stevie killed a convenience store clerk and severely wounded a little kid during a hold-up. Then, the punk *laughed* about it to his brother. Now, Jefferson wants to change the deal he struck with the Eyeless Guy... undo Stevie's healing and give it to the kid in the ICU. And if that means Stevie gets put into the cold, cold ground, so be it.

Discovery: Jefferson sold it, on purpose, to the Eyeless Guy. He knew exactly what he was doing... but now he's not happy he did it.

Qualities: Expert [+4] Biker Dude, Good [+2] Toughness, Good [+2] Outdoorsman, Poor [-2] Reader.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside,

Soul Points Pool: 1

Miscellany: Jefferson calls his Harley "Declaration," and prefers denim to leather.

Task Resolution

"I think so," I replied to the gray-haired little old lady. "Hey, you wouldn't know where a Mage named Violet lives, would you?"

She pointed towards a slim lavender spire across the street, which seemed to be inching west. "I think that's her place: the Indigo Tower."

"Thanks." I turned to walk across the street, but she stopped me with a touch on my arm.

"I know you're a little big to be a Boy Scout," she said, "but could you help an old woman across the street? I'm Gwendolyn, the Crone."

I smiled. "My name's Mike, and I *was* a Scout. 'Do a Good Turn Daily,' and all that. I'd be glad to assist." I offered her the crook of my arm, but she didn't take it.

"It's not that easy. That street is harder to cross than it looks. Take a step off."

So I did – and sank a foot into what had looked like solid asphalt. "Whoa!" It was tough to move, like wading through deep snow or mud, but even heavier and stiffer. Thirty feet would be quite a chore.

"Can you still help me get across?" she asked, and there was something in her voice that made the cracks in my heart hurt even worse.

I thought about it a second, and made a decision. What the hell. "Hop on," I said as I offered her my back, putting my hands on my hips.

She did, sticking her brown button-up boots through the loops formed by my arms and torso. I started across. That little old lady wasn't all that heavy, but it made the going just a bit rougher. Still, it was easy to see that she'd have never made it on her own. I buckled down and started slogging, letting my mind wander.

About halfway across, I started laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"Just thinking about Robin Hood and Friar Tuck, the frog and the scorpion, and St. Christopher. You're not planning on doing something to me while we're hip deep in street, are you?"

She laughed, too. "Nope, I'm not a holy man, forest outlaw, stinging scorpion, or the Baby Jesus. You don't have to worry. But I will inflict a piece of advice on you: relationships are work, responsibility, and reward all in one."

I chewed that over for a minute. "I'm not sure why you felt the need to tell me that at this moment."

"Relationships are a two-way street."

I shook my head, but after she said that, the going seemed a bit easier.

We reached the other side and she clambered down, her heels clicking on the solid walk. I levered myself up out of the asphalt, breathing a little heavier, but not particularly tired. I looked up with a grin. "Curbside service, ma'am."

The old lady had *changed* during our crossing. She had turned young, her hair now black, her body now tall and shapely. Her eyes glowed as she looked down into mine. "Well done, Michael," she said, and touched my forehead. Heat seared through my skin, burning a path deep into me, filling me up a little inside. Imparting me with a drop of soul.

I fell down, gasping. "W-who–?"

"I am Gwendolyn, and in this form, I am your Anima. We'll meet again, love. Be well, and good luck with Violet." Then she faded away.

When your character tries to do something, the GM will determine if the situation is *simple*, *complicated*, or *conflict*. Let's take each in turn.

Dead Inside Master Chart

Level	As Quality Rank	Modifier to 2D6 roll	As Difficulty Rank	Target Number
Poor	Notably Inept.	**-2**	A trivial task.	**5**
Average	Typical human capability.	**0**	Straightforward task.	**7**
Good	Better than usual; most professionals or talented newcomers.	**+2**	Complex task, requiring attention to detail.	**9**
Expert	Noted/famed professional; talent with skill to back it up.	**+4**	Intricate task, difficult and requiring sharp concentration, hard for a typical untrained person (Average).	**11**
Master	Acclaimed genius: talent with substantial skill behind it.	**+6**	Extremely difficult task, hard for most professionals in the field (Good).	**13**

Upshifts (Being Badass)

This is how PCs get more bang for their buck. If the player describes his character's attempt to perform an action in a graphic, flavorful, and entertaining way, the GM can give them an *Upshift*. An Upshift means that for that particular action, the PC rolls as if their Quality were one level higher (essentially giving him an additional +2 to their roll). So, rather than "I hit the sailor" (or "I haggle"), the player says something like "I grab the sailor's shirt with one hand and pull him closer to punch him in the face with my other fist – arr, matey!" (or says, in character, "May the fleas from a thousand camels infest the beds of your children if you try and rob me in this way!"). If the PC had a Good [+2] Pirate (or Bargaining) Quality, this would change his roll in attempting to hit the sailor (or haggle with the merchant) from 2d6+2 to 2d6+4, as if he were Expert [+4] Rank.

NOTE - Upshifts above Master Rank add *an extra die* to the character's roll (i.e., instead of rolling 2d6+6+2, the character rolls *3d6+6*).

Simple Situations

In *simple situations*, the task is clear-cut, there are no outstanding issues interfering with the attempted action, or randomness would bog down the game. In a simple situation, the GM looks at the *Master Chart* (see below), and determines the Difficulty Rank of the task. Then, the GM compares that Difficulty Rank to the character's most appropriate Quality Rank. The higher Rank of the two "wins." If the Difficulty Rank of the task is equal to or higher than the character's relevant Quality Rank, the task becomes a *complicated situation* (see below).

> Examples: Jefferson wants to climb a wall using his Good [+2] Outdoorsman Quality (he successfully convinces the GM that climbing a cliff face is similar enough to climbing a wall for it to count), he'll automatically succeed in scaling Poor [5] and Average [7] Difficulty walls.
>
> If Kristov wanted to climb a wall, he has no applicable Quality, and so would have the default Quality Rank of Average [0]. This means he can only automatically succeed in climbing Poor [5] Difficulty walls.
>
> For Jefferson, Good [9] or higher Difficulty Rank walls are complicated*;* for Kristov, Average [7] or higher Difficulty Rank walls are complicated.

Complicated Situations

Dice rolls are made in *complicated situations*: where comparisons of Rank are inconclusive, or when randomness is desired. Complicated situations are when Quality and Difficulty Ranks are tied, or when Quality Rank is lower than Difficulty Rank. To attempt a complicated situation, the PC rolls two regular six-sided dice (2d6), and adds the Modifier for their Quality Rank. To succeed, the PC must match or roll higher than the Target Number of the task's Difficulty Rank.

> NOTE - Some failures – like attempting to walk a skinny building ledge – may carry the chance of getting hurt. For more on that topic, see below, *Environmental Damage*.
>
> Examples: Jefferson is trying to climb a Good [9] Difficulty wall using his Good [+2] Outdoorsman Quality. The Target Number of Good [9] Difficulty – as noted in the brackets – is 9. Jefferson must roll 2d6 and add his Modifier of +2, trying to match or beat a 9. He rolls a 3 and a 5, giving him 3+5+2 = 10! He succeeds in climbing the wall.
>
> Kristov wants to follow Jefferson up that Good [9] Difficulty wall: again, he has no applicable Quality, and so must use the default Quality Rank of Average [0]. He must match or beat a 9 when rolling 2d6. He rolls exactly the same thing that Jefferson did: a 3 and a 5, and since Average Rank Qualities have no Modifier, that's a total of 8. This is below the Target Number of the wall, so Kristov fails.

When a character's Qualities are set against the Qualities of other characters, this isn't just complicated, it's a *conflict situation* (see below).

DOWNSHIFTS

While *functionally* the same thing (a -2 to a 2d6 plus Modifiers roll), the reasons behind having a Weakness or incurring Downshifts are different.

For example, Jefferson has a *Weakness* of Poor [-2] Reader. If he needs to do a really complicated and unusual repair on Declaration (his hog), requiring reading the bike's manual, this Weakness will affect his overall competence (Expert [+4] Biker Dude) in the repair. Instead of rolling 2d6+4, Jefferson will be rolling 2d6+2. That's just par for the course, an effect of his Strength and Weakness interacting in that particular situation.

A *Downshift* means that for the action in question, the PC rolls as if his Quality were one level lower (essentially giving him a -2 to their roll). Downshifts can come from a number of sources: if a combatant decides to Play It Cagey (see below, *Conflict Jazz*), the effects of Failure or Damage Ranks (see below, Taking It On the Chin), or the general penalty to social situations that the Dead Inside have in the Real World.

While judicious use of Downshifts to reflect a sudden or unexpected change in the complexity of a situation can work very well, GMs should resist the temptation to *overuse* Downshifts as situational modifiers. *DI* games tend to run smoother if the GM simply sets the Difficulty Rank (and thus, Target Number) of a task appropriately. For example, if the PCs are attempting to climb a Average [7] Difficulty wall and it begins to rain, a Downshift to each of their relevant Qualities makes sense. However, if it's already raining when they begin their attempt, simply make the wall Good [9] difficulty from the get-go.

NOTE - Downshifts below Poor Rank mean automatic failure in the use of that Quality. (There is *one* exception to this case; see below, *Soultaking*.)

CONFLICT SITUATIONS

I crouched there on the sidewalk for a moment, regaining my breath. What the hell had just happened? Did it matter? I felt better – a lot better. Fuller. More whole. Who was she? We'll meet again?

Lost in my thoughts, I almost didn't see Lucy walk past me, holding a paper bag. She hadn't seen me.

"Hey! Lucy!" I yelled. She turned back to look at me, and I saw her face go white. She turned back and started to run.

I didn't consider that it had been months since I last saw her. I didn't think that she may have already used my soul for whatever purposes she had stolen it for. All I knew was that she wasn't going to get away. Not this time.

Conflict situations involve active resistance by another to a character's attempts to perform a task: trying to punch a guy in the face, out-thinking a chess player, running a race, or convincing a cop that, no, you weren't really speeding. Conflict – whether physical, mental, emotional, or social – is a large part of many roleplaying games (and most stories, movies, plays, etc.). Conflict situations in *DI* include more than just the immediate success or failure of an attempted action; here, conflict includes the back and forth of an active contest, out-maneuvering the competition, and wearing down an opponent's resistance. Examples of conflict situations include

BEING LAMEASS

Being Lameass is – in some ways – the opposite of Being Badass. Boring, uncharacteristic, or disruptive roleplaying can ruin everybody else's fun, and after all, the point of roleplaying is to have a good time. If a player is reading, refusing to pay attention, watching TV, pedantically rules-lawyering, utterly ignoring the characterization of their PC, being pointlessly abusive or distracting to other players, or – saints preserve us! – *sleeping* at the gaming table, they are working against the overall good time. In these cases, the GM *could* give the offending PC a Downshift based on the *player's* behavior. . . but what's the point? If the player's not interested enough in the game to even pay attention, penalizing this character will probably have little effect on his behavior.

Try to discover the cause of the player's Being Lameass. Maybe it's something about the focus or subject matter of the campaign, a difference of roleplaying style, or even an unrelated personal issue that's bugging the player. The answer to Being Lameass is to discuss the situation outside of the game – either by taking a break or talking between sessions – and try to work through it like grown-ups. A little bit of open communication can do wonders for these sorts of issues.

Just think of it as soul-cultivation in the Real World.
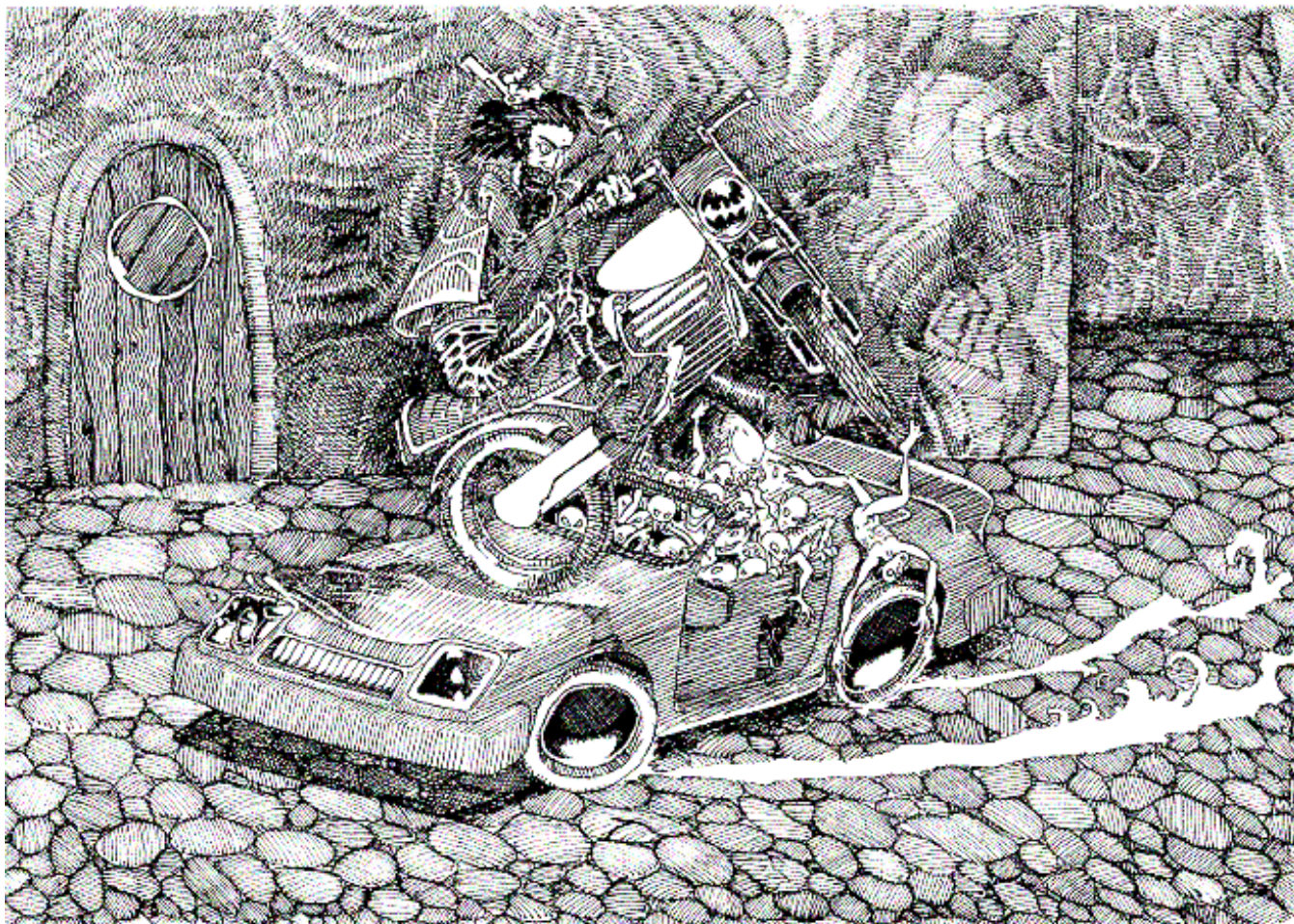
combat, seduction, haggling, debating, and so forth. (Note that some groups won't necessarily want to use the conflict situation mechanics to resolve social interactions, and will want to rely on pure roleplaying instead ; this is fine – the rules structure is there if a group wishes to use it.)

In conflict situations, the characters involved compare the results of 2d6 plus Modifier rolls; the highest successful result wins. However, there are a few refinements of conflict requiring closer attention. These are *Initiative*, *Moment of Truth*, and *Damage*.

> NOTE - Further information on mystical and spiritual conflicts appears below (see boxed text, *Spiritual Conflict*).

> NOTE - In addition to the in-line examples in each section, two detailed examples of conflict situations – with all the bells and whistles – appear at the end of this chapter.

Initiative

First, figure out who goes first – that is, who has *Initiative*. Most of the time, the flow of the situation will indicate who acts first, but in some cases, this order may need to be determined. Here's how to do it:

1. If a character attacks without warning – taking the victim by surprise – the attacker automatically goes first. (At the GM's discretion, he might even get a free turn, if the target is caught totally unawares.)

2. The character with the highest Rank in a "speed" or "reaction time" Quality relevant to the situation (Fastest Gun in the East, Jumpy, Quick Wits) goes first, followed in order by those with relevant Qualities of lower Ranks.

3. The character with the highest Rank in a Quality not relevant to the situation goes next, followed by those of lower Ranks.

Ties can be broken by either:

− Stating that tied characters resolve their actions simultaneously; or

− Rolling a die, with the highest number winning Initiative.

Once Initiative is determined, conflict resolution can proceed. Characters with a higher Initiative may "hold their actions" for as long as they want, but after the last character has done something, they need to take that held action or lose it. After everyone involved in the conflict situation has taken an action (or chosen not to), the characters can act again, in the same order. Lather, rinse, repeat.

> Example: Zandra and Jefferson are arguing over who's going to pay their tab at the White Monkey. Both are adamant in wanting to be the one who picks up the check, so the situation has devolved to conflict. (As the White Monkey is in the Spirit World, both of these characters do not have to worry about the Downshift to social interactions in the Real World from being Dead Inside; see below, *Spiritual Abilities & Powers*, for more information).
>
> Zandra is using her Expert [+4] Marketing Executive Quality here (she's used to picking up business lunches) and Jefferson's using his Expert [+4] Biker Dude Quality (he's used to intimidating people into doing what he wants them to).
>
> Zandra and Jefferson are both at Expert Rank, and thus tied. The GM decides that Initiative between them will be determined with a die roll. Zandra rolls a 3 and Jefferson rolls a 4. Jefferson has Initiative.

Moment of Truth

The character whose turn it is will be called the "attacker"; the character who is the target of the attacker's action is called the "defender." The attacker explains what his attempted action is, and the defender explains how he'd try to counter that action. Then, the attacker rolls 2d6 for his relevant Quality and adds the appropriate Modifier for Quality Rank. The defender does the same. The character with the higher total wins.

If the attacker is successful, *damage* (see below) is applied to the defender; if the attacker fails, no damage is done. A tie is just that – nobody wins, nobody loses... but they both muss each other up a little.

> Example: Jefferson is the attacker, and Zandra is the defender. Jefferson is going to reach for the check brusquely, and Zandra decides to try and grab it first. Jefferson rolls 2d6+4 for a result of 10, Zandra rolls 2d6+4 for a result of 8. Thus, Jefferson does "damage" to Zandra this turn (see below), and has grabbed the check.
>
> On her turn, Zandra wants to snatch the check away from Jefferson. She gets a result of 11, while he gets a result of 5. She does a lot of "damage" (again, see below), and now has possession of the check.

TIME IN CONFLICT

The terms used in *DI* for identifying the passage of time:

Scenes are the entire conflict; starting with determining Initiative and ending with someone winning, losing, surrendering, or leaving the situation.

Each character takes a *turn* or *action*: that's when they make their move, say their piece, throw a punch, etc.

Other characters *react* during a character's turn – saying something back or performing a defense, usually – but their reactions can only be in response to the actions of the character whose turn it currently is. They cannot initiate actions until their turn.

Damage

She got away.

We were running – sometimes I gained on her, most of the time I lost ground. Blocks passed under my feet, the bag of blood-berries oscillated at my belt, and she just kept pulling away. I felt my energy dwindling, my breath coming heavy. I told myself that it was because of my exertions with carrying Gwendolyn across the street, but I knew that wasn't it. Lucy just out-ran me. Then, at the end, just to add insult to injury, she did one of those Leaps up and over the street, and ducked into an alley.

With what I had gotten from Gwendolyn, I knew I had just enough soul-juice to make that kind of

jump, but I didn't want to risk my precious spiritual energy. She was gone. I stopped.

Then I looked around, and discovered what was worse than losing a race to a stinking soul-thief: the Indigo Tower was not in sight. Neither was Wyld Park.

I was lost, and it was getting dark.

Damage (be it physical, mental, emotional, social) is the loss of capability. As a character takes damage, he is less likely to be able to perform at peak efficiency. This is embodied by a temporary Downshift applied to the character's listed Qualities called either a *Failure Rank* or a *Damage Rank*, depending upon the nature of the conflict.

In mental, social, and some physical conflicts, loss of capability is usually temporary, and is represented by Failure Ranks. Examples include a chess match, witty repartee, or running a race.

In many physical conflicts (and even some physical complicated situations), loss of capability is more enduring, and is represented by Damage Ranks. Examples here include combat, running through fire, or falling off of a wall.

In spiritual conflicts, loss of capability involves the loss of Soul Points, and is described at length below (see boxed text, *Spiritual Conflict*).

Dishing It Out

In a successful attack, the difference between the attacking and defending rolls determines how many Failure or Damage Ranks are done to the defender. If the attacker has any Upshifts or Downshifts on their successful attack, that shift will carry through to damage resolution.

If the roll results are tied, *both* characters take a single Downshift.

> NOTE - Qualities Upshifted above Master Rank provide an additional Rank of Damage to be applied.

> Example: Following on the *Moment of Truth* example from above, on Jefferson's turn, the difference between his roll and Zandra's was 2, so he does 2 Failure Ranks to her.

> On Zandra's turn, she did a whopping 6 Failure Ranks to Jefferson.

Environmental damage – like that taken from falling, jumping through a fire, drowning, or other

complicated situations – works by comparing the Target Number of the task against the total of the character's failed roll. The difference between roll and Target Number is the Damage Ranks taken.

> Example: Say that in the example above from *Complicated Situations*, where Kristov wants to follow Jefferson up a Good [9] Difficulty wall, our rockstar is instead trying to follow the biker *down* the wall. As he has no applicable Quality, he must use the default Rank of Average [0], and match or beat a 9 when rolling 2d6. He rolls a 3 and a 5, for a total of 8. This is below the Target Number of the wall, so Kristov fails, falls, and takes 1 Damage Rank from the sudden stop.

Taking It On the Chin

Firstly, if – in the GM's opinion – a character has *relevant* Qualities of Good [+2] Rank or better that could feasibly allow him to ignore or resist damage in the situation (like Tough Skin, Iron Will, True Love, or Impeccable Pedigree), the character can ignore some Failure or Damage Ranks.

In each Scene (not per turn or reaction; see boxed text, *Time in Conflict*), a character can choose to Downshift the Quality; by doing so, the character can ignore *all* Failure or Damage Ranks from one action. The player chooses if and when to use these freebies. That means that if somebody is trying to pry a donation out of a PC who has Expert [+4] Rank Iron Will, the PC can in theory ignore 2 turns of Failure Ranks over the course of the conflict by reducing his Iron Will once for each attack against him that is successful. However, once a Quality reaches Average [0] Rank (through Downshifting to ignore or resist or from taking Failure or Damage Ranks), it can no longer be used in this fashion.

Secondly, any character that has a Weakness related to the type of conflict (for example, Glass Jaw in a combat, Math is Hard! in an arithmetic test, or Can't Say No to a Pretty Face in a seduction attempt), will have to take *two extra* Damage Ranks the *first* time – and only the first time – they get tagged in a relevant situation. (That's why it's a Weakness; if they have an off-setting Strength that allows them to ignore or resist as above, they can use that to ameliorate the badness.)

> NOTE - Qualities reduced to Poor [-2] Rank during a conflict situation by Failure or Damage Ranks are not Weaknesses; Weaknesses are character flaws decided upon at character generation. There's a difference between a Weakness of Poor [-2] Athlete (the character's

never been that into sports) versus someone in a race who's Good [+2] Athlete has been temporarily reduced to Poor [-2] Rank by accumulating Failure Ranks (he's out of breath and feeling the burn).

Lastly, if a defender is caught totally and utterly by surprise by an attacker – to the extent of getting a free turn (see *Initiative*) – or makes not the slightest effort to defend himself, that could add an additional Rank to what he Takes On the Chin.

On the positive side, the player of the defending PC decides *where* to apply the Damage Ranks. They may only be applied to those Qualities listed on the character's sheet (that is, not any one of the character's infinite number of "default" Average Qualities). When any one of a character's Qualities drops below Poor Rank, the character is out of the Scene – that could mean they've totally flubbed their seduction attempt, been knocked unconscious (or killed) in combat, or run out of test-taking time and must put down their #2 pencil. The GM describes how and why the PC is out of the Scene, and lets the player know if/when they can return (see below, *Recovering from Damage*).

> Example: From the *Dishing It Out* example above, Jefferson did 2 Failure Ranks to Zandra in the social conflict over the tab. She chooses to reduce her Good [+2] Business Contacts and Good [+2] Self-Defense Qualities, placing them both temporarily at Average [0] Rank.
>
> Zandra slammed Jefferson for 6 Failure Ranks. However, Jefferson's player asks if his Good [+2] Toughness Quality counts as "armor" in social situations, since this makes him big and imposing; the GM agrees that it does in this case. That means that for this conflict Scene, Jefferson can voluntarily drop his Toughness to Average [0] to avoid all the Failure Ranks he receives in a turn. He decides to do that right now, which means he takes no Failure Ranks from her attack. (Note that since she did have a *righteous* attack on Jefferson, the GM decides that she did snatch the check from the biker; his use of Toughness just means that he's not as deeply hurt by her actions as he could have been.)
>
> Both characters have now taken a turn, and can choose to continue the conflict or not. Jefferson decides to let the lady pay.
>
> If Zandra had a Weakness of Bad Tipper (for example), the GM could decide that such a flaw would have affected the check-grabbing situation. If so, Jefferson would have done 4 Failure Ranks to Zandra, instead of just 2, bringing her closer to losing the conflict.

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT ABSTRACTION

Basically, in any conflict, some of a character's Qualities can be thought of as useful for either "attack," "defense," or "absorption."

As an example, say a character has Good [+2] Rank in the Qualities of Kung Fu, Debating, and Accountant. In combat (a physical conflict), the character will probably opt to keep Kung Fu at Good [+2], and apply Damage Ranks to Debating and Accountant. In an argument (a social conflict), the character will want to keep Debating high for as long as possible, and take Failure Ranks on Kung Fu and Accountant first. If being audited by the IRS (could be a mental, a social, or even a professional conflict, depending on how the GM spins the situation), the character would protect Accountant, try to keep Debating at Good [+2] as long as he could, and sacrifice Kung Fu.

This abstraction of how Failure or Damage Ranks are applied isn't meant to be a one-to-one relation ("Hey, why does getting punched in the face lower my Florist Quality?"), but amusing justifications can be made up anyway ("Well, your black eye makes it hard to arrange peonies...").

Out for Blood?

For physical conflicts, the default assumption in *DI* is that characters can only be killed once they are unconscious or otherwise helpless. This requires no roll, check, or action, simply a statement on the attacker's next turn that the he wishes to kill the victim. (GMs should feel free to change this rule if they desire. Perhaps characters pick whether they are doing "bruising" damage or "killing" damage at the beginning of a conflict situation.)

> NOTE - An important point to remember is that killing another living being in *DI* is a soul-decaying action, and causes the loss of Soul Points (or even whole Type Ranks from *Backsliding*). Therefore, *DI* characters must weigh the decision to kill carefully. This also means that characters with substantial numbers of Soul Points to burn – like Sensitives and Magi – can be more ruthless in coming to murderous decisions. Also note that, technically, Free Spirits, Ghosts, Qlippoth, Tulpas, and Zombis are not "alive," and can be destroyed with less fear of corrupting one's soul, depending on the situation. (See below for more information on Soul Points, Type Ranks, and Backsliding.)

DI assumes that one is using an appropriate tool alongside a Quality – a spreadsheet program with Accounting, a pistol with Gunplay, a little black dress with Seduction, etc. If the GM so chooses, this assumption can be changed such that specialized equipment provides 1 Upshift, limited to Damage Rank determination only.

Under this optional rule, if a character with Good [+2] Kung-Fu uses nunchucks when breaking heads, while he'd be rolling for success at Good [+2] Rank, but when comparing roll results for damage purposes, he'd treat his Kung-Fu as if it were Expert [+4] Rank. (This boils down to an extra 2 Failure or Damage Ranks.)

Recovering from Damage

Once a Scene ends, the injured character will begin to recover lost Ranks. How many he gets back depends upon whether he was in *momentary danger* or is still in *continuing danger*.

–   **Momentary Danger**. If nothing else is going on, and the character is otherwise safe, relaxed, and lacking any time constraints. Examples of momentary danger include playing Go Fish with a six year old, a car chase (though some Environmental Damage could happen...), or a seduction attempt. At the end of the Scene, all Failure or Damage Ranks are removed, restoring Qualities to their appropriate levels.

–   **Continuing Danger**. Danger is continuing if the overarching situation that the conflict happened in is risky, stressful, or under deadline. An example of continuing danger would be playing poker in a seedy dive bar with three Mafiosi. Characters will recover 1d6 lost Ranks of Quality at the end of the conflict Scene. The player selects which Qualities' Ranks are restored. However, the character will not recover any more Ranks until the GM tells them to roll again (or they spend Soul Points to heal; see below).

NOTE - A Strength like "Quick Healer" should allow the character to gain back the standard 1d6 roll, plus their Modifier. A Weakness like "Slow Healer" would mean that

the character rolls 1d6-2 (the Modifier for Poor), with a minimum of zero Ranks regained.

Example: Jefferson's been beaten up and stuffed in a garbage can by a Zombie. At the end of the conflict, all of his Qualities were Downshifted to Poor, except for Biker Dude, which he had bottomed out. Since this happened in a bad part of Zombitown, he's still in continuing danger. He rolls for damage recovery and gets a 3. He puts 1 Rank into bringing Biker Dude to Poor [-2] (now he's conscious), and uses the remaining 2 to get Toughness back to Good [+2], since he figures it'll be the most useful if someone else jumps him.

CONFLICT JAZZ

Here are some methods to get even more of your tactical or strategic ya-yas out. Any character can choose to use them in the course of their conflicts.

Conflict Strategies

There are two additional strategies that a character can use in conflicts, depending upon if he wants to specifically concentrate on attack or defense. One can only be used by an attacker and the other only by a defender. If a PC wishes to utilize either of these strategies, they must announce it at the beginning of their turn. They cannot be used on the same turn.

–   **Flip Out**. The attacker flips out all over the target, making strong attacks (physical, mental, or social) without much heed to defense. A Flip-Out grants an Upshift for the attack (and any subsequent damage) and a Downshift on all defensive reactions and other non-conflict-related actions until his next turn.

–   **Play It Cagey**. The defender plays it cagey, opting for safety by not taking any chances, holding back in the conflict. Playing It Cagey grants an Upshift for all defensives reaction and a Downshift on all the character's non-conflict-related actions until their next turn; unfortunately, Playing It Cagey means that the character's *next* attack action will suffer from this Downshift.

SHIFT ACCUMULATION

In *DI*, all Upshifts, Downshifts, and bonus dice are cumulative. That means that if a character is Being Badass, Flipping Out, and using their Virtue simultaneously, that character would have 3 Upshifts (or a Modifier of +6) on the attack and damage. This means if the starting Quality was of Average [0] Rank (2d6), it would become Master Rank (2d6+6); if the Quality was Good [+2], the roll would be 3d6+6, because one of the Upshifts would take the Rank above Master and translate into an extra die to roll.

If the character also burns a Soul Point for Luck (see below), that would mean that in the example above, the Average Rank's roll would become 3d6+6, and the Good Rank's roll would become 4d6+6. *Smokin'!*

Using Multiple Qualities in Simple, Complicated, or Conflict Situations

If the GM agrees that more than one Quality can be brought to bear on a task, simply combine the Modifiers for the relevant Qualities. This includes not just the Qualities of a single character, but also if multiple characters team-up to perform a task. If multiple characters are joining forces, only one of them needs to roll, and that's the character with the higher Initiative.

> Examples: Jefferson's trying to drive his motorcycle – imported from the Real World – through the Wood. He'd usually use his Expert [+4] Biker Dude Quality, but thinks his Good [+2] Outdoorsman Quality would help him find traversable paths. If the GM thinks that's kosher, Jefferson will be rolling 2d6+4+2, or 2d6+6, to maneuver between the looming trees.
>
> Zandra (Expert [+4] Marketing Exec) and Kristov (Good [+2] Rockstar) decide to work together in a pitch meeting in Archaic Café to try and convince a Sensitive who's an Expert [+4] Record Company Exec in the Real World that Kristov is worth re-signing. Zandra will roll 2d6+4+2; the GM rolls for the Record Company Exec. She rolls a 4 and a 6, for a total of 16, and the GM rolls a 4 and a 6 for a total of 14. Zandra and Kristov successfully convince the Sensitive that Kristov's career is making a comeback!

Using a Quality Against Multiple Targets

If it's necessary for a character to take on multiple targets simultaneously in a single action, he can split his attentions (and relevant Quality Ranks) between them. Of course, this leads to a commensurate decrease in effective skill. For each additional target selected, apply a Downshift to the Quality Rank.

> Example: Say that Jefferson (Expert [+4] Biker Dude) is fighting two Zombi Bikers. If he tries to take them both on, he'll only be at an effective Rank of Good [+2] for his attacks on each. If there were 3 Zombi Bikers, he'd have an effective Rank of Average [0]; if 4, Poor [-2]. If there were 5 Zombi Bikers, he'd automatically fail all five attacks, since his split Rank would bottom out with another Downshift. Better to take them on one or two at a time.
>
> But wait! Jefferson has Toughness at Good [+2] Rank. He persuades the GM that this should count – after all, what's tougher than taking on multiple opponents? If the GM agrees, that works as essentially an Upshift, allowing Jefferson to take on 2 Zombis at Expert [+4], 3 Zombis at Good [+2], 4 Zombis at Average [0], 5 Zombis at Poor [-2], and auto-fail when facing 6 Zombis at once.
>
> Now, if Jefferson could only get the Zombis to attack him in the woods (Outdoorsman at Good [+2] Rank)...

Conflict Between Similar Personality Types

If two characters share the same Personality (Empathic, Instinctive, Sensual, Thoughtful) type or have complimentary Personality types (for example, "Life of the Party" and "Good Time Gal"), they gain an Upshift when attempting to communicate, figure out, sway the opinion of, or fight each other.

OPTIONAL RULE: Abstracting Conflict Further

One could streamline conflict situations further by treating them as complicated situations. That is, instead of having character roll using their Qualities against each other to determine success, simply treat their Quality Rank as a Difficulty Rank. Then, the attacker uses the Target Number of that Difficulty Rank to roll against for success; as with Environmental Damage, the difference between roll result and Target Number gives the Damage Rank. No fuss, no muss (especially for faceless henchmen, if your *DI* game is in the cinematic idiom).

> Example: Kristov has gotten to the throne room of his Nemesis – a Mage named Voorhees – and his path is blocked by one of Voorhees' Dead Inside henchmen (Average [0] Henchman). Kristov rolls his Good [+2] Dirty Fighter Quality against the henchman's Target Number of 7. He rolls a 2 and a 4, plus 2 from Good, giving him a total of 8: Kristov kicks the henchman in the family jewels, downing the thug, and continues walking toward his foe.

VIRTUE & VICE

I sat down on a Mage's stoop, all carved with griffins and krakens and rhinoceroses, and rested my head in my hands. Streetlights along Tower Row flickered to life. I felt like crying.

"Why so glum, chum?"

The voice came from behind me. It was my Shadow, reclining against the steps.

"Hey. Did you see that?"

"Yup. So what?"

"Dude, she might have had my soul in that bag. Or at least she'd know where it is now. And I blew it. I could have used the juice to Leap, and I didn't. I was afraid to lose it."

My Shadow laughed. "I say again, 'so what?' Michael, you're carrying a sackful of blood-berries. Don't you know what that means?"

I looked at the back hanging from my pants and shook my head no.

"Each of those nasty little fruits is just dripping with essence, man. Chomp on a couple of them, and you'll get oodles of soul-stuff back."

"But Oskar was collecting them for Violet. He said she needs them." But I looked at them, and smelled the rank juice from where they'd been bruised. They did stink... of power.

"You need them, too, buddy. You've got no soul — not a whole one at least."

The tone in which my Shadow said this made me hesitant. "Shouldn't I get them to her? Then she might be able to help me out."

"All the help you need is right in that bag. Eat some of her berries, and you won't need her help."

I didn't say anything, but thought, "Her berries?"

My Shadow snorted. "I'm just looking out for you, buddy. After all we've been through, you'd think you'd trust me."

I pondered. On the one hand, what my Shadow said was true — if I ate the berries, I wouldn't need to visit with the Mage Violet. But he had said, distinctly, "her berries." They weren't mine to take, no matter how much I needed them.

I said to my Shadow, "No."

He shook his head in disgust, and went back to following my movements. But this time, it felt like he was mocking me.

The rush of warmth and wholeness that poured into me at that second lifted me up off of my ass, set me on my feet, and made my head swim. In refusing the temptation offered by my Shadow, I had gained more soul-energy. My vision blurred...

In play, a character will be given choices. His decisions in response to those choices can have effects on his Soul Point Pool, as well as adjusting his Virtue and Vice. (The GM keeps track of this, and more discussion on the topic appears in *Chapter 5*).

In general, following the Virtues (especially the character's current Virtue) helps a soul to grow. Souls grow *faster* when virtuous despite adversity, or when resisting Vices (especially the character's current Vice). Going against your current Virtue or indulging your current Vice leads to soul rot, big-time. This is the normal course of business in a *DI* game. (Simply ignoring current Virtue and Vice is shoddy roleplaying; GMs may want to remind a player of his character's Virtue and Vice if he notices this. Repeated indifference may be a case of *Being Lameass*; see above for further details.)

However, a character might run into a particularly difficult choice involving his current Virtue or current Vice, so much so that it's a complicated situation. His reaction to it carries more randomness than the regular decisions he makes. For the character, this situation is a *Virtue Check* or a *Vice Check*. Virtue Checks and Vice Checks are complicated situations. The GM decides the Difficulty Rank of the Check, and the PC uses his Type Rank as the relevant Quality when rolling. The amount of soul cultivation or soul decay that occurs in a Virtue or Vice Check is determined by the combination of what the PC wants to do *and* if they make a successful roll (GMs should see *Chapter 5* for more details). Note that characters, even if forced to give in to their current Vice by a bad roll, can ameliorate any soul rot by good roleplaying of the internal conflict posed by the disconnect of what they feel they *should do* versus what they *can't help but do*.

Using Virtue

Once per session, a character may attempt to use their current Virtue to increase their chances of success in a task, if they can explain to the satisfaction of the GM how the situation relates to that Virtue. (This need not be limited to conflicts; it can be simple or complicated situations, too.) If the GM agrees with the player's reasoning, the PC gains an Upshift to a relevant Quality for that situation. If your heart is pure, you can do great things! (Virtue is its own reward.)

If desired, a character can also use their Virtue in this way to automatically resist a Vice Check, provided they come up with a good explanation of how that would work; however, that eliminates any chance for soul growth or decay.

SOUL POINTS

...and I Saw. The Indigo Tower rose through the fog clouding my eyes, and I knew where it was, right then. Four blocks west, one block north.

I started running. There were more pedestrians in this part of the neighborhood, so I side-stepped and swerved around the ones on the ground. One or two Leaped out of the way, raining curses down on me from building ledges. I resisted the temptation to Leap myself. If not for the chance to grab my own soul, then not for this.

As I ran, I wondered — I was fuller of soul-power than any time since the accident. But shouldn't my vision have used up some of that? There were rules here that I didn't understand. Yet.

Ahead, two ghosts started to pop out of a wall; when they saw me, they ducked back into it, their cries of alarm cutting-off in mid-yelp. I remembered: Raymond in the record store. I hadn't had to do anything to See him. Maybe this was like that.

I skidded to a stop in front of the huge oak door of the Indigo Tower. My sneakers sent up tiny wisps of smoke. I untied the bag of blood-berries from my belt loop and knocked on the door.

Soul Points are awarded to PCs by the GM for many reasons: roleplaying spiritual growth, as a reward for tasks performed in the service of an Imago, or successfully conquering a negative aspect of themselves. They represent the drops of soul-blood possessed by a character, measure how close a Dead Inside character is to becoming ensouled or husked (see below), can be used in Spirit World Commerce, and provide fuel for the Abilities and Powers (see below). Gaining Soul Points feels *good*.

Soul Points can also be *taken away* from a character's pool by the GM if their actions are soul-rotting, negative, or evil. Soul Points lost to spiritual decay are given to a character's Shadow (see *Chapter 5* for more information), effectively making their dark, animal side stronger. Losing Soul Point *hurts*.

SPIRITUAL ABILITIES & POWERS IN THE REAL WORLD

The special mystical Abilities & Powers do not function as well in the Real World as in the Spirit World. The few exceptions are the passive use of Second Sight, the ability to Open a Gate to the Spirit World, and being affected by Spirit Traps. Any other Ability that a character can use in the Spirit World requires an additional Downshift and an expenditure of 1 Soul Point per use in the Real World; any Power that a character can use in the Spirit World requires a Downshift to Type Rank and a *doubled* Soul Point cost per use (minimum 1) in the Real World.

However, Abilities & Powers can be used at their normal Spirit World shift and cost in Places or Times of Power (see *Chapter 2, Notable Locations in the Real World for the Dead Inside*).

Gaining and Losing Soul Points

Every action a *DI* character takes is charged with value; each thing he does or neglects to do affects him to the core. A simple stroll down an alley is a spiritual journey, a random interaction with Joe Bystander is an opportunity to discover new meaning, and every conflict or obstacle in their path is a chance for growth... or rot. However, it is easier to access spiritual Abilities and Powers when surrounded by spiritual energies (like in the Spirit World, or in a Place or at a Time of Power in the Real World).

Gaining a Soul Point feels like an influx of warmth, comfort, and stability – like a sip of hot chicken soup on a cold winter's day. Assembling enough Soul Points for *Improvement* or *Ensoulment* is the aim of most characters (see below).

Losing a Soul Point feels like a tear in the chest that lets a cold draft in. If a character loses too many Soul Points and Type Ranks, they might *Backslide, Regress,* or *husk* (see below).

Burning a Soul Point feels like a sudden rush of strength and energy pouring out, and then – after whatever effect is created occurs – a sudden deflation and mild lassitude. (For extreme results using Abilities and Powers, a character can also burn a whole Rank of his Type Quality. While this provides major oomph!, it feels much like ripping one's eyes, tongue, or heart out by main force.) Burning too many Soul Points or Type Ranks can also lead to *Backsliding, Regression,* or *husking*.

> NOTE - A character's Shadow can also provide Soul Points in special cases. These "Shadow Points" are transitory and limited, and can only be used to *immediately* fuel an Ability or Power, or save the character from *husking* (see below). Also, these Shadow Points are tainted – they feel "sticky," "slick," or "unwholesome" – and accepting one allows the soul to decay slightly (see *Chapter 5*).

The GM has guidelines (in *Chapter 5*) for how to award and deduct Soul Points. Ultimately, if a character ends the session with more Soul Points, or with a higher Rank in his Type than he started with, he's done well.

Using Soul Points

There are three main uses for Soul Points (and Type Ranks, for that matter):

1. Activating Abilities & Powers;
2. As currency in Spirit World Commerce (see *Chapter 2* for background); and

3. Improvement.

Activating Abilities & Powers

Normally, *Abilities* are used with a roll against the character's Type Rank. By burning 1 Soul Point, a character can automatically succeed in using a known Ability; no roll necessary. Spending additional Soul Points allows the character to extend the duration or broaden the scope of an Ability. In dire straits, this could be a lifesaver.

Powers require rolling against the character's Type Rank *and* the expenditure of Soul Points or Type Ranks. As with Abilities, if a character burns additional Soul Points or Type Ranks, he may extend the duration or broaden the scope of a Power.

(See below for detailed information on the *Spiritual Abilities & Powers*).

Currency in Spirit World Commerce

As noted in *Chapter 2*, there are two types of trade in the Spirit World: *sharing* and *selling*. Sharing exchanges require only the merest fraction of soul-blood, which is generally covered by the player's description of the memory or dream being shared, so there's no need to track "fractional Soul Points." For a comparison with Real World money, imagine sharing exchanges involving transactions of up to about $50 (enough to cover basic food, shelter, and necessities).

Selling exchanges are pricier. On the low end, Soul Points are traded; in the middle, Type Ranks; and on the high end, Quality Ranks. A gun might cost a couple Soul Points; a minor enchanted object, a Type Rank; and a mightily enchanted sword, a Quality Rank. Also, the higher the Rank, the more valuable it is (Expert [+4] Rank is worth twice a Good [+2] Rank). For a comparison with Real World money, consider one Soul Point equivalent to $100, one Type Rank as $1,000, and one Quality Rank as $10,000.

> NOTE - These Real World comparisons are not a direct exchange rate, just analogies to help the player conceptualize the value of their spiritual "wealth."

> NOTE - GMs should see *Chapter 5* for more discussion on refereeing Spirit World Commerce.

Improvement

Characters can use their Soul Points for *Improvement*, gaining skill and experience in being their Type. They can spend Soul Points equal to the Modifier of the next Rank of Type, and improving multiple Ranks must happen stepwise. For example:

– Raising Average [0] Rank Dead Inside to Good [+2] Rank Dead Inside costs 2 Soul Points.

– Raising Good [+2] Rank Dead Inside to Expert [+4] Rank Dead Inside costs 4 Soul Points.

– Raising Average [0] Rank Dead Inside to Expert [+4] Rank Dead Inside costs 6 Soul Points (2 for Good, plus 4 for Expert).

To Improve a Quality, a character must spend Type Ranks equal to the Modifier of the next Rank of that Quality, and improving multiple Ranks must happen stepwise. For example:

– Raising Average [0] Rank Gunplay to Good [+2] Rank Gunplay costs 2 Type Ranks.

– Raising Good [+2] Rank Gunplay to Expert [+4] Rank Gunplay costs 4 Type Ranks.

– Raising Average [0] Rank Gunplay to Expert [+4] Rank Gunplay costs 6 Type Ranks (2 for Good, plus 4 for Expert).

NOTE - If a character wishes to gain a *new* Quality, they need to spend 2 Type Ranks to gain it at Good [+2] Rank.

When a character reaches Master Rank in a Type or Quality, it cannot be improved further, with four exceptions:

1. By spending another Soul Point on Improvement within Temenos Chapel, a Master [+6] Dead Inside will become an Average [0] Sensitive.

2. By spending another Soul Point on Improvement after joining with their Syzygy, a Master [+6] Sensitive will become an Average [0] Mage.

3. By spending another Soul Point on Improvement after conquering their Shadow, a Master [+6] Mage will become an Average [0] Immortal (or so it's claimed).

4. By spending another Soul Point on Improvement within Moon Lake, a Master [+6] Free Spirit may become a real soul, and will be immediately sucked through a portal (out to the Sea, halfway to the Source... or so it's claimed).

Backsliding & Regression

On the other hand, a character can lose too many Soul Points. If his Soul Point Pool is reduced below zero, this forces the character to *Backslide*. Backsliding reduces his Type by one Rank and puts 2 Soul Points into his Pool.

When a Mage or a Sensitive character has a Type Rank of Poor [-2] and his Soul Point Pool is reduced below zero, the character *Regresses*. That is, the character's soul falls back along their path of spiritual advancement. A Poor [-2] Mage with zero Soul Points who Regresses becomes a Master [+6] Sensitive with 2 Soul Points in his Pool. A Poor [-2] Sensitive with zero Soul Points who Regresses becomes a Master [+6] Dead Inside with 2 Soul Points in their Pool.

However, when a character of any other Type Regresses, he collapses in upon himself and *Husks* (see below).

> Example: Chang the Average [0] Mage is fighting off 3 foes. During the course of the battle, he zeroes his Soul Point Pool and gets boxed in. He rashly decides to burn a Soul Point to automatically Open a Gate to his Tower. Since he's at zero Soul Points, he Regresses to gain the necessary energy. His Type Rank Backslides, making him a Poor [-2] Mage with 2 Soul Points. But he's alive to fight another day.
>
> If he had Backslid to fight on and zeroed his Soul Point Pool again, he could Regress to become a Master [+6] Sensitive with 2 Soul Points – but he'd lose access to all his Magi Abilities and Powers, making the fight all the harder.

Ensoulment and Husking

It takes 13 Soul Points to *Ensoul* – that is, totally cultivate a complete soul (12 Points to Improve their Type Rank from Average [0] to Master [+6], plus 1 additional Point and a ritual). The newly-Ensouled character retains the ability to interact

with the Spirit World (that is, if he wasn't Sensitive before being Dead Inside and clawing his way back up, he is now). Sensitives can learn to become Magi if they wish; this requires another 13 Soul Points for Improvement, plus successfully joining with their Syzygy in a ritual. Magi can become truly immortal; this requires 13 more Soul Points, plus conquering their Shadow in yet another ritual.

> NOTE - For basic information on the Syzygy and the Shadow, see *Chapter 2*. GMs desiring advice on how to handle interactions with these Imagos, as well as transformations from Dead Inside to Sensitive and Sensitive to Mage, please see *Chapter 5*.

On the other hand, characters can rot their soul completely away, too. When a character (who is not a Sensitive or a Mage) has a Type Rank of Poor [-2] and no Soul Points in their Pool is forced to Backslide for more soul-juice, his personality will disintegrate under the strain, causing him to *Husk*. Husking turns the character into a Qlippoth – making this PC into an NPC monster under the GM's control.

> NOTE - For basic information on Qlippoth, see *Chapter 2*. There's also more information available for GMs on the process – and monster – in *Chapter 5*.

In either case, the session when a PC spends the Soul Points for Ensoulment (or loses his last Point and husks) should focus on the story of how the change occurs, and any ramifications for the campaign or other players.

Using Soul Points in Play

A huge black cat with three blue eyes opened the door for me. "Yes?" it asked in a surprisingly deep voice.

"I have something for the Mage Violet." I brandished the bag. "From Oskar the Sensitive."

Omigod. Oskar! He could still be out there, running from the Eye of the Dead God. I hoped Violet could help him.

The cat stared at me, and blinked at me in a triocular cascade: left, middle, right. "Come with me," it said, and sauntered deeper into the Indigo Tower.

I followed, walking down a short hallway which ended in a cozy little parlor. It didn't look much different than a living room in the real world – stereo, television, bookshelves, Ansel Adams prints on the wall. Sure, the color scheme was slanted towards blues and purples, but it wasn't particularly outrageous or witchy-looking. Then I glanced out the window, and saw that the room – or I – had suddenly jumped about twenty stories. The City spread out under Violet's living room like a concrete quilt. I looked back, and saw the front door. Magic.

A middle-aged woman walked into the room from another door. She had salt-and-pepper hair cut short and wide violet eyes. She wasn't cute, or pretty, or beautiful – she was what they call a "handsome woman." You know, a classy, solid, attractive type.

"Hello," she said, and looked at the bag. "Are those for me?"

It all tumbled out in a rush as I handed her the bag. "Yes. I got them with Oskar, he said you needed them. But an Eye of the Dead God showed up, and he ran off to distract it so I could get away. Can you help him?" In my worry, I almost didn't feel the now-familiar excitement as more soul-stuff trickled into me. Almost.

"Your concern for him is a good sign – Michael, is it? – for your own tragic situation. Keep it up." She looked into the bag. "A little banged-about, but serviceable. I still need more, though." She set the bag down on the glass-topped coffee table. "But to answer your question, no. Not directly."

"Why not?" I asked, frustrated.

"Because if I popped over to the Wood looking for him, we'd both probably die. The Eyes hunger for power, and I'd be a beacon." She studied me closely, and said, "You, however. You might be able to do something. That is, if Oskar yet lives."

She turned and spoke to the television. "Show me Oskar." The TV flipped on, and displayed an image of a scratched and bloody Oskar running down a brook in the moonlight. "Show me the Eye." The scene pulled back, back, back, and showed the Eye on Oskar's trail. It cast about like a bloodhound, but was moving fast. The image collapsed into a bright line, then a single point, then faded, just like on an old-time TV.

Violet turned back to me. "He's alive, but not for long. The Eye is herding him away from the safe paths back to the City. And it looks like he's been hit with the Stare at least once. As I said, I cannot go. But will you?"

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

Spiritual conflict is when one character uses their special Abilities or Powers against another character. In general, it works the same way as regular conflicts (compare 2d6 plus Modifier rolls; higher wins), but there's a difference in how "damage" is applied. The difference between the rolls of the attacker and the defender is *limited to a maximum of the attacker's Type Rank Modifier*, and determines the scope of the effect of the Ability or Power on the defender. Here are some rough examples:

Bind. The difference between rolls indicates how many turns (or whole Scenes, if the attacker burned a Type Rank) the unsuccessful defender is under the attacker's control.

Change Others. The difference between rolls indicates how many turns (or whole Scenes, if the attacker burned a Type Rank) the unsuccessful defender is transformed for.

Second Sight (Active). The difference between rolls indicates how many individual facts the attacker can discern about the defender.

Soultaking. The difference between rolls indicates how many Soul Points the attacker steals from the unsuccessful defender (minimum 1 Soul Point, maximum Soul Points equal to the attacker's Modifier).

Example: Jefferson (Average [0] Dead Inside) has ticked-off a Good [+2] Mage named Mbutu. Mbutu decides to use Change Others to shrink Jefferson down to mouse size, so that his cat-shaped Tulpa can play with the taciturn Biker Dude. Mbutu is the attacker, so he rolls against his Good [+2] Mage Rank and spends 2 Soul Points to attempt to Change Others. He rolls a 3 and a 6, plus 2, for a total of 11.

Jefferson is the defender and rolls against his Average [0] Dead Inside, getting a 3 and a 4 for a total of 7. The difference between the rolls is 4 – but wait! Mbutu's Type Rank is only Good [+2], which will limit the reach of his transformative magic. Since Jefferson hasn't learned Ward yet (see below), he suffers the indignity of being made eensy-weensy for two Scenes (The GM assigns him a temporary Average [0] Quality of "Mouse-sized.") Two Scenes is long enough for a physical conflict Scene with Mbutu's kitty and possibly even a "giant" Mbutu.

There was nothing to deliberate about. He had saved my life – what there was of it, at least – by leading the Eye away. Time to return the favor. "What can I do?" I said, and immediately was struck by a wave of soul-energy, although this time, it was tinged with chilling fear.

Soul Points can be used (or "burned") to activate or extend any of the below Abilities or Powers in play. Burned Soul Points disappear from the character's Soul Point Pool.

If a character observes any other being use one of these capabilities – or is told in *detail* how to activate them – and the Type of being they are has access to it (according to the *Abilities & Powers Chart* below), they then know how do it themselves, provided they take the necessary shifts or spend the required Soul Points determined by their Type.

> NOTE - Again, recall that extra Downshifts or Soul Point costs may be incurred for using Abilities and Powers in the Real World (see above, *Spiritual Abilities & Powers in the Real World*).

ABILITIES & POWERS CHART

	Ability/Power?	Dead Inside	Free Spirit	Ghost	Mage	Sensitive	Zombi
Bind	*Power*	3 Soul Points	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Change Landscape	**Ability**	3 Downshifts	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	At Rank	2 Downshifts	–
Change Others	*Power*	–	–	–	2 Soul Points	3 Soul Points	–
Change Self	**Ability**	2 Downshifts	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	1 Downshift	–
City Navigation	**Ability**	1 Downshift	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank
Create Object	*Power*	–	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Create Tulpa	*Power*	–	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Enchant	*Power*	3 Soul Points	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Healing	*Power*	1 Soul Point	–	–	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Luck	*Power*	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	–
Movement (Dream-leap/ True Flight)	**Ability**	2 Downshifts/ 3 Downshifts	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	1 Downshift/ 2 Downshifts	2 Downshifts/ –
Open Gate	**Ability**	2 Downshifts	–	–	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	2 Downshifts
Second Sight (Passive/Active)	**Ability**	At Rank/ 1 Downshift	At Rank/ 2 Downshifts	At Rank/ 2 Downshifts	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ 3 Downshifts
Soultaking	**Ability**	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	2 Downshifts	At Rank	At Rank	2 Downshifts
Supercharge	*Power*	1 Soul Point	–	–	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Ward	*Power*	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Special	**Ability**	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]

> **LEGEND**
> **At Rank** = Character can use this Ability with a roll against Type Rank.
> **x Downshift(s)** = Character can use this Ability with a roll against Type Rank with x Downshifts.
> **x Soul Point(s)** = Character can use this Power buy spending x Soul Points and making a roll against Type Rank.
> **–** = Type does not possess this Ability or Power.
> **[#]** = See below, *Special*.

Spiritual Abilities & Powers

In *DI*, once a character sees a mystical Ability or Power being used – or has the workings of that Ability or Power explained to him – he will be able to perform that mystical feat, simply by taking the appropriate Downshifts and spending any required Soul Points. (See also the boxed text above, *Spiritual Conflict*, for details on situations where one character wishes to use an Ability or Power on another character.)

Abilities are bolded, and require a successful roll against Type Rank to activate. *Powers* are in italics, and require both a roll against Type Rank and the expenditure of Soul Points (or Type Ranks). *Can be Warded* appears in the descriptions below if the Ward Power can block or dispel the effects of the described Ability or Power.

Bind: Burning the required Soul Points (see *Abilities & Powers Chart*) to try and Bind another being to your will, or reshape their mind into a new attitude (loyalty charm, love reversed into hate, confusion spell); this initiates spiritual conflict. If successful, the attacker can control the target for a number of actions equal to the difference of their rolls. (If a Type Rank is burned, the duration could increase to Scenes or even hours). If successful against a Tulpa, the attacker may burn a Type Rank to become its new master (to master Ghosts, Free Spirits, or Spirit World beasts requires the burning of 2 Type Ranks). To use Bind against an embodied Type (Dead Inside, Sensitive, or Zombi), the attacker must hold a Soul Egg containing at least one of the target's Soul Points. To use Bind against a Mage, the attacker must hold the target's Wizard Egg. Henceforth, the entity is compelled to obey the character's will as if it were a Tulpa created by him,

and may break free of control following the same procedure. *Can be Warded.*

Change Landscape: Alter a single aspect (appearance, size, color, temperature, climate, etc.) or feature of the character's locale with a successful roll against Type Rank (GM determines relevant Target Numbers); can also used to move objects through the air. Basic use of Change Landscape could create a door in a blank wall, instantly brick up a window, or cause a street lamp to sprout from the pavement. Taking an additional Downshift on the roll or burning Soul Points allows the opening of larger passages – alleys, sewer tunnels, corridors – and the creation or elimination of larger objects, like phone booths or newsstands. More Downshifts taken or Soul Points burned could create rooms in large buildings, change the decor in a house, or raise a section of sewer to street level. All of these effects are of short duration, but burning a Type Rank makes them more durable, lasting until changed by another character or effaced by the slow shifting of the City.

Change Others: Reshape the body of another character into a new form (toad, tree, rooted feet, erase mouth, etc.). Burning the required Soul Points (see *Abilities & Powers Chart*) and succeeding in spiritual conflict allows either lasting minor changes or short-term major changes to the target; burning more Soul Points or a Type Rank extends the duration and scope of the effect. (Game mechanically, basic use allows the attacker to apply an Upshift or Downshift to one of the victim's Qualities, or temporarily grant them shape-based Average [0] Qualities.) *Can be Warded.*

Change Self: Reshape one's body into another form (becoming a lion, increasing or decreasing size, altering facial appearance, growing knife fingers, etc.) with a successful roll against Type Rank (GM determines relevant Target Numbers). More Downshifts taken or Soul Points burned allows either lasting minor changes or temporary major changes; burning a Type Rank extends the duration of the effect. (Game mechanically, basic use allows the character to apply an Upshift or Downshift to one of his Qualities, or temporarily grant himself a shape-based Average [0] Quality.) *Can be Warded.*

City Navigation: With a successful roll against Type Rank (GM determines relevant Target Numbers), allows a character to locate the current direction of a notable landmark within the City (see *Chapter 2*) that he has visited, or identify the most direct path to reach a notable landmark he has visited. *Can be Warded.*

> NOTE - While not usually useful for navigating in the parts of the Spirit World outside of the City, some GMs may decide to permit City Navigation to be used that way.

Create Object: Create a small, everyday object out of nothingness. Burning the required Soul Points (see *Abilities & Powers Chart*) allows a lasting simple item (no moving parts, low quality materials, etc.) or temporary complicated items (a jewel, a machine with moving parts, a complicated recipe); burning a Type Rank extends the duration of the object. *Can be Warded.*

Create Tulpa: Soul Points can be "calved off" to form small semi-intelligent servitors called Tulpas. The initial Soul Point cost to create a being with an Average [0] Tulpa Quality is listed on the *Abilities & Powers Chart*. Subsequent Soul Points can be spent in the same manner as for Improvement (see above) on the Tulpa's behalf, allowing the character to or increase the Type Rank, designate new Qualities, or increase the Rank of existing Qualities for the Tulpa. Sensitives are limited to granting Qualities to Tulpas that they themselves possess, while Magi can add any Quality they can imagine to their Tulpas. The creator designates a Tulpa's appearance, though such will always reflect its function (a Strong Tulpa will be heavily-muscled, a Burglary Tulpa will have lock-picks for fingers, a Watchman Tulpa will have large eyes, etc.). If the Type Rank of a Tulpa's creator ever drops below the Type Rank of his creation, the Tulpa escapes its creator's control and becomes a Free Spirit (see *Chapter 2*). Tulpas can be reabsorbed by their creator without the negative effects of consuming a Ghost (see below, *Soultaking*), as long as they have not already become a Free Spirit. Tulpas follow their creator's orders loyally. Other characters can steal control of a Tulpa away from its creator using the Bind Ability (see above).

Enchant: Burning the required Soul Points (see *Abilities & Powers Chart*) and focusing on an object infuses it with magical abilities; use the guidelines for creating Tulpas (see above) for enchanting items. Enchantments last only a few Scenes or days; burning a Type Rank makes the enchantment more lasting. Breaking an enchanted object might allow entities to absorb the spiritual force used to power it, or might do Environmental Damage (GM's option). *Soul Eggs*, *Spirit Traps*, and *Wizard Eggs* are examples of enchantments (see boxed text, *Example Enchanted Objects*).

> NOTE - Except for Spirit Traps and a few other exceptions, enchanted objects do not work in the hands of Average People.

EXAMPLE ENCHANTED OBJECTS

The rest of the textboxes for this chapter contain examples of Enchanted Objects (remember that only Dead Inside, Sensitives, and Magi have access to Enchant):

Stones of Light

Quartz crystals of varying sizes are popular objects for enchantment into Healing Crystals. The crystal will glow from within, and any Spirit Word inhabitant will know its healing properties when they see it. Forcing 2 Soul Points into a crystal makes it an Average [0] Rank Stone of Light, able to heal 2d6 Damage Ranks a day (either in one 2d6 go, or two 1d6 shots). Additional pairs of Soul Points increase the Rank of the Stone by one. A Good [+2] Stone of Light could heal 2d6+2 Damage Ranks a day (either as one 2d6+2 go, two 1d6+1 shots, or one 1d6+2 use and one 1d6 use).

Healing: Heal physical or mental wounds through the use of soul-blood. Burning a Soul Point allows the PC to restore 1d6 Damage Ranks to a wounded character (including himself).

Luck: Using spirit energy to manipulate probabilities. Burning a Soul Point for Luck before rolling gives a character an extra die for that roll.

Movement: Two special modes of Movement in the Spirit World are Dream-leaping and True Flight. Dream-leaping allows the being to move for the duration of the situation as though weightless, make incredibly long strides, walk on walls, or stand rock-steady on unstable surfaces (water, powdery snow,

skinny tree branches). True Flight allows the being to fly like a bird – or superhero. Duration for both types of movement is usually a single Scene with a successful roll against Type Rank (GM determines relevant Target Numbers). *Can be Warded.*

> OPTION - Movement might provide Upshifts for relevant situations – True Flight in combat (staying out of enemy's reach) or Dream-leap in a Climbing attempt (by running up the wall).

Open Gate: With a successful roll against Type Rank (GM determines relevant Target Numbers), creates a Gate between the Real World and Spirit World, allowing characters to pass from one reality to the other. Gates can also be created to connect different locations that are both within the Spirit World; however, no one has yet been able to create a point-to-point Real World Gate. Gates appear as circular or semi-circular rainbows made up of eldritch hues. Duration is generally a Scene; longer if Soul Points are spent. *Can be Warded.*

> NOTE - Recall that Average People can neither *see* nor *use* a Gate.

Second Sight: The Ability to see Gates, Ghosts, Free Spirits, Tulpas, and Zombis. May also involve clairvoyant visions, precognitive dreams, or psychometry (object-reading). Passive use of Second Sight is free (and GM-controlled), but actively calling upon it requires a Type Rank roll (GM determines relevant Target Numbers; note that repeated use of Second Sight "muddies the waters" leading to escalation of difficulty). *Can be Warded.*

Soultaking: With a successful Type Rank roll, initiates spiritual conflict where the attacker attempts to suck away another being's soul-blood. Also used for eating a Ghost. Succeeding in spiritual conflict allows a character to wrest Soul Points away from the defender (*minimum 1 Soul Point*; maximum equal to the Modifier of the attacker's Type Rank). Characters can be forced to Backslide, Regress, or husk through the use of this Ability. *Can be Warded.*

> **IMPORTANT NOTE - A character can *always* use Soultaking, even if Downshifts would take it below Poor [-2] Rank. "Bottoming out" via Downshifts normally makes use of an Ability impossible, but Soultaking is a special case.**

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

NOTE - Soultaking leads to soul decay – be warned! (GMs see *Chapter 5*.)

NOTE - Eating a Ghost via Soultaking carries additional risks. The successful attacker must succeed at a complicated situation, using their Type Rank against the Target Number of their victim's Rank in Ghost, or gain the Weaknesses of the Ghost.

NOTE - To use Soultaking against Average People requires that a Soul Point be spent to "crack" the "shell" that insulates them from spiritual powers and beings (this is in addition any other Downshifts or Soul Point costs), *unless* the target has somehow given permission to the attacker (like, by signing a contract). If "cracked," an Average Person yields 8 Soul Points to the attacker, and becomes an Average [0] Dead Inside.

Spirit Traps

A Sensitive or a Mage can create a Spirit Trap from a small object by burning 6 Soul Points. When brought into contact with a character, it will automatically absorb 2d6 Soul Points (or 8 Soul Points from Average People). Unlike Soultaking, a character can never drop below zero in their Soul Point Pool from losses to a Trap, which means that a Trap cannot force a Backslide or Regression. When in contact with a Trap, its creator (and those he has designated as having the right to do so) can extract as many Soul Points stored within as he desires. No one else can get the soul-blood out. Burning a Soul Point to Ward will allow characters to handle the Spirit Trap for a short time without additional Soul Point loss; the burned Point used for the Ward, however, gets stored in the Trap. Breaking a Spirit Trap is exactly like breaking a Soul Egg (see above). Traps can be "decanted" into Eggs, if desired.

Supercharge: Burning a Soul Point allows the character to "supercharge" one of their Strengths for a single action, giving it semi-magical effects on a successful roll against that Quality. For example, a character with a Good [+2] Rank in Gunplay could Supercharge that Quality to shoot around a corner,

or a character with a Good [+2] Rank in Fast Talk could Supercharge it to convince the sun not to set for a couple minutes. Burning additional Soul Points extends scope or duration; burning a Type Rank extends scope, effect, or duration greatly. *Can be Warded.*

The Blue Guitar

This robin's-egg blue acoustic guitar allows the wielder to make music with it at Good [+2] Rank. If the wielder already has a Rank of Good [+2] or better in a musical Quality, it provides an Upshift to that Quality when used.

Ward: Ward is the use of spiritual force to shield oneself from bad luck, mystical attack, or accidents, and is rumored to be able to keep a Qlippoth at a distance of one body-length. Burning a Soul Point allows the player to re-roll a single die of any failed roll.

Ward can also be used *offensively*, to bring bad luck and misfortune on an opponent. By spending 2 Soul Points, the Warding character can force a target to re-roll the dice on their next successful roll.

> NOTE - This use of Ward is a soul-rotting action. Be warned.

Additionally, Ward can be used to negate any other magic Ability or Power affecting a character – ironically enough, Ward can itself be Warded (see below):

– *Bind*: The target of a Bind attack in spiritual conflict can burn 1 Soul Point as a defensive reaction (instead of rolling vs. Type Rank) to totally block the attack. A character can also break a Binding on himself or others by making a successful Type Rank roll (GM determines relevant Target Numbers) and burning 2 Soul Points (plus any extra Soul Points used by the attacker to enhance the effect).

– *Change Others*: Character can also undo the results of Change on himself or others by making a successful Type Rank roll (GM determines relevant Target Numbers) and burning 2 Soul Points (plus any extra Soul

Points used by the attacker to enhance the effect).

– *Change Self*: Character can undo the results of Change Self on others by making a successful Type Rank roll (GM determines relevant Target Numbers) and burning 2 Soul Points (plus any extra Soul Points used by the attacker to enhance the effect).

– *City Navigation*: Burning 1 Soul Point allows the character to make a single target lose their intended path in the City.

– *Create Object*: Created Objects can be dispelled on the turn they are formed or disintegrated later by spending 2 Soul Points (plus any extra Soul Points used by the attacker to enhance the effect).

– *Movement*: Burning 1 Soul Point allows the character to block the activation of special Movement by a single target; burning a Soul Point and succeeding in a spiritual conflict attack allows the character to "shut off" a target's special Movement until the attacker's next action.

– *Second Sight*: Burning 1 Soul Point allows the character to "cloud" himself from observation by Second Sight for a Scene, with a longer duration for extra Soul Points spent.

– *Soultaking*: If the target of a Soultaking attack in spiritual conflict, can burn 1 Soul Point as a defensive reaction (instead of rolling vs. Type Rank) to totally block the attack.

– *Supercharge*: Burning 1 Soul Point allows the character to "shut off" a target's Power of Supercharge until the attacker's next action.

– *Ward*: Burning 1 Soul Point allows the character to negate any attack using Ward in an offensive manner.

The Ward Ability can serve in spiritual conflict as "soul armor." By spending 1 Soul Point, the character Wards himself ahead of time, allowing him to choose to ignore all the "damage" of any single turn of the next spiritual conflict he participates in (as per armor in normal conflicts).

Soul armor lasts for a number of Scenes equal to the Modifier of the character's Type Rank (minimum 1).

> Example: Using the Example from *Spiritual Conflict* above, let's revisit it using the Ward Power. Mbutu rolled a total of 11 on his attempt to Change Others and Jefferson rolled a 7. Normally, that would mean 2 Scenes of Jefferson being shrinky-dinky. Luckily, Jefferson knows Ward this time, and happens to have "soul armor" active. He chooses to have this Ward intercept the successful Change Others attack, and he remains unshrunk. On his turn, he runs like hell.
>
> If Jefferson had been caught with his "soul armor" down, he probably would have gotten reduced anyway. However, if he had been ambush-shrunk, he could try to use Ward to break the spell. A reasonable Difficulty Rank for this sort of thing is the equivalent of the attacker's Type Rank. So, to break Mbutu the Good [+9] Mage's Change Others ensorcellment, Jefferson's rolling his Ward against a Difficulty Rank of Good [9].

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

[1] Dead Inside suffer a Downshift to their Quality Ranks when used for social interactions in the Real World. When a Dead Inside dies, he becomes a Zombi.

[2] Free Spirits can Phase through objects for no cost in the Real World, and in the Spirit World for a cost of either one Soul Point or taking a Failure Rank; Wards can block this Ability in both Worlds. Free Spirits cannot Open Gates, and must rely on natural Gates or the kindness of strangers to pass between the two Worlds.

[3] Ghosts can phase through objects for no cost in the Real World, and in the Spirit World for a cost of either one Soul Point or taking a Failure Rank; Wards can block this Ability in both Worlds. Ghosts cannot Open Gates, and must rely on natural Gates or the kindness of strangers to pass between the two Worlds.

[4] Magi gain an Upshift for social use of their Qualities in both Worlds. Also, if they place at least 13 Soul Points of their own into a Wizard Egg, they gain the Quality of *Resilience*, and cannot be permanently killed without extreme measures (see boxed text, *Wizard Eggs*). When a Mage dies, he splits into a Zombi and a Ghost.

[5] Sensitives gain an Upshift for social use of their Qualities in the Spirit World. When a Sensitive dies, he becomes a Ghost.

[6] Zombis gain an Upshift for physical and mental use of their Qualities in the Real and Spirit Worlds; they also suffer a Downshift to their Quality Ranks when used for social interactions.

Soul Eggs

A character that may Enchant can create a Soul Egg from a treasured (or fragile) object by burning the required minimum Soul Points for Enchanting for their Type. The Egg can then store additional soul-blood within itself, as many Soul Points as desired, from as many different sources as desired. Unfortunately, Soul Points placed into an Egg cannot be tapped and withdrawn to burn for any Ability or Power unless the character is touching it. Soul Points can be extracted from the Egg at will by anyone in contact with it, and are taken in last-in, first-out fashion.

Possession of an Egg holding even a drop of a character's soul-blood grants an Upshift to any action targeting that character. Having a Soul Egg containing a fraction of their soul is a necessity for attempting to Bind a Dead Inside, Sensitive, or Zombi.

If an Egg is broken, all the Soul Points contained within leap to the nearest character in a storm of strange phenomena (warping landscapes, body alterations, spontaneous generation of Free Spirits or Tulpas, etc.), commensurate with the amount of Soul Points freed.

"Excellent," said Violet. She walked over to a credenza that lolled under an Escher print. The décor increasingly reminded me of the apartment of one of my Lit professors from college. She opened a drawer, and began rooting around in it.

The three-eyed cat came in, carrying a pair of reptile skin boots in his mouth. He didn't look happy, and spat them out onto a rag rug near the coffee table.

Violet didn't turn around, but said, "Thank you, Ricaard. Michael, put those on."

Ricaard the cat sniffed disdainfully, and retreated to elsewhere in the Tower as I grabbed the boots. I sat down on a leather wingback chair, took off my half-melted sneakers, and slipped them on. They fit perfectly – magic.

"Ah, here we are." She shut the drawer, walked over to me, and put a cowrie shell in my hand.

"Okay, what. . ." I began, but she interrupted.

"Those are Leaping Boots." She pointed to my feet. "That is a Sea Key." She pointed to the shell. "I will open a Gate from here to the Wood, somewhat off of Oskar and the Eye's path. The Eye will be attracted to the Gate, and will swerve off. Meanwhile, you will run as fast as you can, scoop up Oskar, and find a pool of water in the brook wide enough for both of you to pass through."

She sat down on the overstuffed sofa and continued. "You will then throw the Sea Key into the pool. When the water glows, dive into it. You will be transported into the Sea, anywhere from a mile to up to three miles from shore. Then you will run back here."

"The boots will let me run on water, right?" I was beginning to get the hang of this place.

She smiled. "As you say. And, if possible, bring back the other bags of blood-berries. If you can't, that's okay; you and Oskar are more important. Any questions?"

"Just one. How do I make these things jump?" I tapped the toe of one of the boots on the floor.

"You don't have to. They already know."

I hitched my belt, made sure I had a good grip on the shell, and clicked my boot-heels together. "Let's go."

CONFLICT EXAMPLE 1

Let's say that Kristov (Good [+2] Dirty Fighter) and Jefferson (Expert [+4] Biker Dude) get into a fight. Jefferson's going to go first, since his fighting-relevant Quality Rank is higher than Kristov's.

JEFFERSON: "I punch at the little twerp."

KRISTOV: "I'll try to duck under the big moose's punch."

Wizard Eggs

Magi hunger for True Immortality, and to protect themselves in this quest to know the mysteries hidden under the skin of the world, they take strong measures. One such measure is the creation of a Wizard Egg.

To create a Wizard Egg, the Mage starts by enchanting a new Soul Egg (1 Soul Point). Then, using a special ritual, he pours an entire soul's worth of his spiritual force into it (13 Soul Points), and burns an additional 3 Soul Points to mystically "seal" the object. Total cost: 17 Soul Points.

After doing this, the Mage gains a new Quality at Average [0] Rank called *Resilience;* this cannot be Improved. Resilience makes a Mage exceptionally difficult to kill – they just get better. However, this is not True Immorality; Resilient Magi continue to age, can sicken, lose limbs and organs, go senile, and even die, if a number of precautions are taken – like burning the body and scattering the ashes, or draining/breaking the Wizard Egg before beating the Mage into pulp. This Quality even works in the Real World, albeit in a much slower and subtler fashion. (The True Immortality Magi seek includes agelessness, perfect health of body and mind, total regeneration of lost limbs and organs, and rapid healing from even the most mortal of wounds.) If any Soul Points are taken from the Wizard Egg, the Resilience Quality ceases to work until it is once again "topped off."

If anyone ever gets hold of a Mage's Wizard Egg, he gains an Upshift in all situations directly involving that Mage. He can also tap the Wizard Egg as if it were a regular Soul Egg. Furthermore, possession of a Wizard Egg is a necessity for attempting to Bind that particular Mage. Because of this, Magi tend to either hide their Wizard Eggs in safe, remote places and place potent guardians and traps around them, or keep them in their possession at all times (though this can be dangerous, given the relationship between Magi and their Shadows; see *Chapter 5*).

Dead Inside and Sensitives – even if they do the ritual and spend the 17 Soul Points – cannot normally create a Wizard Egg or gain the Resilience Quality.

JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+4; he rolls a 3 and a 1 for a total of 8): "Eight!"

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; he rolls a 4 and a 5 for a total of 11): "Eleven! Ha!"

GM: "Kristov bends down, and Jefferson's punch misses the mark. Kristov's turn."

KRISTOV: "I come up and try to sock him one in the nuts!"

JEFFERSON: "OOoooh, not cool, dude. Why do you always go for the low-blow?"

KRISTOV: "My Quality is Dirty Fighter, sport."

JEFFERSON: "Well, I'll try to parry his punch away from my groin."

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2, he rolls a 4 and a 5 for a total of 11): "This one goes to *eleven*! Heh heh heh!"

JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+4; he rolls a 6 and a 3 for a total of 13): "Thirteen. Guess it's not your lucky day!"

GM: "Jefferson knocks Kristov's low-blow aside, easily."

KRISTOV: "Gulp."

JEFFERSON (miming cracking his knuckles): "This is gonna hurt you a lot more than it hurts me, buddy." (to GM) "I'm gonna grab his shirt, throw him into the wall, and wind up my haymaker. When he bounces back, I'll connect. Hard."

KRISTOV: "Hey, that's more than one action!" (looks at GM)

JEFFERSON: "Nope, it's Being Badass." (looks at GM)

GM (ponders): "Yeah, that's pretty badass. Jefferson gets an Upshift on the attack."

KRISTOV (buries his head in his hands): "This is gonna hurt."

GM: "What's your reaction to the attempt going to be?"

KRISTOV (has a bright idea): "I'm gonna Play It Cagey."

GM: "You know that'll screw up your next attack."

KRISTOV (ponders): "Nah, it's not worth it. I need to tag this guy a couple times, and I'll need all the bonuses I can get. I won't Play it Cagey."

GM: "Alright, Jefferson's rolling against an effective Master [+6] Biker Dude for this attack, or 2d6+6. Go for it."

JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+6; he rolls two 5s for a total of 16): "Sweet sixteen, baby!"

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; he rolls a 1 and a 3 for a total of 6): "Dammit. No go."

GM (calculating, 16 minus 6 is a total of 10): "Jefferson throws Kristov against the wall and clocks him on the return for 10 Damage Ranks."

JEFFERSON: "Take that, little buddy. Should've Played It Cagey."

KRISTOV (glumly looking at his character sheet): "Well, I could drop all my Goods to Averages, that's 4 Damage Ranks. Drop them all to Poors, that's another 4. Two more... okay, I drop my Average Dead Inside to Poor. That leaves one Damage Rank, and everything I got is at Poor now. Crap. I'll take it on Dirty Fighter and bottom out. I'm unconscious."

GM (to Jefferson): "Now what do you do?"

JEFFERSON: "I have a beer and wait for him to wake up, so he can take back what he said about my momma. Or else."

GM (to Kristov): After a couple minutes, you come around. You're still in continuing danger because Jefferson could stomp your ass again. Roll 1d6 for Damage Recovery."

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6; he rolls a 2 and a 4 for a total of 6): "Six Ranks back... Hmm, I'll put Dirty Fighter back to Good, that's 1 to hit Poor and 2 more to get to Good, total of 3. Dead Inside back to Average, that's 1. Rockstar back to Good, that's 2. There, that should do it."

JEFFERSON (to Kristov): "Apologize for what you said about my momma."

KRISTOV: "Sorry! Don't hit me again, okay?"

CONFLICT EXAMPLE 2

In Archaic Café, Zandra (default of Average [0] Seduction) has decided to hit on Kristov (Good [+2] Rockstar): when she was in junior high, she had the biggest crush on him, and covered the walls of her room with his posters.

GM: "Since Zandra's initiating this, she'll go first. However, after her initial sally, I think Kristov should have Initiative, because his Rockstar Quality is higher Rank than her default Seduction. Beside, he's probably used to that sort of thing. Everybody cool with that?"

ZANDRA (to GM): "But what about my Expert [+4] Marketing Executive?"

GM (to Zandra): "I don't really think this is a business transaction, do you? Or did I misunderstand?"

ZANDRA (throws a die at the GM): "Cute. Okay, whatever." (to Kristov) "A cute brunette who looks like a Wall Street version of Mary Ann from *Gilligan's Island* sidles up to your table and says, 'Hey, aren't you Kristov Wolff? Can I buy you a drink?'"

KRISTOV (miming reading a newspaper): "I'll try to turn down the drink politely."

GM: "Your Vice is Avarice, isn't it? And didn't you specifically get all Elvis in your Backstory?"

KRISTOV: "Yeah, that's right."

GM: "Vice Check. She's offering booze." (The GM secretly determines that the Difficulty Rank of this Check is Average, with a Target Number of 7. He could tell Kristov this, but prefers to keep Checks secret, so he doesn't; for more information, see *Chapter 5*.)

KRISTOV: "Okay... But I'm doing this under protest, because I think getting blitzed in the Spirit World is neither conducive to regaining my soul, nor sounds like a particularly good idea. What's that against?"

GM: "To resist the call of Demon Rum, roll against your Dead Inside Quality of Average."

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6; gets a 2 and a 6, for a total of 8): "I got an eight."

GM: "You feel a rush of warmth as you successfully resist the tempting offer of sweet, sweet liquor. You just earned a new Soul Point."

KRISTOV: "Sweet!" (to Zandra) "Thanks!"

ZANDRA: "Whatever."

GM: "Okay, guys, roll."

ZANDRA (rolls 2d6; she gets a 4 and a 3, for a total of 7): "Lucky seven!"

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; he gets two 3s, for a total of 8): "Kristov smiles and says, 'Thanks, but I've already got one.'"

ZANDRA: "Crap."

GM: "Okay, Kristov, you have Initiative now; it's your turn again."

KRISTOV: "She didn't take the hint?"

ZANDRA: "Nope, she's still standing there. Drooling a little bit, maybe."

KRISTOV: "Dammit. Cold shoulder time. I get up and make for the Men's Room to get away from her."

ZANDRA: "I try to stop him by placing my hand on his arm and doing that smiling with a twinkle in my eyes thing."

GM: "Zandra, take an Upshift on that defense. I think that's pretty cool."

ZANDRA: "Thanks."

GM: "Go ahead and roll."

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; getting a 2 and a 6, for a total of 10): "Ten!"

ZANDRA (rolls 2d6; gets a 1 and a 2, applying an Upshift gets another +2, for a total of 5): "Aw, c'mon."

KRISTOV: "Kristov walks right by, not even noticing that twinkle."

GM: "That's 6 Failure Ranks, Zandra. Where you taking them?"

ZANDRA: "I'll drop my Self-Defense from Good to Average, that's 1; Business Contacts from Good down to Poor, that's another 2; and I'll finish off by dropping Marketing Exec from Expert down to

Poor for 3." (to Kristov) "You really know how to take the wind out of a girl's *sales*, don't you?"

GM: "Oh, that's a horrible pun."

KRISTOV: "Punning should be a Soul Decay activity."

GM: "Write the author."

ZANDRA: "Well, I thought it was funny."

GM: "Okay, it's your turn again, Zandra."

ZANDRA: "Okay, I run up behind him and say, 'I thought "Be My Love Bunny, Honey" was *sooooo* well-written!' to get him to stop and talk to me."

KRISTOV: "Oooh, an aficionado of Wolff Pack's tunes. Still, I'm not on the market 'til I get my soul back."

GM: "Roll."

ZANDRA (rolls 2d6; gets a 5 and a 6, 11): "Awesome!"

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; getting a 3 and a 2, for a total of 7): "Whoops."

GM: "Four Failure Ranks to Kristov."

KRISTOV: "I'll take both my Good Songwriter and Second Sight down to Poor." (to Zandra) "He stops, turns to the lady, and says, "You really liked that one?""

ZANDRA: "Hee!"

GM: "Next turn. Kristov?"

KRISTOV (chuckling): "That was just the set-up. I say, "That song was crap. You obviously have no taste.""

ZANDRA: "Hey, I was thirteen!" (to GM) "I'm not sure I want to continue trying to seduce such a jerk."

GM (looking at Zandra's character sheet): "I'd say that comes under your Weakness of Taking Criticism, too."

ZANDRA (looks at sheet): "Yeah, I guess so."

GM (to both): "That's an extra 2 Failure Ranks. Hmm. You're going to quit the attempt anyway, right? But you have to do that on your turn. What with that zinger, let's roll and see if you get to leave on your own terms or left standing there, spluttering in rage, okay?"

ZANDRA (looks at sheet): "I think I only have Average [0] Dead Inside and a current Marketing Exec Rank of Poor [-2], so that means I can only take two more Failure Ranks before I'm out anyway, right?"

GM: "Right."

KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; getting a 3 and a 4, for a total of 9): "Niner."

ZANDRA (rolls 2d6; gets a 3 and a 5, for a total of 8): "Eight. That's only 1 Failure Rank, but when you add in the dig that hit my Criticism Weakness, that makes 3 Failure Ranks, and I'm out."

GM: "That means Kristov gets to say how the Scene ends, I'd say."

KRISTOV: "I give her that winning grin that graced the covers of all my CDs, pat her on the cheek condescendingly, and go into the Men's Room."

ZANDRA: "Zandra's just standing there, completely furious and at a loss. When she recovers a little composure, she'll mutter, 'I'm gonna burn all those albums and posters when I get back to the Real World. What a jerk.'"

GM: "Next Scene, you'll both be back to your normal Quality Ranks…"

DI GM Advice

DECIDING TO RUN A *DI* CAMPAIGN

You've decided to try and run a *Dead Inside RPG* campaign for a friend or group of friends. Good for you. However, being a GM means a little extra work. Here are some things you should ponder before going to your group.

What Power Level of Play?

There are three main "power levels" of play when starting a *DI* game:

1. **Dead Inside** who are scrambling to get their souls back. This power level is focused on education and survival.
2. **Sensitives** who are helping out the less fortunate to regain their souls, or developing the quality of their own souls in search of magical power. This power level is focused on relationships, exploration, and discovery.
3. **Magi** who are plotting for and against each other, possibly in a bid for True Immortality or rule of the Spirit World. This power level is focused on finding purpose, building alliances and organizations, and destroying enemies and their resources.

Think about what power level of play you want your game to be at, and consider what level your friends would most enjoy. If they're the sort of folks who dig Spirit World-shaking Magi-level skullduggery, and you're interested in Dead Inside-level soul searching and philosophy (or vice-versa), some discussion and negotiation is in order.

Maybe this will mean you'd better run the Mage-level game. Or it's possible that some of your friends will take a chance and try something different. Perhaps you can compromise – running a Sensitive-level game, heavy on the magic and emphasizing the metaphysics of power. Or, maybe you end up assembling a different group with an interest in the level of play you're interested in. It's up to you and your players to come to an agreement you can all live with.

HOW MUCH HORROR?

The intent of *DI* is that Dead Inside-level campaigns start with a strong horror emphasis (i.e., characters being at the mercy of power), and transitions to one of dark fantasy (characters striving against power, using power of their own). Once characters start to get a handle on their own capabilities and the nature of the supernatural world, *DI* can retain a mild horror-vibe while increasing the opportunities for magic, wonder, and whimsy. But the same moral issues remain in play throughout, serving as a wellspring for both horror and wonder.

Sensitive-level and Mage-level games start with a higher level of wonder and magic, since the characters are assumed to be knowledgeable and empowered. Horror can vanish entirely, or make a big comeback as foes with equal or greater might – but fewer scruples – array themselves against the PCs.

In the final analysis, it's really up to the individual GM and gaming group. Go with the level of horror that you're comfortable with.

What Style and Genre of Play?

Now, think about not just the power level, but also the *style* and *genre* of the game you want to run.

Style. Do you want your individual *DI* Universe (or *Diverse*) to focus on the dark fantasy aspects (magic, enchantments, dream-like quality) of the setting? Or would you prefer a more horror-oriented game (theft, struggle, powerful enemies, nightmarish qualities)? Is your Diverse highly cinematic, like a Hollywood blockbuster with tremendous

explosions, stylized fight scenes, great production values, larger-than-life characters, and big scenery? Or would you prefer a more documentary/*cinema verite* look at average people in not-so-average situations? Neither is better or worse than the other, and they sure play differently. How much of the game will take place in the Real World, and how much in the Spirit World?

Genre. Do you want to fiddle with the basic urban fantasy setting of *DI*? Will you paint over the fantasy elements of the Spirit World with a thick coat of a science-fiction gloss to make the City a virtual world within a network of computers? Is the Spirit World in your Diverse trapped in the past, looking like a crazy Tombstone in the Wild West days? Are the PCs coming from the modern world, a historical era, a futuristic period, or an alien planet? Will the PCs be Roman senators, scurvy pirates, noble samurai, Cold War spies, four-color superheroes, or one of each?

You bought this book: play *DI* the way you and your players want to. Go for it. Make it your own.

THE BUTT-KICKING GAME: *DI* FOR ACTION-ADVENTURE!

The game mechanics of *DI* are fast and loose, and can encourage highly-cinematic play. After all, who's to say that a Quality of Ninja, Superhero, or Double-Oh Spy can't be taken in a GM's Diverse? Not us.

OPTION - An intriguing concept might be to chuck the whole Spirit World, replace Soul Points with Action Points (or Spy Points/Hero Points), and just run a straight-up action game. You won't hurt our feelings – quite the contrary, in fact.

NOTE - Magi Combat, even in the most *cinema verite* games, is encouraged to be surreal, high-energy, and scary.

Episodic, Miniseries, or Serial?

Will *DI* sessions be stand-alone adventures? A linked group of adventures telling a single story? Or an ongoing, open ended campaign?

For groups that cannot meet regularly, stand-alone *episodes* are probably the best bet. If adventures can

be completed in a single session, everyone will feel as if they've gotten the most bang for their buck.

For groups that can meet regularly, but tend to have scheduling discontinuities, a *miniseries* design can work well. These would involve focused quests that require a handful of sessions (3 to 6) to complete. If combined with the episodic format, this will allow good stopping places for the PCs, so that in case of gaming interruptions, no one's left hanging.

For groups that can meet regularly and have little variance in schedules, a continuing *serial* blueprint might be preferable. Character arcs and goals can intertwine, branch, separate, and spark subplots or further plots as the game progresses week-to-week, month-to-month, year-to-year. Serial campaigns often become densely detailed, familiar, and much-enjoyed.

What Themes?

You don't have to go hog-wild here, but pick out two or three general themes you'd like to explore in your Diverse. One word concepts are good – any of the Virtues or Vices work well, as do ones like *Responsibility*, *Loyalty*, *Purity*, *Kindness*, *Hatred*, *Desperation*, *Self-Reliance*, or *Cooperation*. Use your Themes both in pitching the prospective campaign to your friends and when you sit down to design adventures (more on that below). Themes can change after you talk to your group, or even in play. They are the stars you hitch your wagon of adventure ideas to; you can always cut 'em loose if they're not going where you want.

What Setting Pieces Do You Wish To Use?

Take a second to look over the Locations and NPCs offered in *Chapter 2* (and below). If you want, make a list of the places you think your group will find fun to visit and the people you think they'll enjoy talking to. Just keep the list (and some notepaper) handy when you're talking to the players – they might give you ideas to connect the dots between their characters and the stuff you find neat. Again, keep all of this in mind for after your friends say they want to play and you're sitting down to fill in some notes for the game.

How Do I Recruit Players?

Some folks are lucky, and game with the same people consistently. Others flutter from group to group, or belong to a larger organization like a college gaming club. Still others hit their local game store for pick-up games, or connect through a bulletin board there. Some folks meet and/or play RPGs entirely on the Internet.

All of these recruitment options can help you in getting people together for a *DI* campaign. However – and, let's be honest, here – *DI* is a new, unknown game system that has a metaphysical slant, so some of these people aren't going to be interested in experimenting with it. That's great. It's not a reflection on you, on them, or on *DI*. Different strokes for different folks.

Then there are people who might be interested in *DI*, but depending upon the level, style, and themes you want to explore, might lose interest. Maybe they wanted the quiet struggle against slipping into the Void when you wanted a rootin' tootin' "Western Marshals of the Spirit World" sort of thing. If you can't compromise, look for folks who want to explore your Diverse rather than inflicting it on those who want something else. *C'est la vie.*

You could also try to recruit people who have never played an RPG before (or who haven't gamed in a long time), but who are interested in the genres of fantasy and horror, or who have an interest in psychology, philosophy, religion, morals, or ethics. *DI* lends itself to deep but fun discussions about these topics. Take advantage of the game mechanics of *DI* – the **Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System**. It was designed for evocative simplicity, speed, and flexibility in play, and has been shown to be very welcoming and easy to understand for both long out of practice gamers and complete tyros. The relative quickness and straightforward nature of character generation can appeal to those folks who don't wish to "read 40 pages of rules" just to start playing.

The most important thing in recruiting players – *DI* especially, but any game – is be honest in what you want the game to be about, and ask your prospective players to do the same. Talk about it. Make sure you're all on the same page, or at least willing to bend a bit, so that everyone will have a good time. That's the goal of gaming – to have a good time.

Saint Rat
of
Sewerland

PLAYING DYNAMICS

How many people are playing – and the nature of how they are playing – will change the way *DI* is played. This could have an impact on any of the elements (Level, Style & Genre, Theme) we mentioned above. Here are a few of the high points.

Open vs. Closed Games

Is your *DI* game going to be open or closed?

Open games are potentially infinite – with no defined endpoint, they can go on and on, following the adventures. This is the typical RPG set-up: roll up characters and they go through adventure after adventure until the game is brought to a close (on purpose or accidentally).

Closed games have a defined goal at the outset, and once that goal is reached, the game's over. If you've ever created characters, ran them through a single module (or linked series of modules) to completion, and then ended the game, that could be considered a closed game. (That's not to say that the PCs couldn't be picked up again for a later module or modules...)

A good first *DI* game for new players could be a closed one, centering on Dead Inside characters trying to (re)gain their souls. An "all Dead Inside game" can give the fullest introduction to the system and setting, and allow the player(s) and the GM to work out the particular presentations, takes, and alterations from the material as written. The game can end there.

Or it could continue, if desired, as an open game or a new closed game. After playing through a few sessions, everyone should have a good grasp of the ideas in *DI*, and can then go on to explore new aspects of the Spirit World. They could make up new characters, or use their earlier ones.

One-on-one Play

DI works well for *one-on-one play* (one player, one GM). One-on-one play allows the player to go as deep into roleplaying their character as they desire, without having to worry about the reactions of other players around the table. Plus, since there's only one player, the PC is in the spotlight the entire time, and whole Scenarios can be crafted to explore the nuances of the character and his development.

This is a boon for players who might be shyer or more reticent in their gaming style, or who prefer a more intense gaming experience; it can be a problem for those who primarily game for social interaction, pure escapism, and the vicarious entertainment of watching other folks play their characters.

Group Play

Group play (one GM, more than one player) allows the players to spark ideas and characterizations off of one another. This can make for increasing social interactions and more challenging in-game quests (since the party is stronger than a single player). In addition, all around the table can be entertained by the triumphs and failures of their fellows.

Group play is a bit trickier than one-on-one play to manage, since there are more actors on the stage vying (or, in some cases, not vying) for the spotlight. Setting up obstacles and rewards becomes more difficult – if a group includes both a Dead Inside and a Ghost, for example, many locations otherwise blocked off from the corporeal character can be easily entered by the non-corporeal one.

Also, friction in the forms of bickering and differing goals can occur, not just in the fun way between characters, but also in the less-fun way: between players. Disputes can explode over everything from how each portrays their character, to in-game actions by one character that marginalize or hurt another character, to struggles over spotlight time, to bringing out-of-game issues into the game, to table talk disagreements about topics not relevant to the *DI* game at hand.

Solution: Play with friends and/or learn when to take five to allow people calm down. It's just a game, it's meant to be fun, and it's not cool to harsh another player's gaming buzz.

Troupe Play

Troupe play is a nifty variant on group play for some gamers. Essentially, troupe play is group play, only each of the group members takes a turn being the GM. This works very well in capturing the changeable nature of the Spirit World in *DI*: each GM will have a slightly different GMing style and emphasize slightly different themes and ideas, just because they're different people with different interests. Troupe play also can generate a lot more buy-in from members of the group, since they all get a turn in the driver's seat.

This, obviously enough, is also one of the biggest pitfalls in troupe play: some folks don't *want* to be in the driver's seat. They may game for escapism, and GMing requires too much thinking or preparation to be fun; they may doubt their own ability to run a game; or they may just not want to GM a *DI* game.

Quick Fix: Everybody doesn't *have* to GM, just the folks that want to do so.

A Further Suggestion: Unless you *want* your *DI* adventures to be really uneven (which is a perfectly viable choice), each GM should run an entire Scenario before handing over the reins. Switching off between sessions can lead to not-fun competition between GMs as they try to top one another. This one-upsmanship is a danger for all types of troupe, but when the period of control is as short as a single session (or less; i.e., switching GMs in mid-session), it becomes much more likely.

HELPING PLAYERS CREATE CHARACTERS

It's part of the GM's job to help his players create characters that are not only fun for the player to role-play, but that also won't cause problems for other players. Here's some general advice on how to do this.

Talk About the Game Beforehand

"A god can create a world only by listening."
– James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

The GM should talk to each player – separately or together – about his general ideas for the game. This could be as simple as "I'd like to have a kind of Gilligan's Island in the Spirit World game with the characters questing to regain their souls and get out" to "I'd like to do a detailed and epic game involving characters who rise from less than nothing to near demigods" to "You guys could be trying to reassemble the Dead God."

The next words out of the GM's mouth should be "And what do you think about that?" and he should listen to what kind of game the players want. After all counties are heard from, the GM can decide if he's good to go, needs to compromise or alter his core idea, or toss out his idea and go with the better, more fun, or more desired idea the players came up with.

Once this short, preliminary discussion happens, everybody should be on the same page on the types of characters that would fit in the prospective game.
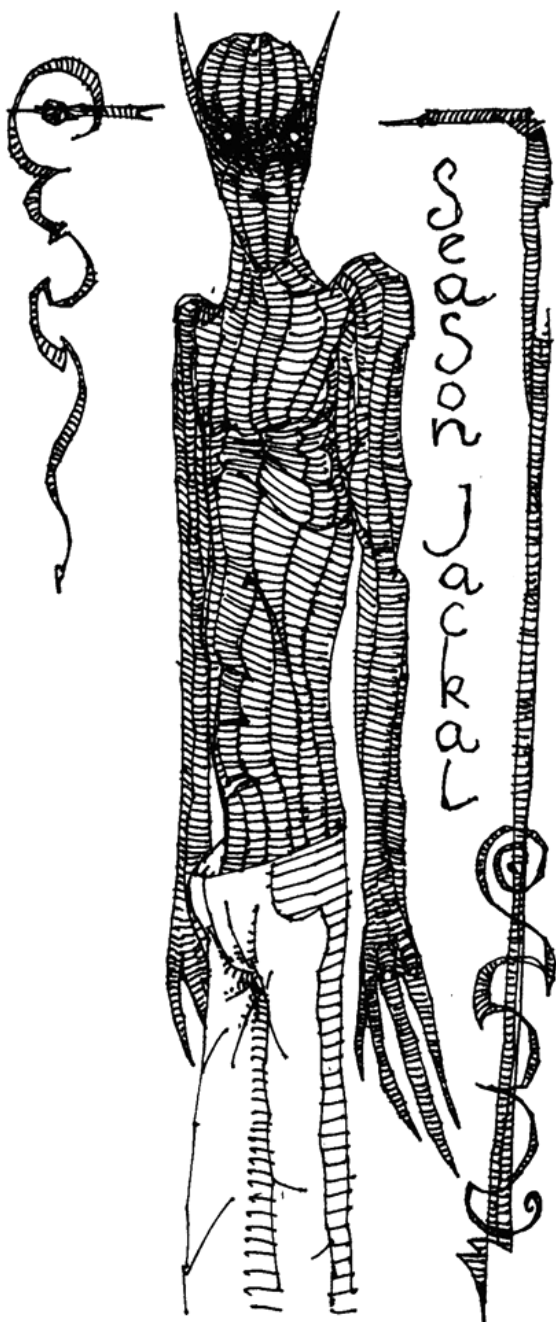
Comfort and Stretching in Characters

Some players like to play the same type of character often; others enjoy trying new things. GMs shouldn't force them either way. However, if a GM thinks that a player would be particularly suited to a character type, or would get substantial entertainment from a character type they wouldn't normally play, they can feel free to offer their ideas. But GMs shouldn't be upset if they're told to take a hike.

Refining Choices During Character Generation and After

The optimum way to fashion a character for a new *DI* player is for the GM to step the player through the Character Generation process detailed in *Chapter 3*, in whatever order is necessary, as a dialogue. By collaborating in this fashion, a GM can offer suggestions on focus, characterization ideas, backstory ideas, identify intrinsic Setting and Adventure Hooks (see below), and suggest the scope and limits of Quality selection. For an example of the latter, say a player is building his character as a firefighter, and wants to know if the Fireman Quality would let him use a fire-axe as a weapon. If the GM says no, and the player *really* wants to be able to hack at things with a three-quarter axe, he can take a Choppin' With an Axe Quality. If the GM says "sure, axe use is covered under Fireman," then that frees up another Quality slot for the player's character.

The GM should also suggest to (especially first-time) players when to broaden up their Qualities to take advantage of the *DI* game mechanics. Why take Qualities of Hide, Fight, Dodge, and Climb when you can take a single Ninja Quality? GMs should point out ways to make their players' characters more efficient under the *PDQ System*, more fun to play (and to watch being played), and in general more interesting for the player throughout the process of making up a character.

> NOTE - An easy way to prompt Quality choice is to simply remind the player of the general "categories" of Qualities: *physical*, *mental*, *social*, *professional*, and *spiritual*. A PC who has his Strengths and Weakness spread out among the categories will be a much more interesting character than one who focuses overmuch on a single type of Quality.

However, the most single powerful ability of the GM should be used rigorously during character generation: the GM Veto. Anything that seems like it will lead to less-fun for everyone involved should be struck down if the player cannot describe how the thing they envision benefits everybody's playing experience. Just because he wants to play a Kryptonian Dead Inside and thinks it'd be cool is not enough: how does Vince being able to play Schmuck-El the Depressed make Vivian's time around the gaming table better? (Not that it can't or shouldn't be done; playing Dead Inside variants of popular superheroes could be a really intriguing idea for a *DI* campaign....)

Lastly, if after a session or two the player isn't happy with their character's performance, it is highly recommended that he and the GM sit down to see if any Qualities can be changed, collapsed, or added to reflect the way the character's been played. Whatever maximizes everybody's fun is okay.

Intrinsic Setting & Adventure Hooks

GMs should encourage the players, when making up their characters, to leave elements of their Backstory blank or roughly sketched. (Note that the Soul Stolen and Soul Sold reasons for soul loss are tailor-made adventure hooks, provided the player lets those plot threads dangle.) That way, he can go back and play connect-the-dots with elements of his Scenario and the *DI* setting. Did a character's father leave home when they were a baby? Make Samuel their Daddy. Did a shadowy figure steal their soul when they were at Disney World? Whoa – instant villain for a Scenario (or campaign). Was the character mysteriously lost for two days as a teenager, and they've never been able to remember where they were? Maybe they passed into the Spirit World unwittingly, and had their minds blown... and a small tribe of Free Spirits in the Wastes worships the character as a god.

Group Character Generation

Instead of allowing players to scamper off to separate corners to work on their characters, the GM may want to suggest everybody sitting around the game table to throw out their ideas and opinions on each other's characters. This can lead to more cohesive groups, as players differentiate their PCs. If

two players both want to play a big, dumb, strong guy, simply saying that around the table could cause one of them to change their mind and go with a different character concept, or merely take the time to flesh out how his big, dumb, strong guy is different than the other player's. Some groups will take advantage of the ability to mix and match character strengths, optimizing the party so as to handle all sorts of threats. ("You be the physical guy, you be the mental guy, I'll be the social guy, and you be the professional guy." Congratulations: you've just made the A-Team – BA, Hannibal, Face, and Murdock – and *they* lasted a couple seasons.)

Another great feature of group character generation is the option of a common origin for the characters. Perhaps they all sold their souls to the same guy, are related, went to high school together, or suffered the same mysterious train crash that flung them right into the Spirit World. A shared beginning point or pre-existing relationship between characters is a powerful tool for keeping the group together and friendly.

The two largest pitfalls with group character generation are: 1) the possibility of players getting pressured into a character they really don't want to play, simply to balance the group (a.k.a. "the Cleric Problem"); and 2) unless the players are skilled at keeping the division between player-knowledge and character-knowledge inviolate, it will be hard for one character to have a Deep Dark Secret that could cause a ruckus of fun down the line.

Skeptical Characters ("Scullys")

"If people are constantly encouraged to understand their thoughts as chemical secretions, and even their impulses to kindness as a sophisticated form of egoism, whatever they have left of them that constituted their soul will be lost."

– Robert Musil

Sane Real World characters probably won't believe in any of this weird stuff – a Spirit World, magical powers, prophetic visions. When presented with it, they'll spend time trying to rationalize away the things that they see or those that happen to them in a hundred different ways. What happens if a rationally-minded sort like this becomes Dead Inside? A *DI* game might lose its spark and drag if one (or more) character(s) continually denies reality and conceits of the game.

Unless the player *wishes* to play this type of "Scully" character, he can become frustrated with the disconnect between the desire to join in the spiritual fun and games and the need for his character to remain true to his conception of it. What is there to do?

One option is for the GM to take the discouraged player aside, and flat-out ask him what would convince the character that the non-ordinary reality of the Spirit World is as true as the Real World. If the player comes up with something, give it to him, either later in the session or in the next session. Problem solved.

If there's nothing that could change a character's perceptions, maybe the player could get some roleplaying fun by being the Scully: believing their Spirit World adventures are delusional, trying to rationalize everything as part of a conspiracy, or interpreting events to try to explain them using Occam's Razor. (For an example of the first type of rationalization, watch the movie *Hook* to see how Peter Banning attempts to explain away Tinkerbell using Freudian psychology). Scullys can be great for comic-relief.

If the player can't see a way for the character to buy-in to the Spirit World and doesn't *want* to play a Scully, it may be best to admit that the character might be unplayable for the game. Set it aside, and come up with a new one; or, alter the character such that the character becomes open to the weirdness. A level of acceptance is vital to a good *DI* game.

NOTE - A Dead Inside Scully, denying all that happens to him, believing himself to be mad, could be an interesting NPC. Frustrated, lost, and trapped in the Spirit World, helping the Scully – whether opening their eyes to what's really happening, helping them regain a soul, kicking them back into the Real World through the nearest Gate (what if the NPC unconsciously Wards against other characters' use of Open Gates? They'll have to drag him to a natural one...), or some combination of these options (or others) – can be a great "adventure" for PC groups.

Multi-Type PC Groups

Some players may want to generate PCs that are of a different Type from the rest of their playing groups' characters. This is okay, if the GM is comfortable with the idea. There are slightly different factors to consider when making up a character of a different Type (see *Chapter 4* for any special Abilities, Powers, or shifts for different Types):

Free Spirit. Since Free Spirits start their existence as Tulpas, in character generation they replace *Soul Loss* with *Details of Creation* and *Discovery* with *Liberation*. They have a starting *Soul Point Pool* of 3.

Ghost. Since Ghosts are dead Sensitives, in character generation they replace *Soul Loss* with *Details of Life*, and *Discovery* with *Details of Death*. They have a starting *Soul Point Pool* of 3.

Mage. In character generation, Magi replace *Soul Loss* with *Details of Gaining Mage-hood* and *Discovery* with *Rituals Performed* (i.e., have they created a Wizard Egg or severed their Shadow?). They have a starting *Soul Point Pool* of 8, and must have a *Nemesis* (see below).

> NOTE - Where do Magi learn their rituals? Do they instantly learn the rituals when they double their soul, cease being Sensitive, and become a Mage? Must each ritual be sought out individually? Can study in the City Library – or performances in the Theatre des Loups – yield the information? In *DI*, the source of knowledge of Magi Rituals is left up to the individual GM's discretion.

Sensitive. In character generation, Sensitives replace *Discovery* with *Details of Ensoulment*. They have a starting *Soul Point Pool* of 5, and might have a *Nemesis* (see below).

Zombi. Since Zombis are deceased Dead Inside, in character generation they replace *Soul Loss* with *Details of Life* and *Discovery* with *Details of Death*. They have a starting *Soul Point Pool* of 3.

Here are some guidelines for incorporating different Type characters in each level of play:

- **Dead Inside-level**. Dead Inside, Ghosts, or Free Spirits can be played as-is. If a player wishes to be a Zombi or a Sensitive, they should have an extra Weakness (for a total of *two* Poor [-2] Qualities in addition to their Strengths); GMs should consider also having an enemy possess a Soul Egg holding some of the Sensitive's soul-blood. Magi are not acceptable characters in a Dead Inside-level game.

- **Sensitive-level.** Sensitives and Zombis can be played as-is. If a player wishes to be a Dead Inside, Ghost, or Free Spirit, they should have either an extra Strength of Good [+2] Rank, or may increase the Rank of a single starting Quality by one; they may also possess a single Enchanted Object. Magi should have an extra Weakness (for a total of two Poor [-2] Qualities in addition to their Strengths); GMs should consider also having an enemy possess a Soul Egg holding some of the Mage's soul-blood.

- **Mage-level.** Magi can be played as-is. If a player wishes to be a Zombi or a Sensitive, they should have either an extra Strength of Good [+2] Rank, or may increase the Rank of a single starting Quality by one; they may also possess a single Enchanted Object. Dead Inside, Ghosts, or Free Spirits are not acceptable characters in a Magi-level game.

RUNNING THE GAME

Being the GM for an RPG is tough work: you've got to set the Scene, portray the NPCs, adjudicate the rules, create situations to be resolved, help shape the story of the game with the players, and encourage them to role-play for their entertainment and everybody else's. It's a rough – but rewarding – gig.

In a *DI* game, the main tools to use are your *Common Sense*, *Game Sense*, and *Story Sense*.

Common Sense: Evaluate characters, scenery, and situations in terms of "Is this reasonable, given the situation?" Depending upon these three elements, what is "reasonable" may change drastically, however. For example, while some Real World families have a basic security system in their house, that system probably does not include lethal weaponry. On the other hand, the home of a paranoid might very well have a sophisticated security system with man-traps and semi-lethal defenses. A powerful Mage probably has extensive mundane and magical guards and wards around his Tower to protect his hoard of Soul Eggs – measures

could range from Spirit Traps to Change Other enchantments.

Game Sense. Evaluate characters, scenery, and situations in terms of "Should I make the PC(s) roll for this?" Depending upon what your players' characters are up to, and the way you run your game, this can vary wildly. Take the example running through the discussion of Conflict in *Chapter 4* – Zandra and Jefferson arguing over who gets to pay the check at the White Monkey. Some GMs wouldn't resolve this using the conflict situation rules; instead, they'd let the players roleplay it out, like most social situations. But they might still use those social conflict rules if a character is involved in a formal debate, making an attempt to sway a crowd, or arguing a case in front of a judge. Know when to apply rules and when to abstract them for the comfort of your players.

Story Sense. Evaluate characters, scenery, and situations in terms of "What would be the coolest thing to happen at this point in the game?" In many ways, having good Story Sense allows you to chuck your session notes and fly by the seat of your pants when the players come up with something cooler than you did. For example, say you've planned out the adventure to revolve around the mysterious NPC who holds all of the PCs' Soul Eggs. You've left clues left and right pointing to Samuel the Mage as being the Egg-keeper, but the PCs have somehow decided that Manny at the White Monkey has them stashed under the bar. If their idea fits the evidence, and is at least (or more) entertaining than your concept – change it. Especially if their idea is better. Story Sense means being able to judge which "story" (Samuel vs. Manny) is more fun: look to how your players are reacting as a guideline.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REAL WORLD?

As noted in *Chapters 2* and *4*, Abilities & Powers (except the passive use of Second Sight, Open Gates, and some Enchanted Objects) are limited in the Real World. Abilities require an additional Downshift and 1 Soul Point per use; Powers require a Downshift and a *doubled* Soul Point cost per use (minimum 1 if they are "At Rank" Powers). In Places or Times of Power (natural Gates, In-Between Places and Times, Rites of Passage, Haunted Houses, Sacred Geometry, Indian Burial Grounds, Feng Shui, Places of Loss and Suffering; Places of Joy and Delight; see also *Chapter 2*), Abilities & Powers can be used at their normal Spirit World shift and cost.

Currently, the interactions and plots of the clued-in and empowered Types in the Real World is left wide open for *DI* GMs to fill in to their own satisfaction for their Diverse. However, a few points are worth mentioning:

* Humanity tends to fear and persecute what it doesn't understand.
* The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.
* Humans tend to band together in groups.
* Soul Points are a limited resource.
* Places of Power are worth holding onto.

Taking these points together, most clued-in Types will thus try to keep quiet to avoid harassment. They may join like-minded peers or collect entourages of followers (or both), will probably tend not to use their Abilities & Powers unless absolutely necessary, and will certainly jockey to gain control over areas where their Abilities & Powers work better. *QED*: Instant secret occult conspiracies.

OPTION - If a GM wants to encourage Spirit World play over Real World play, they should feel free to make Soul Points harder to come by in the Real World (but just as easy to lose). Whether that means it takes twice as many Ticks to make a Tally (see below) or if Cultivation Ticks cannot be earned in the Real World is up to them.

NOTE - The upcoming supplement (titled *Cold, Hard World*) will provide additional material and ideas for GMs who wish to set more of their *DI* campaign in the Real World rather than the Spirit World.

DI Scenery

Basics: Describe each Scene, paying attention to what all five senses (plus Second Sight) could tell about it.

Many *DI* games will take place in the Spirit World, which warps and shifts in response to the actions, attitudes, and imaginations of the characters. The best way to manage and display these aspects of the Spirit World is to treat it like an NPC. Make it as human as you want, give it an animalistic mentality, or make it actively malevolent. Just try to be consistent in your portrayal for the sake of the players, if not across a series of sessions, then at least within a single session. If the Spirit World is out to get the characters in one Scene, then suddenly switches to being magnanimous and forgiving in the next, this could confuse and unsettle the PCs (or players) – they won't know what to expect at any given moment. Of course, it's your game – if you're going for that kind of instability in what is known, more power to you.

For example, let's say a group of PCs are walking through the Wood. Since it's a metaphysical landscape, it will react to characters moving through it. If a character goes and chops down a living tree for firewood, this – in addition to not being particularly bright woodsmanship – will probably piss off the Wood. The forest can turn darker for him, twigs can snag his gear more often than the others, the furry critters will hiss at him (or leap to assail him), or he can be separated from his fellows by shifting paths. On the other hand, a wise woodsman who seeks out a dead, rotting tree that needs to be cleared and takes care to make sure it's not being used as a honeycomb or fox's den or whatever, may be rewarded by the Wood, as if he had drawn a rotted tooth that was paining it. The path is smooth for him, the trout leap into his net, and the air is sweet and fresh.

Some Spirit World Locations, like Archaic Café and the Theatre des Loups, specifically focus on characters' psyches and change as needed in order to promote growth. Many Scenes taking place against these backdrops will require that the GM spend some time manufacturing episodes from a character's (or characters') past or psychology. Whether the GM does this all from "behind the curtain" by studying the Backstories of the group, or flatly asking "out of character" for the players'

ADDITIONAL *DI* LOCATIONS

NOTE - Also see below, *Additional DI NPCs*.

Faustina's Eyrie. Faustina's Eyrie is a tall, exceptionally slim spire of black volcanic glass, banded in iron. Two-thirds of the way up – nearly 25 stories in the air – is the front door. There is no way to get to the front door without Dream-Leap or True Flight. Inside, the décor is Spartan – no cushions, no rounded edges, no softness – just like Faustina. She commands the widest and highest view of the City from this perch, and many say that nothing happens on its streets that escapes her sight.

The House of Dusk. The House of Dusk is a temple to tantric sex: more than a bordello, it is a place of exploration and healing, and a useful place for a character to meet their Anima/Animus. Located on the Edge of Tower Row, it was founded a decade ago by a Sensitive named Helen Kierkegaard.

Rags to Riches. Willy Ragpicker, a resident Dead Inside, runs a pretty standard Exroads Market stall. An Army surplus tent pitched on a wooden slat platform, the stall is hung with colorful scarves and finished goods, while boxes of broken items are stacked beneath. Some are of Spirit World make, while others are gotten from new arrivals to the City from the Real World.

Thirteen Street Station. Thirteenth Street Station is a typical Train Station – they all share a ticket booth (manned by a/the Conductor), a turnstile, baroque copper scrollwork covered in verdigris, and elegant wrought-iron benches along the platform. By common consent of City inhabitants, Stations are sanctuaries from physical and spiritual violence... but this cease-fire sometimes breaks down during the long, quiet nights.

cooperation in generating the relevant Scenes for the target PC, the point of these specific locations is to externalize the internal. For some groups, the players find it really fun if they are allowed to help with the "stage dressing" of the area as it shifts and changes to teach or catalyze the target. (Furthermore, in the case of the Theatre, other PCs may need to take on temporary roles in the target's psychodrama: the mean college prof who told the character he'd never amount to anything; the teenage object of desire; the dependant grandmother, etc.)

> NOTE - Also keep in mind the effect that the Spirit World has on technological items: above ground level, they work pretty well; at ground level, they're a little sketchy; and below ground, they rarely work. One way to work this is to allow them to be used normally on rooftops and upper floors, apply a Downshift at street-level; and flat-out say they don't work underground.

In terms of the City, be sure to give each neighborhood its own particular characterization, to help define them for the player's imaginations. Perhaps the streets in Tower Row are polished marble, and the scent of verbena is always in the air; while the Rampart's roads are less-impressive looking but more functional concrete, and the air is full of cooking smells; and Zombitown's avenues are cobblestones, and a sickly-sweet odor taints the neighborhood. Just sketch out a few sensory details or pieces of set-dressing for each neighborhood... and feel free to incorporate your own.

Also do not neglect the effect NPCs will have on their local environment. How does that Sensitive decorate his Rampart apartment? What sorts of wonders has that Mage incorporated into their tower? Does that Ghost have a house on Spectral Point, and what does he keep in it?

Some NPCs may have gone even further, and claimed small areas outside of the City and set up their own tiny fiefdoms. Whole Islands in the Sea, Glades in the Wood, Oases in the Waste, or Fastnesses in the Mists could be ruled by a Sensitive or Mage with an iron fist, or be populated by enclaves of beings seeking to escape from the social, political, and spiritual machinations of the City. Maybe there's even a small settlement where Ghosts and Zombis live together in harmony...

DI NPCs

> **Basics**: NPC are people, too. What sort of people (and how important) they are is up to you.

You can make up full character sheets for any NPCs the characters might run into; this is less of a chore in *DI* than in some other games. But typing up pages and pages of sheets for every Tom, Dick, and Harriet will still take a lot of time. As quick way to handle this is to just list out a single Quality or two that would be important when interacting with the PCs. Remember, everybody can do just about anything at Average Rank: you only need to concentrate on where they're better or worse than average. If the NPC is an Exroads Market vendor, she might have only Good [+2] Merchant and Average [0] Dead Inside.

Another thing you really need to think about is what the NPC's current goal happens to be, since that will influence how they interact with the PCs. The NPC Cop who's coming to the end of his shift and just wants to go home and sleep will react to a bunch of loitering PCs in a quite different way than the NPC Cop who's fresh on his shift and behind in his monthly quota of citations given.

> NOTE - NPCs in the Real World that are Dead Inside, Sensitives, or Magi and base themselves there rather than the Spirit World should definitely be a little odd: they are fixated on the world of the flesh rather than the world of the spirit, and there should be a damn good reason. After all, their spiffy-cool magic powers don't work half as well as they do on the Other Side. Then again, there are few of them there and "in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king."
>
> While Dead Inside in the Real World are hampered in social uses of their Qualities, that does not preclude them from gaining positions of power and authority – perhaps they're just that good (high Quality Rank), or lost it after the fact (Soul Loss). Maybe they purchased their position with their soul... and don't underestimate the "creepy factor." Many people will give a creepy person whatever it is they want just so they'll *go away*, and a smart Dead Inside can make this work to their advantage.
>
> Sensitive NPCs are probably a little fey, unworldly, or involved in the psychic or occult subcultures of the Real World. That's not to say that every boardwalk fortune-teller or psychic telephone friend is a Sensitive – heck, they could be Dead Inside that *think* they're Sensitive.
>
> Mage NPCs in the Real World are a double-threat: they have access to surprising amounts of power even there, and they have a bonus to using the social aspects of their Qualities. They are charismatic, magnetic, and compelling. Whether working as a psychologist or cult leader, they will draw attention.

ADDITIONAL *DI* NPCs

NOTE - Also see above, *Additional DI Locations.*

The Conductor. He sells the tickets (in exchange for shared memories of travel) at the Station's booth. Someone just like him (or himself) takes the tickets as passengers enter their car. Those who walk to the Engine see him driving the Train. He's there, tipping his hat as passengers disembark. Sometimes, he ejects troublemakers from the cars, even if the Train is nowhere near a station. But few have ever seen two of him at once, standing side-by-side; seeing a pair of Conductors is an omen of one's own death.

Faustina. The Mage Faustina has iron fingernails, a piercing stare, and long, glistening black hair. She is considerate, but not nice: cruel kindness, the truth that burns, the sharp but pithy insight are all phrases that sum her up well. She never walks, she flies – the aerial battles with her Shadow are legend in the City. From her Eyrie, she watches, seeing all that happens below. She knows all the gossip, and will exchange her rumors for the rumors of others... if you can reach her door.

Helen Kierkegaard. Attractive in daylight while unadorned, once Helen puts on her priestess garb and stands in the moonlight, she is beauty incarnate. She is the High Priestess of the House of Dusk, a tantric sex temple. Helen is a Sensitive pursuing Magi-hood; unfortunately, she keeps getting distracted from her goal by all the poor Dead Inside she must help. (Part of the problem is that Helen is constantly using her accumulated Soul Points for her customers' benefit rather than her own.)

Willy Ragpicker. Born unlucky, Willy never had a soul. However, he found his way into the Spirit World at age twelve, and never really looked back. He buys, shares, and sells cloth; it's a living. While not a cheat, Willy is not a fool, either. He is both cautious and selfish, which has made his spiritual growth proceed at a glacial pace. He is carefully hoarding his "profits" in order to – one day soon – go and ensoul. He hasn't returned to the Real World since his sixteenth birthday; he found it too cold and hard compared to the welcoming streets of the City.

Some types of NPCs – notably certain Imagos, Qlippoth, and Spirit World Animals – require a bit more discussion.

The Imagos

The Imagos teach, but often their lessons are hard and dangerous for the student. They are forces of nature, whose sole purpose is assisting in the development of souls, one way or another. (That includes even the Shadow and the Nemesis, though the "development" sought by these Imagos could be death for the character; see below.) Imagos could be described as spiritual gardeners in service to the Source. Imagos can be invoked by name if their aid is needed. However, they tend to come when they sense a need, rather than when someone wills it.

When it does come, an Imago can appear in one of its full-time forms or temporarily "possess" a nearby character. Imago-dom can be thrust upon a character, and can be actively sought and cultivated as well.

> NOTE - As GM you may wish to disallow the latter choice: separation of player knowledge and character knowledge regarding the abilities of the Imagos could become an issue for many groups, if the mystery of what the Imagos are or can do becomes common knowledge.

Tapping into a deeper aspect of reality as an Imago grants certain Abilities and Disabilities (see boxed text, *Imago Abilities & Disabilities*) to the target character, in addition to those they possess as a Dead Inside, Sensitive, Mage, etc.

Imago Abilities and Disabilities

The full-time Imagos – or characters temporarily taking up an Imago mantle – have a number of special powers, related to helping (or hindering) a specific character. These include:

– *Character Focus.* Imagos may only use their Abilities and Powers– from their Type and from being an Imago – for or against the target character, or for personal survival.

– *Know Need.* With a successful roll using the target's Type Rank as a Difficulty Rank, the Imago knows what is needed for the target character to grow, and knows what must be avoided or risk Soul Decay.

– *Set Quest.* Imagos can set tasks for a target character, which must be related to either the Imago's or the target character's current Virtue and Vice. Upon completion of this task, the target character instantly gains one Soul Point, which seemingly comes from nowhere.

FULL-TIME IMAGOS

Full-time Imagos are NPCs who are *always* Imagos – they're not possessed by an Imago, they are one in the flesh. Evie (manager of the Archaic Café) and Manny (the bartender of the White Monkey) may be two such.

Here follows more detailed information on a few Imagos:

Anima/Animus/Syzygy. In *Chapter 2*, we learn that the Anima/Animus/Syzygy is "the female aspect of the male's unconscious, and the male part of the female's," one of the primary guides in soul cultivation, and a participant in the character's love-life. But what does all of that *mean*, especially in the context of the game?

The Anima/Animus/Syzygy is concerned most with relationships – friendly ones, romantic ones, and antagonistic ones. It gets involved in a character's life to strengthen good relationships, repair or sever bad relationships, and teach the target how to form new relationships. If a character is having problems dealing with other people, the Anima/Animus/Syzygy might be showing up soon.

A quick and easy way to think about how to characterize a character's Anima/Animus is to think of it being strong where the character is weak. This doesn't mean that it's the *opposite* of the character, but rather *complementary* to the character. If a character is a physical sort – athlete, fighter, laborer – the Anima/Animus will focus on mental, social, and professional issues. If the character is strongly mental and professional, the Anima/Animus will balance by being strongly physical and social. If a character only lacks physical prowess, the Anima/Animus will possess that prowess. And so forth, for the various iterations. If Qualities ever have to be determined for the Anima/Animus, simply duplicate the character's character sheet, and alter the emphases, or come up with logical extensions that would "round out" the character.

The union of these complementary parts – character and their Anima/Animus – is the Syzygy. It is the complete and balanced individual which must be accepted to gain the power of the Magi. When a character desires and is ready for this change in state, the Syzygy will appear (possibly rising out of the Anima/Animus) and set the necessary quest. The quest should involve the character performing some deed or task that displays or utilizes the nature of their Anima/Animus. This means that the big bruiser must do some brainwork, the intellectual must physically exert himself, the social butterfly must rely on themselves, the professional type must relearn how to let their hair down and relax, or some mixture of these, focusing on transcending a character's limitations (use the character's Weakness as a guide, here).

To transform from a Sensitive into a Mage, the character must come to terms with their Syzygy. This involves a ritual: a mystical wedding between character and Anima/Animus, officiated by a Trickster.

NOTE - Finding a Trickster to perform the wedding, as well as keeping him/her/it out of trouble during the proceedings, is *definitely* an adventure within itself.

While sometimes performed at Linnet Fracture, the ceremony can be done in any location bearing hidden gates to other parts of the Spirit World (Wyld Park, Moon Lake, the Ripping Fogs, Exroads Market). The Master [+6] Sensitive character burns a Soul Point during the ceremony, and at the end has balanced his male and female sides to become an Average [0] Mage.

The Shadow. As the animal part of a being's unconscious, the Shadow cares about basic urges: *hunger*, *sexuality*, *play*, c*uriosity*, and *creativity*, irrespective of the needs of the moment. It has little concern for social strictures or spiritual needs; all it cares about is survival and sating its desires. This is why the Shadow receives Soul Points lost to Decay (see below, *The Shadow Knows*). The Shadow can use them to fuel any of the Abilities & Powers accessible to the character; a common tactic of the Shadow is to use these Soul Points on Second Sight, to gain further knowledge of the Spirit World and its inhabitants, so that it can protect its character and lead it to further sate its/their desires.

It can also offer these lost Soul Points (also called *Shadow Points*) back to the character to use – but they must be used *immediately* on an Ability or Power, or to stop the process of Husking. The taint upon Shadow Points instantly grants Soul Decay (see below, *Decay Ticks*). Despite all this, the Shadow – at least until the first ritual to change a Mage into a True Immortal – is dedicated to keeping its owner *alive*, *healthy*, and *on course* for gaining greater power (because this will allow the character to satisfy their desires even more completely).

"Conquering the Shadow" is what transforms Magi into a True Immortal. This involves two separate rituals. In the *Ritual of Severance*, the Shadow must be physically cut from the Mage: this requires burning 7 Soul Points, a successful Expert [11] Difficulty roll against Type Rank, and the use (and destruction) of an Enchanted blade. Severance traumatizes the Shadow, often making it into the Mage's Nemesis. After separation, the Shadow can take on a three-dimensional physical form, and shares all of the Mage's Qualities, Abilities, and Powers (including Resilience). It retains the power of receiving Soul

Points that the Mage loses to Soul Decay, already possesses the Imago Abilities & Disabilities (see boxed text), *and* might gain the special Abilities of the Nemesis. (Winning True Immortality ain't easy, bub.) The Mage will no longer cast a mundane shadow after this ritual.

The *Ritual of Ascension* occurs after the Master [+6] Rank Mage has either defeated or reconciled with his Shadow. The ritual involves consuming the Shadow; the only utensil used must be an Enchanted blade, which is destroyed in the process. (If the Mage and Shadow have reconciled, the tool required is an Enchanted needle and thread, used to sew the two beings back together; needle and thread are destroyed in the process.) A successful Expert [11] Difficulty roll must be made against Type Rank. Then, a Soul Point is burned to seal the two entities together, and the Mage becomes a True Immortal (see boxed text, *Immortality Options*). Given the difficulties, few Mages have ever become True Immortals (though it's rumored that Manny, the bartender of the White Monkey, is one – there are lots of rumors about Manny).

IMMORTALITY OPTIONS

When a Mage makes the jump to True Immortal, what does that mean? Here are a few options to select from (or come up with your own):

* Vanishes to parts unknown.
* Remains in the Spirit World as a Full-Time Imago.
* Remains in the Spirit World as a Mage, with a "True Immortal" Quality replacing "Resilience."
* Is given a Spirit World of their own to build/shape as a Demi-urge.
* Goes exploring – after all, they cannot be destroyed by entering the Void or Source any longer... Or can they?

The Nemesis. Unlike the Shadow, the Nemesis seeks to destroy its target. Usually, this is a role taken up by an NPC rather than a full-time Imago.

The ritual for taking up the mantle of another character's Nemesis is called the *Blood-Oath*. While uncommon, it can be unearthed with mild effort, and performed with a successful Type Rank roll against a Good [9] Difficulty. By making a sacrifice of both physical blood and soul-blood (one Damage Rank and 3 Soul Points) in a Place of Power or in a relevant Notable Spirit World Location, and swearing a great oath to destroy the target utterly ("before the Source and the Void"), the character becomes the Nemesis of the target. A character can only be the Nemesis of a single being at any time.

Being a Nemesis grants two special Abilities (that is, being a Nemesis does not *normally* give access to the other Imago Abilities; exceptions naturally occur, however):

  – *Tangled Path*. The Nemesis and its target's plans and goals will constantly intersect and possibly interfere with each other.

  – *Thwart Reward*. Whenever a Nemesis derails one of its target's plans or harms something important to the target, it immediately gains a Soul Point *even if the action taken causes a Decay tick or Soul Point loss*; and if the Nemesis forces its target to make a choice that results in the loss of a Soul Point, it immediately gains 2 Soul Points, *even if the action taken to arrange the choice causes a Decay tick or Soul Point loss*.

The Voice. The Voice speaks only when a *player* (not a PC) has become frustrated or confused. It speaks to the *character*, illuminating the choice(s) before him, offering trenchant advice or pointed warnings that there may be repercussions not anticipated in an action. (Preferably in a deep basso a la James Earl Jones.) The Voice is – in many ways – the Voice of the GM, but it must be used only to clarify a character's situation or options to a player, not to railroad the player and his character into a course of action. It is a powerful tool, and not one to be abused.

> NOTE - If the GM is using the Voice more than once every two sessions (no matter what the number of PCs in the game) something is *wrong*, probably with the way he has been describing scenery, NPCs, or situations. He should talk to his players to see what their feelings are about the game, and do what is necessary to make it fun for them, up to and including ending the *DI* campaign.

CHARACTER DEATH

Death is not the end for many Types of *DI* characters: Dead Inside come back as Zombis, Sensitives as Ghosts, and Magi as Ghosts *and* Zombis. Much fun can be had by allowing a dead character to "come back" in a different form. Remember, however, that Ghosts and Zombis, being dead, cannot become Sensitives or Magi.

Unfortunately, unless Ghosts and Zombis can unite safely into a new Dead Inside (which probably requires a massive number of Soul Points and a special ritual, if it's possible at all), when a Free Spirit, Ghost or Zombi dies, that's the end.

Qlippoth

Unknown to most Spirit World inhabitants, there are actually two types of Qlippoth: Living and Dead. Living Qlippoth come into being when living beings (usually Dead Inside) husk; Dead Qlippoth come into being when dead, undead, or "never alive" beings (usually Zombis) husk. When a living being husks, its Type changes to an equal Rank Qlippoth Quality. When a dead being husks, *all* of its Qualities become Qlippoth Qualities (this become important, see *Qlippoth Vulnerabilities*).

> Example 1: If Zandra (Expert [+4] Marketing Executive, Good [+2] at Self-Defense, Good [+2] Business Contacts, Poor [-2] Dead Inside, Poor [-2] at Taking Criticism) husks, she becomes a Living Qlippoth with the following Qualities (Expert [+4] Marketing Executive, Good [+2] at Self-Defense, Good [+2] Business Contacts, Poor [-2] Qlippoth, Poor [-2] at Taking Criticism).

> Example 2: If Zombi Bob (Good [+2] Bartender, Good [+2] Conversationalist, Good [+2] Black-Belt, Good [+2] at Knowing Where Stuff Is, Poor [-2] Zombie, Poor [-2] Goes to Pieces) husks, he becomes a Dead Qlippoth with the following Qualities (Good [+2] Qlippoth, Good [+2] Qlippoth, Good [+2] Qlippoth, Good [+2] Qlippoth , Poor [-2] Qlippoth , Poor [-2] Qlippoth).

Both types of Qlippoth can hide and fight well, do not track their Virtues or Vices, cannot earn or lose Soul Points (unless they've stolen them from another character), do not accumulate Ticks, and share some Abilities and Disabilities:

- **Qlippoth Vulnerabilities**. Qlippoth have several weaknesses. These include the "loss" of Soul Points they steal to the Void, the need to burn a Soul Point a day to stay alive; the inability to enter the Real World, and a constant keening or high-pitched whistling that seems to come from them. They take damage from physical attacks, but they also can take damage from a few spiritual Abilities & Powers:
    1. *Change Others*. The difference between Change Others rolls in spiritual conflict can be applied as "damage" to a Qlippoth's Type Rank. When the Qlippoth Type drops below Poor [-2], they vanish forever.
    2. *Change Landscape*. The difference between Change Landscape rolls in spiritual conflict can be applied as "damage" to a Qlippoth's Type Rank. When Qlippoth drops below Poor [-2], they vanish forever.
    3. *Heal*. Every Soul Point spent attempting to heal a Qlippoth reduces its Rank on a one-to-one basis. When a Dead Qlippoth drops below Poor [-2], they vanish forever; Living Qlippoth may vanish or come back as a zero Soul Point Pool Dead Inside (at the GM's option).

- **Soultaking**. Qlippoth use Soultaking to survive. When a Qlippoth uses Soultaking, the first few Soul Points stolen (equal to the highest Qlippoth Rank Modifier; minimum of 1)) vanish into the Void. The next Soul Point taken allows the Qlippoth to survive for another day. Subsequent Soul Points can be used on Abilities & Powers, or can be converted into fresh Qlippoth Ranks as for Improvement (though this takes up an entire turn).

- ***Living Qlippoth*** retain their human Qualities, can use Change Self to shift from their shadowy Qlippoth form back into their human semblance, can Phase through objects like a Ghost or Free Spirit, and might be able to be "healed" back from being a monster.

- ***Dead Qlippoth*** have *all* their Qualities converted into Qlippoth Qualities, cannot use Change Self to alter their appearance (only shape); can Phase through objects at their highest Qlippoth Rank without spending a Soul Point or taking a Damage

Rank. They cannot be "healed" back from being a monster.

Spirit World Animals

Many Free Spirits choose not to pursue soul growth. Instead, following their natural inclinations to play (see *Chapter 2, What Do Inhabitants of the Spirit World Do?*), many decide to spend their existence romping through the Spirit World in animal form. Foraging, basking, hunting (each other), eating, mating (GMs should determine whether Free Spirits can conceive – this will have an effect on "animal" population sizes), the whole megilla. Unfortunately, Free Spirits who forsake human company along with humanoid shape quickly lose their rudimentary personalities (and many of their Type Abilities & Powers); in many ways, they become the dumb beasts they pretend to be.

Limited only by imagination, these Spirit World animals come in a plethora of shapes and sizes, ranging from simple idealized animal forms (lion, lamb, squirrel, etc.), to those of mythology and legend (chimera, dragon, unicorn, etc.), to unique and/or bizarre beasts (Blurmen, Eyes of the Dead God, Foghawks, etc.). Most beings should have a Type like Spirit World Animal (which also acts as a Quality for basic things like Foraging/Hunting, Fighting, Finding Shelter, etc.).

Write-ups of idealized animals and creatures of myth are not given: any one of a hundred different RPG systems or the vast amount of source materials out there can give you ideas to adapt, to match *your* conception of what these beasts can do (how many times a day can a dragon breathe flame? Does it even breathe flame? Can it fly? Does it need wings to do that?). Instead, this section will focus on three *DI*-specific Spirit World Animals, which GMs can use as examples for their own creations.

Blurmen. Humanoid shapes of shimmering heat, the Blurmen haunt the Waste. Since they retain somewhat human characteristics – they are bipedal, have opposable thumbs, and use tools – they keep a modicum of personality. However, the sandstorms scour their memories just as they scour away their images. Ultimately, Blurmen act more like a troop of advanced baboons or chimps more than a tribe of desert nomads. They can be bribed with shiny
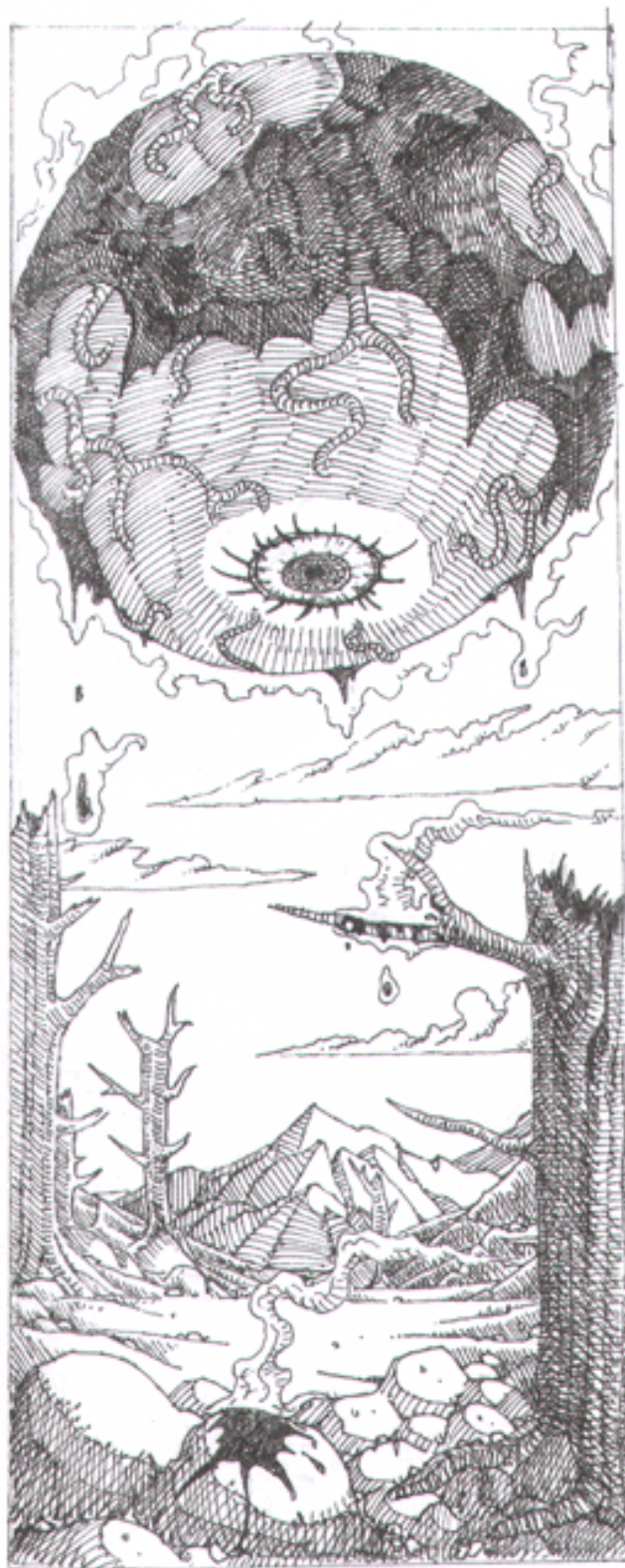
things; their "pelts" are sought after for Invisibility Cloaks.

- – *Qualities*: Expert [+4] Blurry (acts as armor and for stealth); Average [0] Spirit World Animal, Poor [-2] Distracted by Shiny Things.
- – *Abilities*: Dream Leap; Phase.
- – *Soul Point Pool*: 3

Eyes of the Dead God. Found haunting the Wood in pairs, the Eyes of the Dead God are strange beasts indeed. They appear as giant eyeballs, up to a yard in diameter, and are wreathed in an aura of anger and hate. Some sages claim that they are not devolved Free Spirits at all, but devolved Imagos. Either way, they are dangerous and hunt in tandem. Especially drawn to powerful souls, the Eyes of the Dead God use their powerful Stare to knock down, paralyze, and burn their prey; they feed on the smoke rising from the corpses of their targets, "inhaling" the Soul Point-charged vapor through their pupils.

- – *Qualities*: Expert [+4] Spirit World Animal, Good [+2] Flight, Poor [-2] Reactivity to Light (quick shifts from light to dark or dark to light confuse them).
- – *Abilities*: Special (*The Stare*). For 1 Soul Point, an Eye may use the Stare. When aimed at a target not looking at the Eye, it strikes as a beam of Good [+2] Rank force; this knocks prey down. If the target is looking at the Eye, the Stare paralyzes at Expert [+4] Rank (resisted by Type Rank; **cannot be Warded**); this snares prey. If paralyzed and looking at the Eye, the Stare acts as Average [0] Rank Soultaking (with a "special effect" of appearing to be fire), which converts the prey into something the Eye can consume.
- – What makes the Eyes of the Dead God so dangerous to long-time Spirit World denizens is that the more powerful the target, the more deadly the Stare is against. If the target of the Stare is a Sensitive, its effects gain one Upshift; if the target is a Mage, it gains two Upshifts.
- – *Soul Point Pool*: 7

Foghawk. Eyeless off-white birds that swoop through the Mists, Foghawks hunt by sound alone. Their speed and silence is legendary; only slightly less so is the sharpness of their talons. They flock and nest together in Fastnesses, but each hunts the Mist alone. Their feathers are

sought as components of Flying and Second Sight enchantments.

– *Qualities*: Expert [+4] Flight, Good [+2] Talons, Average [0] Spirit World Animal, Poor [-2] Blind.

– *Abilities*: SecondSight Sonar. While Foghawks usually orient themselves using a form of Second Sight, while closing for the kill, they switch to an rapid pattern of alternating Active and Passive Second Sight at Good [+2] Rank. This psychic Sonar allows them to locate and "jam" the Second Sight of the Foghawk's target (passive Second Sight vs. Expert [11] Difficulty to sense a Foghawk's approach). SecondSight Sonar can be countered or misdirected with Ward, causing them to crash into cliff walls, trees, or even the ground. (Note that if the Foghawk is not hunting, Ward will render a character invisible to the bird; a useful trick for those who raid their nesting Fastnesses for molted feathers or eggs.)

– *Soul Point Pool*: 2

Character Arcs & Goals

NOTE - Everything said about NPCs in this section holds true for PCs, too.

In *DI*, the basic character "arc" – the movement from the beginning of a character's story to its end - is that of the character starting from a position of (relative) weakness and moving to a position of (relative) strength. That endpoint of strength is their goal. Pursuit of a goal motivates a character, and shapes his responses to events and situations. Let's look at each type of being to get an outline of the arcs and goals for each.

Dead Inside. A Dead Inside is moving from a beginning point of near-soullessness to total ensoulment. For some (those who have had their soul stolen, sold, or lost), this involves getting back

what they started with. For others (those lacking a soul since birth, due to breakage, or due to rot), this involves cultivating a new, fresh soul. Once they have gathered enough Soul Points – from actions fair (helping others) or foul (Soultaking from others) – they must thread the Maze within Quaternity Keep to get to Tenemos Chapel. Then, they need to burn that last Soul Point to become Sensitive.

Free Spirits. Free Spirits in pursuit of becoming real souls cultivate Soul Points & Type Ranks through playing and entertainment. Once they step into Moon Lake and burn that last Soul Point, they begin their journey to the Source. Those who don't care about becoming real only live to satisfy their passing fancies, amusements, and desires.

Ghosts. Ghosts generally try and resolve issues left unfinished by their deaths, both in the Real and Spirit Worlds. Once that is done, they can pass beyond and rest. Alternatively, some former-Magi Ghosts may be trying to find their Zombi "brother" to return to life as a Magi.

Magi. Magi chase after True Immortality and attempt to weaken their own Shadow as much as possible. If they can glean enough power – earned themselves or stolen from others – and triumph against their Shadow, they may very well become gods. They also intrigue against each other, to stop their fellows from becoming gods themselves. They may also help out those less fortunate or powerful than themselves (all the other Types) out of a feeling of kindness, or simply to use them as cat's-paws in their personal quest for power.

Sensitives. Sensitives can seek to become Magi, and thus work on assembling soul-power to enable that change; they'll also need to fuse with their Syzygy to make that jump. Some simply live and learn, pursuing knowledge for its own sake. Others serve as guides and healers for the Dead Inside, Ghosts, and Zombis out of charity.

Zombis. Zombis generally don't have an overwhelming goal other than to continue to survive, and not decompose so much. Since they don't have emotions anymore, they often set random intellectual or physical goals to achieve, purely for something to do (anything from learning to calculate pi to 100 decimal points to climbing up to Mount Haustilak, floating high in the Mists).

SAMPLE DEAD INSIDE PCS

Want to just start playing the Introductory Scenario (see *Chapter 7*)? Or maybe a friend drops by the gaming table right before or in the middle of a session and wants to join in? Maybe it's been a long week at work and everybody wants to game, but they don't have the mental energy to come up with a new, creative character?

No problem! – here are four sample PCs to use, in addition to the three mentioned in *Chapter 3* (Zandra and Kristov) and *Chapter 4* (Jefferson):

Mel Berkowitz, Well-to-Do Plumber

Personality: Sensual. Mel believes in what he can see, hear, hold in his hands, or what he's personally experienced.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Integrity. *Vice*: Avarice. Mel knows who he is and his place in the big picture, generally, and feels that the thing he needs to change that is money.

Soul Loss: Mel sold his soul to "the Devil" improve his business. But substantial wealth didn't satisfy, so he wants his soul back.

Discovery: He knew – but didn't really believe – from the get-go. It's just that all the fun in life seems to have gone down the tubes; heck, the only feeling he tends to get anymore is the deep pang in his heart whenever he looks at his ledger books. When he saw a Ghost come up out of a u-bend one night, it all seemed to come together.

Qualities: Expert [+4] Wealth, Good [+2] Plumber, Good [+2] Youthful Indiscretions, Poor [-2] Suspicious Nature.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Unknown to Mel, "the Devil" doesn't exist in the *DI* cosmology; the purchaser was probably a Sensitive or Mage. Mel could use his "Youthful Indiscretions" Quality – representing an adolescence running with the wrong crowd – for fighting, street-life, vandalism, boosting cars, and other seedy pursuits.

Vina Marlybone, Geekotrix

Personality: Thoughtful. Vina's interested in new ideas and new applications of old ideas.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Hope. *Vice*: Cruelty. Vina can sit for hours, wrestling with a piece of code, because she knows at the end, it will all compile. Unfortunately, she's a little too happy with herself for being able to make it sit up and shake hands on command, and flaunts it in front of less capable programmers.

Soul Loss: Somebody swiped her tricked-out future-phone from work. Everything was on that handheld: address book, schedule, three years of diary entries, digital photos... It was more than just a tool, it was her life: she had inadvertently placed her soul inside it. Without it, she's nothing, and empty inside.

Discovery: Vina received a random phone call from a Sensitive identifying himself only as "Dr. Cagliostro." The Doctor knew she was out of sorts, offered convincing evidence of either psychic powers or supreme con-artistry over the phone, and told Vina he could help. Vina just shrugged and said, "Why not? Should be good for a laugh, right?" But she didn't laugh when he told her she was Dead Inside... because she believed him, every word.

Qualities: Expert [+4] Computer Programmer, Good [+2] Geek, Good [+2] Karate, Poor [-2] Near-sighted (wears glasses).

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: The Geek Quality is used by Vina to remember geeky trivia topics, discuss issues of interest related geeky topics, and interact with other geeks. Her Near-sighted Weakness runs the gamut from being inobservant (even with her glasses on) to getting "Velma'd" (what she calls it when her glasses get knocked off and she can't see anything but big, blurry blobs).

Henrietta "Henri" Peabody, Soc Prof

Personality: Empathic. Henri's fascinated by how people (including herself) interrelate, singly and in groups.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Courtesy. *Vice*: Despair. Henri's a soft touch, always there with a shoulder to cry on and an ear to listen with. But this often conflicts with her need inability to trust others – especially those close to her – with her own problems.

Soul Loss: Henri's soul was stolen by a student of hers – a young man who she took pity on. He wormed his way into her bed, and the next day was gone, taking her soul away with him.

Discovery: Over the course of the rest of the semester, Henri learned that something was terribly wrong with her. When her search for the student led her to the unexpected dark side of her podunk college town, she started to get clued-in to what was going on.

Qualities: Expert [+4] College Sociology Prof, Good [+2] Dancer, Good [+2] Conversationalist, Poor [-2] Fear of spiders.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Once introduced to the Spirit World and its inhabitants, Henri will be fascinated by their social interactions, and wish to study them extensively.

Ryan Shaunnsey, Broken Fireman

Personality: Instinctive. When presented with a choice, Ryan goes with his gut feelings.

Backstory: *Virtue*: Fortitude. *Vice*: Despair. Ryan throws himself into things – his job, his leisure time, his marriage – with great verve and energy. Unfortunately, he sometimes finds himself envying other people's good fortune, possessions, or accomplishments, and doubting he'll ever achieve the same.

Soul Loss: Ryan broke his soul when the call came in that his apartment building was on fire. Knowing that his wife was home sick and probably knocked out on cough medicine, he made it with his rig across town in ten minutes flat – no mean feat, since the trip normally takes at least half an hour (his buddies in the Department still talk about it). When he reached the building, it was too late for Doreen.

Discovery: He saw Doreen's Ghost, the flames flickering through her, wave to him sadly and float up through a rainbow and vanish. He's decided to find her, wherever she's gone, and either bring her back or stay wherever she is.

Qualities: Good [+2] Firefighter, Good [+2] "Irish," Good [+2] Family History, Good [+2] Buddies in the Department, Poor [-2] Obsessed (with rescuing his wife).

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Ryan is descended from an Irish family that seems to have had a high number of Sensitives – prophetic dreams, wild talents, remarkable luck; this is part of what allows him to accept his seeing his wife's ghost – it's not totally unnatural to him. This means that he may have relatives still hanging around in the Spirit World (as Sensitives, Mages, Ghosts, or Zombis). He uses his "Irish" Quality for family connections, drinkin', fightin', and mournful singin'. His Obsession means that he's easily led by the nose when something could relate to his quest to find his wife's spirit.

JUDGING SOUL CULTIVATION AND SOUL DECAY

"In the concentration camps, for example, in this living laboratory and on this testing ground, we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man has both potentials within himself; which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions."

– Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

In *DI*, Soul Points reflect the growth and withering of a character's soul: the meaning and value they bring to themselves through their actions and attitudes. Like cutting a gem, new facets appear as a

character is examined, explored, cut, and polished to a high gloss, ending with a more valuable piece of art at the end.

The tools used in this process are *Virtues & Vices*, *Ask Why*, *Cultivation Ticks*, *Decay Ticks*, and *Awards & Penalties*. We will explore each in turn below.

Virtues & Vices

DI's Virtues and Vices provide a tool for evaluating the actions of characters, whether they are PCs or NPCs. By comparing *what* a character does and *why* does it against the list of Virtues and Vices, the GM can track how a character is growing or rotting.

DI uses a short, syncretic list of Virtues and Vices as its default spiritual metric. But that's not to say that every GM *must* use them. Indeed, below are some alternative Options for Virtues & Vices, if the basic set doesn't appeal.

> NOTE - GMs wishing to explore the Options below are encouraged to do a little outside research to get further details on each.
>
> OPTION 1 - *The Seven Contrary Virtues* (Humility, Kindness, Temperance, Chastity, Patience, Generosity, Zeal) and *the Seven Deadly Sins* (Pride, Envy, Gluttony, Lust, Wrath, Avarice, Sloth) of Christianity.
>
> OPTION 2 - *The Eightfold Path of Buddhism*. Virtues (Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration); Vices (Wrong View, Wrong Intention, Wrong Speech, Wrong Action, Wrong Livelihood, Wrong Effort, Wrong Mindfulness, Wrong Concentration).
>
> OPTION 3 - The *Viking Virtues* (Honesty, Hospitality, Courage, Loyalty, Cleverness, Luck) and the *Viking Vices* (Dishonesty, Inhospitality, Cowardice, Disloyalty, Gullibility, Ill-Fortune).
>
> OPTION 4 - *Dealer's Choice*: Select as many opposed pairs from the above sets as you wish, or come up with your own. GMs should feel free to design their own ethical structure, but should note that they will need to do a little extra work to convert any new *DI* products or freebies, since those items will be geared for the default Virtues and Vices of *DI*.
>
> OPTION 5 - *Cultural Relativism*. Maybe every character works off of a different Virtue/Vice scheme.

Whichever option a GM selects will have a major effect on characters. *Virtues* are actions and attitudes that characters are being encouraged to perform and hold; their opposed *Vices* are those that they are being encouraged to avoid or eschew.

Calling for Virtue & Vice Checks

How often should a GM call for a character to make Virtue and Vice Checks (reminder: see *Chapter 4*, for basic *Virtue & Vice* info)? And how hard should they be? Should a PC know that a Check is happening?

When designing Scenarios, it is recommended that a GM pre-arrange one Virtue *or* one Vice check per character, generally at a Difficulty Rank equal to or one Rank higher than their Type Rank. (If playing one-on-one, this can probably be changed to "one Virtue *and* one Vice check.") The rest of the time, the PC is just awarded or penalized by Ticks as they go about their day-to-day lives. However, due to circumstances raised in play, a character may very well be presented with one or more situations that are essentially Virtue or Vice Checks. This is nothing to worry about. Simply use the same mechanics, if desired.

A Virtue or Vice Check is one of the times a player may be limited in their options by their character's nature. Now, whether a player knows that a Check is happening depends on the player-GM relationship, but the answer should probably be "yes."

The current Virtue and Vice predetermines, to an extent, what the character's response to a Check should be. When a character with Avarice as their current Vice is put on the spot, the universe collapses to "will you be greedy, or won't you?" Checks incorporate randomness here in the form of a complicated situation roll comparing the Check's Difficulty Rank and the character's Type Rank. While dice rolls determine the result of this moment of truth, arguably more important is what the character *wants* to do, and how the player *portrays* that internal conflict. It is possible that an Avaricious character fails their Vice Check and still ends up with a Soul Point, by garnering Cultivation Ticks for their intent and good performance of the "I hated to do this, but I had to," variety of roleplaying.

IMPORTANT NOTE - Letting players know that this is one of the situations where their reaction depends on the roll of the dice – like landing punches in combat or noticing something sneaking up behind them in the dark – and that *the way they portray their response to the situation matters* can help them understand that they're not being railroaded.

It's also vitally important that GMs express to their players that Virtue and Vice Checks can be rewarding, *even if they've failed their roll*.

Virtue & Vice Check Flowchart

1. *Set Difficulty Rank of Check.*
2. *What the Character Wants to Do:*
    - *Avoid Virtue* or *Follow Vice*: 2 Decay Ticks
    - *Follow Virtue* or *Avoid Vice*: 2 Cultivation Ticks
3. *The Check Roll (complicated situation; Type Rank vs. Target Number) Result:*
    - *If success,* character can do what he wants to.
    - *If failure,* character must follow Virtue or Vice.
4. *Why the Character Succeeded or Failed the Check:*
    - *No explanation*: 1 Decay Tick
    - *Reasonable explanation*: 1 Cultivation Tick
    - *Good explanation that fits with characterization and Backstory*: 2 Cultivation Ticks
5. *Portraying the Check Aftermath (How did this affect the character?):*
    - *No roleplaying of the Check Result*: 1 Decay Tick
    - *Good roleplaying of the Check Result*: 2 Cultivation Ticks
6. *Add up Ticks into Tallies, Circle, and award (or deduct) Soul Points.*

Example: Kristov (Average [0] Dead Inside) is confronted with a mystically-tempting (Good [9] Difficulty Rank Vice Check vs. Avarice) shot of the Whiskey of Life.

- Kristov doesn't want to drink it (2 Cultivation Ticks).
- Unfortunately, he only rolls a 5. He fails the Vice Check, and must follow his Vice.
- Kristov's player says: "After a long, agonizing stare at the gleaming liquid, I pick up the shotglass. I say, 'When I lost my soul, I searched for release and comfort in the bottom of a bottle. And here it is.'" (2 Cultivation Ticks)
- Kristov's player continues: "I down the Whiskey as a tear runs down my cheek. When the last swallow is gone, I realize that I've just returned to my old habits, looking for something external to fill me up. I drop the glass, and before it shatters on the floor, I'm crying like a baby." (2 Cultivation Ticks)
- GM adds up the Ticks into Tallies (1 Tally, with a Tick left over), Circles the Tally, and awards Kristov 1 Soul Point.

Ask Why

But what about those cases where the reason for taking the action isn't so clear-cut? Or the action itself, while significant, could be interpreted for good or ill? That's when the GM needs to ask the question "Why?"

Whether as out of character table talk or through the lips of an NPC, "Why did you do that?" can often illuminate ambiguous actions. Fore example, say an NPC beggar asks a PC for some spare change for food. The PC refuses, and runs off down the street, looking for a restaurant. What does the GM do? He should ask "Why?" Take a look at some PC responses, and the varied results:

- "I never give money to panhandlers." - Decay Tick
- "I haven't eaten in days myself." - Decay Tick
- "Lazy people make me angry; they should get a job." - Decay Tick
- "I can't be bothered." - Decay Tick
- "I'm calling the cops to arrest that bum for vagrancy." - Decay Tick
- "I'm going to buy him a sandwich instead of giving him a buck." - Cultivation Tick
- "I'm going to call a buddy I have in Social Services." - Cultivation Tick

For more on where, when, and how to place Ticks, see below, *Cultivation Ticks* and *Decay Ticks*.

Ticks & Tallies in the Real World

While Ticks and Tallies can be accrued in the Real World, it's best not to Circle and award or deduct Soul Points until the characters are in the Spirit World, to reinforce the setting conceit of the Spirit World being more "welcoming" of spiritual forces. However, in those Diverses where equal time is spent adventuring in both Worlds, GMs may want to consider allowing Soul Points to be awarded or deducted in Places of Power or at Times of Power.

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Sincerity & "Gaming the System"

What if the players in a *DI* game refuse to take it seriously, and run around helping little old ladies across the street, giving away their worldly goods, and basically acting like Dudley Do-Right, simply to collect those sweet Cultivation Ticks and juicy Soul Points? There are two ways of looking at this situation: 1) either the GM should refuse to give Ticks and Points for insincere actions, since that blows the "feel" of his Diverse; or 2) it doesn't matter, since the point of *DI* is to encourage "good works" in-character. If the environment encourages everyone trying to one-up the others by doing good deeds, eventually they'll actually *do* something noble without being snarky about it.

It's only a joke until they stop laughing.

</div>

Evaluating Actions

When a character takes a significant action (i.e., usually involved in interacting with another character or exploring some aspect of their own psyche, but not just offering pleasantries), the GM should follow this basic process:

1. Evaluate the action to determine if that action results in or indicates the presence of *Soul Cultivation* (an increase of meaning, value, and depth) or *Soul Decay* (a decrease of meaning, value, and depth) for the character.
2. Based on the *what* and the *why* of the action, the GM figures out which Virtue or Vice the action falls under.
3. He places a mark (called a *Tick*; see below) in that box on that character's meter on the GM Record Sheet (see *Handouts*).
4. If enough Ticks have accumulated to make a Tally, the Tally should be Circled and Soul Points awarded or deducted from the PC (see below).

NOTE - This evaluation process is fast in practice, once the GM gets a feel for it.

Ticks, Tallies, & Circles

Ticks are used to record "fractional" Soul Points gained through Cultivation or lost through Decay; they also track which Virtue or Vice is relevant to that gain or loss. *Tallies* are five Ticks, and they represent a full Soul Point, ready to be given to (or taken away from) a character. *Circles* indicate that a Tick or a Tally has been awarded to (or taken away from) to a character. Tracking this using a double-entry system – one Tick on the "Soul Cultivation" or "Soul Decay" line of the *GM Record Sheet* and one under the relevant Virtue or Vice, allowing the GM to chart the nature of the character's growth in play (see below, *Tally Tracking & Virtue/Vice Adjustment*).

NOTE - If the GM wishes to use a "single-tick" system, that's fine – just know that doing so will require more attention when determining if a character's current Virtue or Vice should change as he is played.

Let's follow an example: Kristov has just called a friend of his in Social Services to help out a panhandler. The GM decides this action counts as a Tick under Courtesy. On the *GM Record Sheet*, he marks:

Character Name:	Kristov			
Soul Cultivation	I			
Integrity	Hope	Fortitude	Generosity	Courtesy I
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	Despair	Cowardice	Avarice	Cruelty

This shows that Kristov has one Tick, and it's in Kindness.

While before going back to wait with the panhandler for his Social Services friend, Kristov buys the downtrodden fellow a hamburger. The GM decides this is worth a Cultivation Tick under Generosity. On the *GM Record Sheet*, he marks:

Character Name:	Kristov			
Soul Cultivation	II			
Integrity	Hope	Fortitude	Generosity I	Courtesy I
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	Despair	Cowardice	Avarice	Cruelty

This shows that Kristov has two Ticks: one in Courtesy and one in Generosity.

Cultivation Ticks

These types of actions help grow the soul through meaning, discovery, sacrifice, and forging interpersonal connections. Here are some things that can count as Soul Cultivation (though which Virtue they fall under depends on the GM's evaluation):

- True or clear communication on an important topic with another character.
- Appreciating beauty, truth, or freedom in a situation.
- Displaying courage under stress (courage is acting despite one's fear; having no fear could be considered foolhardiness, not courage).
- Respecting another's (or one's own) dignity to an appropriate level (compare being humble vs. being prideful).
- Honest laughter (not cruel or mean; an extra Tick for being able to laugh at oneself)
- Taking a stand on an issue, ideal, or value, when it is applicable to a wider case than the character's specific situation.
- Discovering a vocation, undertaking a mission or quest, or dedicating one's actions to something other than oneself.
- Expressing love (not lust) for another.
- Reflecting upon oneself in the interests of growth (thinking about the effect of one's actions or inactions, just taken or yet to take; so long as this is not morbid or selfish reflection).
- Recognizing positive aspects in others (or in oneself).
- Creating something for the benefit of others.
- Performing a noble deed for the benefit of others.
- Experiencing or encountering something (or someone) that is profound, illuminating, or deep.
- A useful attitude taken toward unavoidable suffering (acceptance or lack of acceptance, whichever is most *useful* for the character at that time).
- Offering a helping hand or word, without thought of reward.
- Transcending one's normal limitations; succeeding at a task that the character believes is "too difficult."

- Expressing one's self-determination.
- Sharing what one possesses with others.
- Good roleplaying or making the GM and other players laugh.
- Providing exposition, scene-dressing, neat ideas, explanations, or improvising new details of personal Backstory during play.
- Sacrificing something of one's own for another's welfare. (2 Ticks)
- Keeping one's word. (Extra Ticks if doing so inconveniences or endangers the character.)
- Turning a tragedy into an opportunity through one's actions (extra Ticks if turned into a triumph); that is, showing the capacity to rise above (or grow from) adversity.

GMs should reward any positive action or expressed thought with a Cultivation Tick.

Decay Ticks

These types of actions corrode the soul through loss of meaning, self-absorption, and malicious or selfish interactions with others. Here are some things that can count as Soul Decay (though which Vice they fall under is dependent on the GM's evaluation):

- Purposeful miscommunication on an important topic with another character.
- Destruction or besmirching of beauty, truth, or freedom in a situation.
- Displaying cowardice under stress, without subsequent guilt or shame.
- Disrespecting (or excessively respecting) the dignity of another or oneself.
- Cruel or mean laughter (2 Ticks if at oneself).
- Refusing to take a stand on an issue, ideal, or value; alternatively, changing one's stand based solely on personal impact of topic.
- Denying a vocation, refusing a mission or quest, or renouncing one's responsibilities.
- Lusting for another, without another personal or emotional connection.
- Morbid or egocentric self-reflection leading to inaction or negative actions.
- Sacrificing another's welfare for your own.

- Recognizing only the negative aspects in others (or in oneself).
- Destroying something simply to deny others access to it.
- Performing an ignoble deed for the sole benefit of oneself.
- A useless attitude taken toward unavoidable suffering – acceptance or lack of acceptance, whichever is least useful for the character at that point in time.
- Demanding rewards for one's actions or words.
- Turning an opportunity into a tragedy through one's actions (extra Ticks if a triumph is overturned).
- Showing the inability to rise above (or grow from) adversity.
- Refusing to express one's self-determination.
- Hoarding what one possesses from others.
- Thoughtless pursuit of power, pleasure, wealth.
- Justification of the use of willful force and promulgation of injustice against others, simply because the character has suffered in the past.
- Expressing bitterness, disillusionment, isolation, boredom, depression, aggression, or nihilism.
- Expressing beliefs or thought of "nothingbutness"; that is, denying personhood and self-determination in favor of imagining people as merely "meat-machines" or marionettes controlled by strings of simple stimulus and response.
- Experiencing suffering (possibly needlessly) without seeking meaning in that suffering.
- Hold one person responsible for the actions of another.
- Accepting a Shadow Point from one's Shadow.
- Every Soultaking attempt or offensive use of Ward.
- Eating a Free Spirit or Ghost (2 Ticks).
- Killing another character or causing them to husk (lose a full Soul Point).

GMs should penalize any negative action or expressed thought with a Decay Tick.

> NOTE - See also *Chapter 4* for the rules on Backsliding, Regression, and Husking.

The Nasty-game: How to Be Eeeee-vil!

Given the rules of *DI*, being "evil" is penalized. Are there then no evil Mages or Sensitives to strive against? What if a group of PCs wishes to be nasty and mean? Is this possible?

While many roleplaying games are, in essence, about trespassing, breaking and entering, burglary, murder, and looting, this one isn't intended to be. "Kill them and take their stuff" are not Soul Cultivation actions. Still, there are not-nice people out there in the Real World and the Spirit World: how do they continue to be evil without becoming Qlippoth? Here are several options:

Karmic Bank Balance. Some characters spend the effort to build up a lot of spiritual capital (Soul Points) through good deeds so that they may have the occasional "spending-spree" when it's necessary to whack people in their way.

Investing Other People's Soul Money. Using a Spirit Trap or Soultaking allows a character to collect a potential windfall of Soul Points in return for accruing a lesser amount of Decay. Magi are known for having plenty of Soul Eggs filled brimful for their less-upstanding activities.

I'll Have My People Kill Your People. Working at a remove, through agents or faceless mobs or bureaucracies – or better still, unknowing cat's-paws – reduces (but does not eliminate) the amount of blood on one's hands. Degree of culpability comes down to a question of choice: a Tulpa has no free will of its own, so a Mage ordering one to kill an enemy is just as bad as the Mage doing it himself. If the Mage contracts out to a Sensitive to do his dirty work, there's the chance the Sensitive will choose not to kill; in any case, the action will happen based on the Sensitive's free will. This is better for the Mage – though he still gains Decay Ticks for initiating such a dastardly plan, it's not as "bad" as being the actual triggerman.

Shadow Laundering. Recall that a character's Shadow can provide the character with Shadow Points to be used immediately. Since these Shadow Points are essentially the Soul Points the Character has lost to Decay, a nasty character still has access to them, provided they use them with care.

Economies of Scale. Many Magi enmesh themselves in grandiose schemes to score Soul Points in bulk. If they are able to collect vast amounts of soul-energy in one go, they will realize great spiritual profits for a minimal cost in Soul Points lost to Decay.

In short, evil characters in *DI* must work *around* the nature of the soul to pursue evil nasty plots, so as to avoid getting badly hurt or even destroyed by their actions. This aspect of the game is intentional: it should be hard, dangerous, and not particularly rewarding for PCs to be evil in such a cosmos.

Awards & Penalties

When a Tally (that is, five Ticks) occurs in Cultivation or Decay, the character has earned (or lost) a new Soul Point. At this point, the GM has two methods of awarding or penalizing the character:

1. **Wait until the end of the session to distribute Soul Points**. Be warned that using this method can lead to characters hoarding their Soul Points, refusing to use them for their Abilities & Powers unless absolutely necessary. Waiting to Award also means that there's no immediate feedback from the GM to the player to indicate what earns Soul Points and what takes them away. On the more positive side, waiting until the end means that characters will not likely have great changes in their Soul Point total during play.

2. **Award Soul Points immediately as earned**. Once a character performs the last action that causes a Tally, Circle it and tell the character "You just gained a new Soul Point, put it in your Pool." Be warned that using this method can lead to characters having wildly fluctuating Soul Point Pools, as they gain, lose, and burn Points. Indeed, profligate spenders – if they come to rely on being able to build Soul Points easily – may find themselves in a crunch if they become the target of a Soultaking attack. However, immediately awarding or penalizing a character offers pointed guidance to the character on what Cultivation and Decay entail; players see the results relatively quickly after performing appropriate acts (not one-to-one, but one-to-five correspondence).

Let's go back to Kristov. In the course of the session, he's gained two more Cultivation Ticks, one in Integrity and one in Hope. After he sings his heart out over a particularly rousing song to inspire the audience, he gains another Hope Tick. On the *GM Record Sheet*, the GM marks the Tally:

Kristov has thus earned a new Soul Point.

If the GM is using immediate awards, he'd Circle the Tally, like so:

...and tell Kristov to add a new Soul Point to his Pool.

Tally Tracking & Virtue/Vice Adjustment

Using the double-entry system allows the GM to track how a character is being played. After a session or two, the GM can add up all the Ticks in a character's Virtues and Vices to find out whether they still match the Virtue and Vice the player selected in Character Generation. If it's shown that even though the character was envisioned as a Despairing type, in play he ended up being more Cruel, then the Vice of that character should be changed. This will show how the character is *now*, and comparing the current Virtue and Vice to the initial selections can show character growth and change. Virtue/Vice Adjustment should lead to a more meaningful game experience – after all, the GM can more precisely aim challenges at the PC's nature as it develops and refines during play.

Let's look at Kristov again. After a few sessions, here are his Virtue and Vice totals:

His player selected the Virtue of Generosity and the Vice of Avarice when he came up with the

character. Looking at the totals above, it seems that Generosity isn't a big part of Kristov's temperament, but Courtesy is (he's been portrayed as more compassionate and polite than giving). Also, Avarice doesn't seem to match any more: Kristov's barely lost control and pigged-out or drunk himself into a stupor. However, he has been being played as kind of mopey and pessimistic, courting Despair. The GM suggests that Courtesy might be a better Virtue and Despair a better Vice for Kristov to the player. More often than not, a player will agree – after all, it's their actions in-character that are creating these Ticks!

The Shadow Knows

A Shadow belonging to a Dead Inside or Sensitive is concerned with survival and sating appetites, both its own and those of the character casting it (even if the character doesn't admit to those desires). In those situations, the Shadow can offer advice – or even power – to its owner. A Shadow receives the Soul Points its owner loses to Soul Decay and always knows the character's current Virtue and Vice. As it's in the Shadow's best interest to survive and gain power, it will most often appear to the character during highly-dangerous situations (and Virtue and Vice Checks) to silkily argue for the side of self-satisfaction (which is usually, but not always, the side of Decay). Note that if a character husks, he essentially dies, and the Shadow will too. In *most* cases, the need for survival trumps the need to sate urges.

With a Mage who's performed the Rite of Severance, the Shadow is a separate but connected being. Although the Shadow still receives Soul points lost to Decay and knows the Mage's Virtue and Vice, it is no longer physically tied to the Mage, and may pursue its own interests, utilizing any Shadow Points it has accumulated. Nearly all use their newfound initiative and freedom to harass their owners, attempting to tempt them into Vice Checks (for more power), overexertion in Soul Point burning (to cause them to Backslide and become Sensitive, rejoining Shadow to caster), or out-and-out murder (in the belief that after Severance and collecting enough Shadow Points, they will be able to survive on their own as a Free Spirit).

Hoarding & Squandering Soul Points

What happens when a PC hoards his Soul Points, refusing to use them on all the spiffy-cool Powers? What about if a PC runs through Soul Points like water? How about if they sink it all into Improvement of their Qualities to the neglect of Type Rank (and ensoulment), or vice-versa? What if they go through spending sprees in Spirit World Commerce?

Ultimately, it's the player's choice what to do with their Soul Points. Some want to get their soul back as soon as possible and stop being Dead Inside. Others want to play with the cool Powers Soul Points permit. A few want to beef up their character's mundane abilities before working on the spiritual ones, and others want to climb to the top of the ladder and become Mages, because that looks to be fun.

It's all good. Really. Whatever they want to do with them; they earned them, after all.

That being said, here are some ways to make players reconsider their Soul Point economy (or lack thereof):

- *Shiny Toys*: In return for a service, let a Mage offer the character an enchanted item, essentially at cost: the Mage will create a specialty magic item for the character, if the character provides the necessary Soul Points.

- *Something's Following Us!*: A mystical beastie, like a Qlippoth or an Eye of the Dead God, could track a character by the "smoke" of their burnt Soul Points. This sort of threat could persuade those characters who use their soul-essence liberally to run silent, run deep.

- *Soultakers, Inc.*: Increase the number of Soultaking attacks against the characters. Being brought too close to Husking could cause characters with a squandering bent to sink some into Improvement, or even just to tone down their spendthrift ways.

- *We're Trapped!*: Placing PCs somewhere they cannot easily get away from using mundane locomotion can encourage reticent Soul Point holders to burn a point for Dream-Leaping.

Soul Point-Commerce Intersections

Given the above, a little more detail can be provided for "sharing" types of Soul Commerce exchange – that is, when a memory or dream is shared for a good. What's really happening is that the Cultivation Tick that a character would normally get for "Providing exposition, scene-dressing, neat ideas, explanations, or improvising new details of personal Backstory during play" is being used as currency.

Using the information in *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 4* should give a good basis for refereeing transactions. Basic food, drink, and nightly shelter in the Spirit World should not be a problem for characters – sharing should cover it. If a character wants an apartment, storage space, vehicle, really ritzy meal, piece of equipment, etc., then selling should become more important. And for plot-relevant trading (information, McGuffins, skills, etc.), characters should definitely be operating in the high-stakes range of Quality Ranks, Type Ranks, and so forth.

One thing a GM should ponder is the effect of bartering away aspects of a character not covered by the *DI* game system– like their name, memories, age, or destiny. While there should be a mild mechanical effect, it might not be as clear-cut as a loss of Rank. Perhaps a new Weakness is in order, one that's more "game color" than "game effectiveness."

> Example: Say a character sells their name. The GM decides to interpret this as a new Weakness called "No Name." No Name could mean several things for the character:
>
> - If anyone ever attempts to refer to the character by her old name, no one will hear the sentence spoken.
> - People – including the character – start to forget her once she passes out of their sight.
> - To get a new name, the character must have someone who doesn't know her yet give her a name.

Another interesting point about Spirit World Commerce is that the mundane objects that characters carry around in their pockets might be useful for barter. Combs, cell phones, make-up, Walkmans, Real World money (great for making amulets), lighters, pens, pencils, gum, mints, on and on – these are things that some Spirit World inhabitants can't get their hands on readily. Sure, there are Traders who Gate back and forth with goods, but in the Real World, a Rank of Opera Singer ain't gonna buy a candy bar. Better to have tangible goods for them to pawn or resell.

ADVENTURE DESIGN

"[Man] can stand the most incredible hardships when he is convinced that they make sense; he is crushed when, on top of all of his misfortunes, he has to admit that he is taking part in a tale 'told by an idiot.'"
– Carl Gustav Jung

Designing good adventures for their players is a large part of a GM's craft. Even if the design is something as simple as "Let the PCs work out how to throw a surprise party for their Sensitive friend" or as complex as "map and detail a Mage's Tower

which the PCs must penetrate to steal the Lark of the Promise." The GM must be ready with Scenery, NPCs, Plots, and Situations to help shape the gaming experience.

Below is some general advice for designing your own *DI* adventures; take what is useful and leave what is not.

General Principles

Before sitting down to design a new adventure for his *DI* group, a GM should sit down and review the following checklist. Using at least half of these principles well should make for an enjoyable session, all around.

– **What Is/Are the Objective(s)?** The GM should set the objective or objectives for the adventure, taking into account character goals for PCs, NPCs (especially allies and Nemeses), and current events in the campaign setting (Real World or Spirit World). This can range from "Get my Soul Egg back" to "Escape from Sewerland" to "Find a Way to See the Source."

– **What or Who Is/Are the Obstacle(s)?** What characters, scenery, or situations stand between the PCs and the adventure objective? Are they knowingly interfering with the characters, or blithely ignorant? Do their plots intersect with their PCs? Are they also trying to reach the adventure objective, brooking no competition?

– **Add Some Action!** Include at least one action (read conflict) situation. Combat is a handy choice, but a GM should not feel limited to simple head-bashing. Chase sequences, thrilling arguments, mountain climbs, quelling of mobs, defusing Spirit Bombs – all of these situations can get the adrenaline pumping, too.

– **Pardon Me, Would You Like Some Social Interaction?** GMs should figure out who the PCs will probably meet in passing – those characters that won't necessarily be obstacles, but will need to be interacted with. The heart of roleplaying is in interpersonal communication between

characters; often, social interactions are more interesting than action sequences. Cutting a fine figure at a Magi ball, overhearing others' whispered plots, haggling in the Market, chatting with the bartender, mediating a treaty between the Ghosts and the Zombis, presenting oneself to the Night King's Court, that sort of thing.

Achorite

A very rare monastic order whose members wear the heads of flies for piety and devotion. They sell free-range dreams, hand-picked from the fields Afar.

– **Magical Mystery Tour**. Select one or more magical or spiritual element(s) to explore the strengths and potentials of the *DI* game and setting: a book that was Shakespeare's Soul Egg, a flight of Foghawks swooping out of the Ripping Fogs to bask on the City's gargoyles, an cloak enchanted to make the wearer beautiful. Then, select one aspect of the adventure to be a puzzle that involves the mystical element – now the

PCs have something intriguing to figure out. Whether it's the identity of the murderer or what really happened to Grandma's shoes, a little mystery helps engage PCs' imaginations.

– **Deep Thoughts**. Pick an intriguing philosophical, ethical, or moral issue, and combine with any of the other elements here; concretize it into a situation involving NPCs, scenery, or enchanted items. Is it really a soul-rotting action to kill someone? What if they really deserve it? What if they ask for it, to end pain? Is Love stronger than Hate? Are they different sides of the same emotion? Does Lust engender Love, or vice-versa, or are they unrelated?

– **A Moment to Shine**. Arrange the adventure elements such that each PC has a moment to shine – whether displaying aspects of their Personality, their Qualities, their habits, their background, whatever. Having at least one situation specifically targeted at each PC's Strengths or Weaknesses will make for happy players – especially if their PC's contribution has an impact on the situations or contributions of other PCs.

– **Planning & Resource Management**. Some players really enjoy situation analysis and planning: how can we get in to that Mage's Tower? If we pool our money, can we hire a caravan to cross the Waste? What's the best way to build a spy network in the City? GMs should definitely consider laying out an objective or caper for PCs to plan out.

– **Continuity Clean-up**. Reflect on past adventures, and search for dangling plotlines and NPCs. Bring them back by figuring out what they've been doing – and how successful they've been at it – since they last met the PCs.

– **End on a High Note**. Try to design the adventure to end on both high energy and a feeling of closure. Long denouements generally sap the life out of a campaign. If the group will be meeting again soon for another session, ending on a cliffhanger can be appropriate; if there will be a long hiatus, more closure might be better. Ending on a high note keeps a *DI* game fresh and interesting, and the players desiring more.

Scenarios: Seeds, Scenes, and Skeletons

There are three components to Scenarios: Seeds, individual Scenes, and the Skeleton. Seeds grow into Scenes, Scenes hang on the Skeleton, and the Skeleton holds everything together. Depending upon how the GM assembles these components, the resulting game could meander (focusing on picaresque exploration and discovery) or dash (focusing on action, reaction, and result).

This is a modular toolbox approach to adventure design: GMs can select the structure and pieces they think will work best with their group. Arranging these components into different configurations with different players and/or characters ensures that every Scenario will look, feel, and play differently, even if the GM is working from the same text.

Let's tackle these components in order.

Seeds

Seeds are very basic ideas, situations, or images that can serve as the starting point for Scene design. A Seed can be a thought problem ("what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object?"), a situation ("A Dead Inside, a Ghost, and A Zombi walk into a bar..."), or an image ("A man kneeling in front of a woman, holding a Soul Egg to her, which she refuses to take").

Seeds are developed into Scenes by asking "what's going on here?" followed by "why is this happening?" If a GM asks these questions while keeping the elements of his Diverse in mind, intriguing patterns and potentials can emerge. These patterns and potentials coalesce into Scenes as the GM attempts to codify the what, the why, and other information necessary to help the players experience the Seed concept.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Here are a few ideas to use in creating your own *DI* adventures. Use them as Seeds to grow a session that will interest and excite your players:

Knocking Down a Mage's Shadow. A Mage has hired the PCs (with promises of aid, return of their Soul Eggs, enchanted goodies, etc.) to help him whittle down his Shadow's power in preparation for a bid for True Immortality. Unfortunately, he's been a very bad boy for many years, and his Shadow is quite powerful. The PCs need to find, investigate, and harry their patron's animal side... and survive to collect their payment.

Spirit Trap Slavery. The PCs wake up in the Spirit World as Dead Inside. They discover they have been shanghaied into a strange new world through the judicious use of a Spirit Trap and a naturally-recurring Gate by an unscrupulous Dead Inside slaver wanting to gain his soul back as soon as possible. While he holds pieces of their souls, how can they but obey his commands?

Build Something New. Sick of inter-neighborhood bickering, incessant Qlippoth attack, and dubious soul-energy scams, the Triangle Council has decided to form a police force for the City. The PCs – for odd and inscrutable reasons – were at the top of the recruit list. With the approval – if not the funding – of the Triangle Council, they are tasked to clean up illicit soul-commerce amongst new arrivals and unscrupulous cart vendors near the Bridge of Souls. If they do well on this pilot project, perhaps the City Police will grow into a valuable force for order; if they do poorly, the dream of an ongoing Department will die.

Scenes

GMs should take the time to build several Scenes that he thinks are interesting or fun to run, and then only select the Scenes that he thinks will be fun for the *players* to experience. These two things – fun to run and fun to experience – are not always the same. Go too heavy on the former and a GM may become more adversarial, interested in "getting" the PCs; go too heavy on the latter and the GM could feel stifled. A happy medium should be sought: GMs should select the Scene that maximize fun for them *and* the players.

Scenes should also recapitulate the overall General Principles mentioned above – Objective(s), Obstacles(s), Action, Interaction, etc., in a tight focus. Instead of the game's overarching Objective of "(re)gain a soul," a Scene could have one like "(re)gain a Soul point" or "Find Mr. Brown's wallet."

Each Scene will have notes detailing possible Objective(s), Obstacles(s), Actions, Interactions, and so forth.

Scenario Skeleton

The Scenario Skeleton should not to be confused with a "plot." Where a plot is related to the *story* of a game, the Skeleton is intended to be a map to the *game* of a story. Plot and story come from the histories, personalities, and actions of the characters (both PCs and NPCs). A Skeleton helps the GM select and order those Scenes that will enable the PCs to create that plot and story.

The basic parts of a Skeleton for *DI* (or any game, really) is pretty simple:

- **Enter Play**. The players must begin their adventure.

- **Learn the Rules As You Go *and/or* Explore the Board**. The abilities of players' characters and the nature of the scenery they move through must be learned.

- **Make A Move *or* React to the Moves of Others**. The players must take actions on their own initiative or in response to the actions of others (or Fate).

- **Expand *or* Consolidate *or* Retrench**. The players must try to gain, strengthen, or recover from the loss of capabilities, tools, information, or short-term goals.

- **Endgame**. The players attempt to achieve their long-term goal in the face of opposition from others (or Fate).

Each Scene should have notes detailing possible attachment points to one of these Skeleton parts.

Customization

Once more, with feeling: GMs should feel free to alter anything and everything – in the planning

stages or even in the middle of play – to increase the entertainment quotient around the gaming table. The more fun the gaming group has in a session, the better the chances that they'll gather around that table for another one.

Pre-Game Show

The things that need to be done before starting any *DI* session are:

– Look for Seeds;

– Come up with Scenes based on those Seeds;

– Select the "maximum fun" Scenes to use;

– Assemble the Scenes into a Skeleton;

– Fill in anything that's still missing; and

– Assist players in character generation (or Improvement).

However, there's a catch for totally new *DI* games: if a GM comes up with Seeds, Scenes, and Skeleton, the newly-generated PCs may not be adequately "hooked into" those elements. If a GM helps the players create characters first, the PCs must sit around and wait for the assembly of elements to happen. Neither is particularly palatable.

However, a canny GM will have a handful of Seeds and a basic Skeleton mapped out before the first session and be generally familiar with some possible Scenes. Then, they help the players design their PCs (see relevant portions of *Chapter 3* and this chapter). Of vital interest to the GM is noting each PC's type of Soul Loss, type of Discovery of Soul Loss, and their Virtue and Vice. After that, GMs can select maximum fun Scenes to fill out the Skeleton for optimum impact with those specific PCs.

INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO OVERVIEW

Using the *General Principles* checklist above, here is the overall plan for the Introductory Scenario ("Brave New Spirit World") in *Chapter 7*:

1. *What Is/Are the Objective(s)?*: Introduce PCs to *DI* game mechanics and setting; if there are multiple PCs, introduce them to each other;

possibly enable one or more PCs to (re)gain a soul by Scenario's end.

2. *What or Who Is/Are the Obstacle(s)?*: The strangeness and "ground rules" of the Spirit World and *DI* Cosmology; imparting information to the PCs in a fun way; PC conflicts; and NPC foes.

3. *Add Some Action!*: Some Scenes should be set up for action using the different types of situations (simple, complicated, and conflict) and the different areas of focus (physical, mental, social, professional, spiritual).

4. *Pardon Me, Would You Like Some Social Interaction?*: There should be at least one character (PC or NPC) per Scene to interact with.

5. *Magical Mystery Tour*: Every Scene should display a spiritual power, being, or piece of scenery.

6. *Deep Thoughts*: Some Scenes should have opportunities for Virtue or Vice Checks, related to a philosophical, moral, or ethical situation.

7. *A Moment to Shine*: Scenes should be selected (and, if necessary, modified) to provide each PC a chance to step into the spotlight.

8. *Planning & Resource Management*: At least one or two Scenes in the Scenario should involve either: a) PCs needing to devise a strategy to accomplish a short-term goal; or b) PCs weighing the decision whether to hold or burn earned Soul Points to resolve the situation.

9. *Continuity Clean-up*: The GM should try to connect each PC's Background or Soul Loss to at least one Scene in the Scenario.

10. *End on a High Note*: If the Scenario cannot be completed in a single session with one or more PCs recovering a soul, depending upon the tastes of the playing group, the GM should end the session either: a) on a Scene where the PCs have found a place of relative strength and safety; or b) at a cliffhanger. In both cases, the group can return to that Scene next session to complete the Scenario.

Chapter 6
Glossary & Bibliography

GLOSSARY

> **NOTE** - The names of Abilities, Powers, Imagos, Locations, NPCs, and Spirit World Animals do not appear in this Glossary; see *Chapters 2, 4,* and *5* for further details.

Ability: An inherent mystical capability. Different Abilities are available to *DI* characters depending upon their Type.

Action: Whatever a character does on their Turn.

Average People: Living people with souls who are blind to the Spirit World and its wonders.

Backsliding: Losing enough Soul Points (going below zero in the Soul Point Pool) to force a reduction in Type Rank.

"Burning": Spending Soul Points to activate Powers (or for other effects).

Circles: A Gamemaster (GM) notation for awarded or lost Soul Points.

Complicated Situation: A situation where Rank comparisons aren't clear or randomness is desired.

Conflict Situation: Contests, combats, or other situations in which multiple characters are directly attempting to influence or resist each other with their actions and reactions.

Cultivation Ticks: A GM notation to record soul-cultivating actions.

d6: One six-sided die; the standard dice used for craps, *Monopoly*, *Yatzee*, and *DI*. *2d6* means two six-sided dice.

Damage Rank: Temporary Downshifts applied to Qualities, which can be permanent (until healed by time or character action).

Dead Inside: Living people lacking a complete soul who are open to the Spirit World and its wonders.

Decay Ticks: A GM notation to record soul-rotting actions.

DI: An abbreviation for the *Dead Inside RPG*.

Difficulty Rank: Indicates the complexity of a task; compared to Quality Rank to determine whether a situation is simple or complicated.

Downshift: Temporary reduction of a Quality by one Rank (that is, a -2 penalty to a roll).

Ensoulment: The process of (re)gaining a soul.

Environmental Damage: Harm caused by the scenery – fire, drowning, falling, etc.

Failure Ranks: Temporary Downshifts to Qualities, lasting until the end of a scene.

Flip Out: To neglect one's defense in favor of offense.

Free Spirit(s): Tulpas who have won freedom from their creators.

Gate: A rainbow-ringed portal that connects the Real World to the Spirit World, or two different points within the Spirit World.

Ghost(s): A dead soul lacking a body.

GM: Gamemaster.

Husking: When a Poor [-2] Type Rank Dead Inside, Ghost, or Zombi goes below zero in their Soul Point Pool, causing them to collapse into an NPC monster called a Qlippoth.

Imago: An archetypal being (or state of being) that reflects or embodies elements of a character's psyche.

Improvement: Use of Soul Points to increase Type Rank, or Type Ranks to increase Quality Rank(s).

Mage (plural, Magi): Living beings who have Ensouled twice and joined with their Syzygy; Magi possess vast spiritual Abilities and Powers.

NPC: Non-Player Character

PC: Player Character.

Play It Cagey: To neglect one's offense in favor of defense.

Power: A mystical capability requiring the "burning" of Soul Points to function.

Qlippoth: (pronounced "KLIP-poth" or "QUih-LIP-poth") Monstrous animate connections to the nothingness of the Void, created when a being loses the last vestige of their soul.

Quality: A particular talent, skill, set of associates or associations, or flaw of a character.

Rank: Indicates the level of a character's mastery of a talent, skill, field of knowledge, interacting with a community, endeavor, or existence.

Reaction: Actions taken by a character (usually in response to another character's Action) when it's not their turn.

Real World: The world of Average People; most Abilities have difficultly working there.

Regression: When a Poor [-2] Rank Sensitive or Mage Backslides, forcing a transformation to a "lower" spiritual Type (Mage to Sensitive, or Sensitive to Dead Inside).

Resilience: Quality gained by Magi who place a substantial amount of their soul-blood into a Wizard Egg; Resilience makes them difficult to kill (they just get better); though they may still age, sicken, go senile or insane, and die (with special measures).

Scene: A period of time representing a single situation (or a handful of tightly-connected situations).

Sensitive(s): Living beings with more than the usual amount of soul-essence; Sensitives possess strong spiritual Abilities and Powers.

Simple Situation: A situation where a task is clear-cut or randomness is not desired.

Soul: A mystical essence that dwells within the body, composed of energy, impulse, willpower, chi, meaning, etc. Also called soul-blood, spiritual force, "the juice."

Soul Cultivation: Actions or attitudes that lead to personal growth and increase a character's overall spiritual energy.

Soul Decay: Actions or attitudes that eat away at the psyche and decrease a character's overall spiritual energy.

Soul Egg: A fragile object enchanted to hold and retain soul-energy.

Soul Point: A fraction of a complete soul – also called "a drop of soul-blood" – used to activate Powers, enable Improvement, and Spirit World Commerce.

Spirit Trap: An enchanted object used to steal soul-energy from the unwary.

Spirit World Commerce: The exchange of goods, services, information, and Soul Points (as Low Trade) and Type Ranks or Quality Ranks (as High Trade).

Spirit World: The world of most *DI* beings that responds to those within it; Abilities and Powers can be used at normal shifts and Soul Point costs there.

Tally/Tallies: A GM notation for awarding or taking away a character's Soul Points.

Target Number: The number needed to be matched or beat by a 2d6 plus Modifier roll to successfully perform a task in a complicated situation.

Ticks: A GM notation for Soul Cultivation or Soul Decay.

True Immortality: Sought by most Magi, this includes agelessness, perfect health of body and mind, total regeneration of lost limbs and organs, and rapid healing from even the most mortal of wounds.

Tulpa(s): Thought-constructs energized by an infusion of spiritual-energy; subservient to their master's will.

Turn: The subdivision of a Scene when a character may initiate an Action; all other characters may only React on an Acting character's Turn.

Type: A special Quality denoting the sort of being a character is (Dead Inside, Sensitive, Mage, Ghost, etc.).

Upshift: Temporary or limited increase of a Quality by one Rank (that is, a +2 bonus to a roll).

Vice: A character's current primary spiritual temptation or weakness.

Virtue: A character's current primary spiritual strength.

Virtue & Vice Checks: An important spiritual test that touches on either a character's current primary Virtue or Vice.

Wizard Egg: A special type of Soul Egg used by Magi to gain Resilience.

Zombi(s): A dead body lacking a soul.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Each of the works mentioned below had an influence – some greater, some lesser – on the development of the *Dead Inside RPG*. Explore them for yourself!

Non-fiction

Bettleheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. This book had substantial input into the psychology of the Imagos as well as the GM Advice in *Chapter 5*; also a good lit-crit read.

Carse, James P. *Finite and Infinite Games*. I picked this up initially to acid-test some ideas I had about the difference between "closed" and "open" games, and wow – bits of it really linked up with some of the other stuff I was reading and gave a new direction to *DI*.

Casteneda, Carlos. *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, and its sequels. (I hesitate to place this work and its sequels under Non-fiction, but hey, whatever. You won't find it shelved in a Fiction section.) Anyway, I read the first three or four of Casteneda's books in college, and I didn't really care if they were Fiction or Non-fiction: they were nifty descriptions of mystical practices.

Eliade, Mircea. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. This is a dense anthropology book with fascinating reportage of actual shamanic techniques and beliefs. Note that its repetitive nature can induce mind-numbing boredom; for dedicated readers only.

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. You *must* read this book. Period. I can say that out of all of these works, it focused the direction of *DI* – and, indeed, my outlook on elements of Real Life – deeply.

Green, Toby. *Meeting the Invisible Man: Secrets and Magic in West Africa*. Interesting account of a guy who goes to Africa to learn how to be invisible and invulnerable. Engaging and a cool look at what magic in *DI*'s Real World might look like – or, rather, *not* look like – to Average People.

Ingerman, Sandra. *Soul Retrieval: Mending the Fragmented Self Through Shamanic Practice*. This book is essentially "Eliade-lite"; I recommend it to anyone interested in grasping the basic shamanism schtick. However, I find this work marred by a fairly syrupy shiny-happy people vibe. Still, if you dig New Agey stuff, check it out.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Man & His Symbols*. Fascinating fusion of mysticism, dreams, and psychology. I find Jungian psychological concepts speak to me more readily than

Freudian ones. Along with Frankl, the strongest influence on *DI*. Highly recommended.

Penczak, Christopher. *City Magick: Urban rituals, spells, and shamanism*. This is a fun little book, and a nice primer for basic "real world" magical practices (as they are). Can be useful for window-dressing a *Dead Inside* (or any other urban fantasy) campaign.

Pirsig, Robert M. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. Philosophy, especially as regards the search for Quality. Another college read, and it gave me thoughts to think about forever. Highly recommended.

Redfield, James. *The Celestine Prophecy*. Overblown fiction masquerading as fact in the Casteneda vein, this book nonetheless has some interesting bits to mine for uses of Second Sight and Soul Points.

Fiction

Barker, Clive. *Imajica*. Slanted more to the Mage-end of the character pool, but very, very neat. Worth the read.

Chabon, Michael. *Summerland*. Fascinating intersection of fairies, Norse myth, Native American beliefs, stories, other-worlds, and baseball. I really don't like baseball, but after reading this novel, I've softened my opinions tremendously.

Finney, Charles G. *The Circus of Dr. Lao*. Wonderful book (and a passable film titled *The 7 Faces of Dr. Lao*), its one of a handful of works that ring with Truth and Beauty for me. Go. Read. Now.

Gaiman, Neil. *Neverwhere*. Urban fantasy, under London. Strange powers. Archetypal beings. Mystical dealings. Good stuff. Recommended.

Hesse, Hermann. *Steppenwolf*. Psychological and intriguing novel that had great influence on the Theatre des Loups. Hesse's *Magister Ludi: The Glass Bead Game* is also worth reading; for some reason, a Live Action version of the Glass Bead Game is how I envision Magi plotting against each other – they're playing a vast game of interlocking components that have a ripple effect on pieces already in play, sparking new connections, alliances, and enmities. Oh, read *Siddhartha*, too.

Hilton, James. *Lost Horizon*. Stop me if you've heard this one already: an airplane full of Dead Inside go down in the Himalayas, and are led to "Shangri-La" (read "Spirit World") to recover their souls.... Highly recommended. (See the movie, too.)

Holdstock, Robert. *Mythago Wood*. Imagos, on crack. Intriguing thoughts on the intersections of story and psychology. Check it out.

Le Guin, Ursula. The *Earthsea* trilogy. Influenced Magi and the Shadow strongly, as well as being a damn fine read. The first two books are the best, and highly recommended.

Cartoons & Comics

Gaiman, Neil. *The Sandman* series (Vertigo). If you haven't read these comics, you need to. Incredible work, beautiful art, true stories, and dreams. Available in most bookstores as trade paperback collections; start with *Preludes & Nocturnes*. Go. Read. Now.

McCay, Windsor. *Little Nemo: 1905-1914* (Evergreen). Its use of dream-logic and breathtakingly fantastic dream-imagery is a primary visual influence on the City and the Spirit World. I have a beautiful hardcover collection of these seminal newspaper comics, collecting all the *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and *Little Nemo in the Land of Wonderful Dreams* strips. My collection is from Evergreen, which is an imprint of Benedikt Taschen Verlag GmbH. Track down a copy: you won't be disappointed.

Straczynski, J. Michael. *Midnight Nation* (Top Cow). Cop has his soul stolen, and must walk from coast to coast – guided by a mysterious stranger – to try and recover it. Available as a trade paperback from most comic shops and bookstores. Highly recommended.

Willingham, Bill. *Fables* (Vertigo). All the fairy tales have been driven from their Homelands by the mysterious Adversary, and must hide from the "mundys" – that's you and me – while working out their differences and living their nigh-immortal lives. Highly recommended. Also check out *Proposition Player* (also from Vertigo), about a poker player who comes into the possession of a number of souls – and Heaven and Hell aren't happy about it. And try to find back issues of Willingham's great superhero series, *Elementals* (from Comico), which pretty much could be a "*DI* Supers" campaign.

Films & Television

Dark City. Probably the biggest influence next to *Little Nemo*... on my mental images of the City and Spirit World. One could see John Murdoch as a Dead Inside discovering his Sensitive powers... he's even got a Quest: get to Shell Beach.

Hook. It's not great art, but I like it. There's something very important going on in the beginning and middle of this film... the end peters (heh) out, unfortunately. But taking the whole story, you can see an odd form of Backsliding as the Pan goes from powerful Sensitive warrior (or low-level Mage) to Dead Inside accountant and back. (Tink's a Free Spirit, of course.)

Jacob's Ladder. This movie is somewhat of an anti-influence on the game. There are elements I really liked in the movie, but I felt – and still feel – unfulfilled by it. Still Jacob's visions could lend more horror oomph to GMs who wish to slant their game in that direction (in that case, also see *Donnie Darko* and *Angel Heart*).

The Matrix, **The Matrix Reloaded**, and **Matrix Revolutions**. Elements of how plastic and flexible the

Spirit World is in *DI* come from these great action flicks; the Dream-leaping/True Flight modes of movement are displayed to good effect (also see *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or *Iron Monkey* or any other Wire-Fu Wuxia for more Spirit World Movement). There are also dollops of philosophy to fiddle with, and the character development of the main character from Anderson to Neo to the One could be interpreted as the path of a character from Dead Inside to Mage.

The Prisoner. See what happens when a secret agent is "disappeared" for his reticence in explaining why he quit his agency. Plunked down into the weird world of the Village and under constant assault on his psyche and sanity, Number 6 fights against the system and the machinations of various Number 2s. Recommended as an exploration of the individual's will in the face of unknown, inexplicable oppressors.

Spirited Away. In many ways, this animated masterpiece from Hayao Miyazaki is the perfect *DI* movie. A must see. Also see < http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/sen/proposal.html >; excellent stuff.

What Dreams May Come. Another strong influence on *DI*, and the only movie with a climax that is (appropriately) an anticlimax, and it works because – or despite – of that.

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory. Wonka's a Mage, the Oompa-Loompas are Tulpas, and all the kids are clearly Dead Inside, except for Charlie, who's a Sensitive. The false Slugworth is one of Wonka's agents, probably a Tulpa or Sensitive. I suspect that the *real* Slugworth – the one we never see – is Wonka's Shadow.

Yu Yu Hakusho: Spirit Detective. This anime series, less bombastic and more arch than *Dragonball Z* (which also has a large Spirit World component, it must be said), has an interesting Quest/Case structure that's definitely worth considering for adaptation into a *DI* game.

Games

Castle Falkenstein: High Adventure in the Steam Age (R. Talsorian Games), by Michael Pondsmith. A huge system-influence on *DI*, and a damn fine game to boot.

GURPS Fantasy II: The Madlands (Steve Jackson Games), by Robin D. Laws. Inspiration-fodder – *The Madlands* first opened my eyes to just how *different* a good game could be from the rank-and-file on our game store shelves. If you'd like your mind expanded, check this setting out (probably via eBay).

Marvel Superheroes Role-Playing Game (TSR), by Jeff Grubb. One of my all-time favorite RPGs, and that's despite my growing up as a DC Comics fan. The Universal Chart, yeah; Column Shifts, yeah; Karma Points, *hell* yeah! I break this game out every year for a one-shot.

Nobilis (Hogshead Games, now Guardians of Order), by R. Sean Borgstrom. Beautiful, intriguing, and a bit too opaquely baroque, *Nobilis* is a fascinating read as well as being a tangible piece of art. Some elements of this game influenced how I constructed my system, and, I'm sure, my setting. Read and mine this puppy.

octaNe: the psychotronic game of post-modern trash culture america (Memento Mori Theatricks), by Jared A. Sorensen. Damn good game, with cool emphases and a cheerful disregard for "realism." Also a big influence on pushing me to get *DI* finished; the guy who can write a book like this is the sort of hombre I want to consider a peer.

Over the Edge: The Role-Playing Game of Surreal Danger (Atlas Games), by Jonathan Tweet with Robin D. Laws. Rules-light system, wacky setting. Great reading by itself, and a powerfully-packed idea mine.

Pendragon: Epic Roleplaying in Legendary Britain (Chaosium), by Greg Stafford. This game is a tangential influence on the Virtue/Vice system. *The Boy King: Arthur Claims the Throne of Britain*, a fantastic supplement for the game, is also worth seeking out. Good stuff.

RISUS (Cumberland Games), by S. John Ross. A nice hyper-light game system; elements influenced the *PDQ System*, i.e., *DI*'s game mechanics.

Storyboard (Magus Creative Games), by Matthew C. Gaston and Rich Taylor. Like *RISUS*, another interesting hyper-light system that influenced the construction of the *PDQ System.*

Underworld: An Adventure Game of Subterranean Urban Fantasy (Synister Creative Systems), by Gareth-Michael Skarka. I thought this work, while it had some warts, had elements that rocked on toast. Many parts are eminently adaptable to any urban fantasy RPG.

Unknown Armies: A Roleplaying Game of Power and Consequences, Second Edition (Atlas Games), by Greg Stolze & John Tynes. One of my favorite RPGs, possibly my absolute favorite – at least until I wrote this one. Stylish, smart, and above all, human. I cavil a bit at an overly dark tone to some aspects of the setting. However, I'm probably responsible for some of that, since I've done a bit of freelance work on the supplements, and a lot of yammering on the mail-list.

Wraith: the Oblivion, Second Edition (White Wolf Games), by Rich Dansky. Luckily, I first read *Wraith: the Oblivion* long, long after I had started writing *DI*. A really interesting, if dark, setting. The biggest direct influences it had on the game is probably inspiring the concept that *DI* Shadows gain Soul Points lost to Soul Decay, and the "damage vs. power" tradeoff for Ghosts passing through material objects in the Spirit World.

Chapter 7

DI Introductory Scenario: "Brave New Spirit World"

This chapter is an Introductory Scenario for new *Dead Inside RPG (DI)* GMs and PCs. It will help familiarize the playing group with the system and setting of *DI*, as well as the particular tone and style that the GM wishes to include in his game. Elements of this Scenario can be removed, expanded upon, bent, twisted, or reversed as the GM sees fit – so long as he thinks it will lead to a better experience for the entire group.

REMINDERS

Dead Inside suffer a Downshift when interacting socially in the Real World. Part of this is the Dead Inside's disconnection from life, and part of it is the unconscious reactions of Average People to their soullessness.

The only Abilities that work at regular cost in the Real World are Open Gates and the passive use of Second Sight. Unless within a Place or Time of Power, any other Ability requires an extra Downshift and 1 Soul Point; similarly, all Powers require an extra Downshift and double the normal expenditure of Soul Points (minimum 1) to function.

If a player gets into trouble before getting a handle on the new rules of reality in the Spirit World, one of his Imagos might show up to offer insight, advice, or aid. If he simply needs information, the Wise Old can appear and offer a hint on where to go. If the PC is having problems like failing despite of (or by misapplying) his strengths, his Anima can show up and lend a hand. If the PC is in direct danger, his Shadow will try and come to his rescue as best it can. If the PC is trapped by someone or something, the Trickster can appear, and help spring the character, though this might be an "out of the frying pan and into the fire" situation.

Remember that not every indicated Possible Virtue or Vice Check must be undergone; only one or two that relate to the character's current Virtue or Vice. (However, Tasks assigned by a Guide are in addition to the normal one or two Checks per session.)

SKELETON OVERVIEW

For ease of getting started, the Skeleton for this Scenario has been mapped out and some Scenes have been attached to it. If desired, the GM can alter the skeleton, swap out Scenes, design new Skeleton elements, or design new Scenes.

The illustration below shows the basic Skeleton and Scenes for the Introductory Scenario:
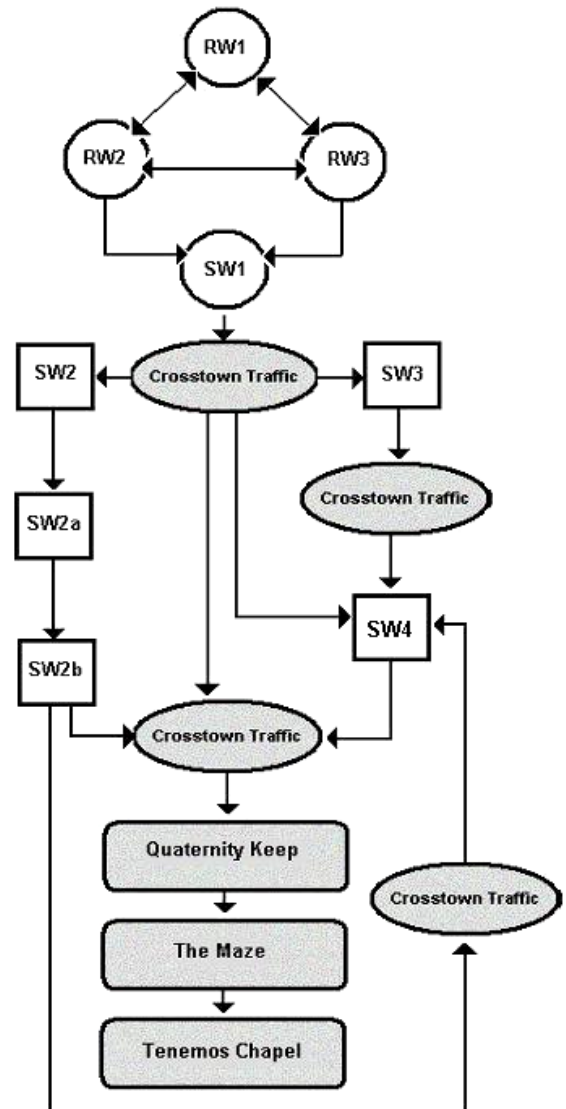
ENTRY SCENES

Three potential Entry Scenes in the Real World are indicated as circles on the Skeleton. These are *RW1: Bill*, *RW 2: Madame Lupino*, and *RW3: the Glade*. (Players have either already made-up *DI* characters or are using one of the sample PCs from *Chapter 5*. If desired, any of these Scenes can be tied to their *Discovery* of soullessness.)

RW1: Bill

Situation. Bill Vance is a Ghost. In life, he supported his wife and little boy comfortably as an industrial drill-bit salesman. As a Sensitive, his Second Sight gave him an edge in scoping sales prospects, managing his investments, and gambling in Atlantic City and Vegas at conventions. Recently, Bill and his family moved into a new house in a new city, smack dab in the middle of his new territory.

Then, his wife got sick, the car broke down, his kid needed braces *and* glasses, and his roof sprang a leak. Bad luck dogged Bill, but he had finally started to dig out from under. Unfortunately, that's when Bill had a vision that he'd die the next day, at 10 am.

Knowing (for a fact) that his insurance money and estate would be tied up in probate for around three months, and not having any family to rely upon, Bill decided to try and gather together as much cash for his wife and son as he could. He pulled an all-nighter, hitting all the off-track betting parlors, back room after-hours poker games, and so forth. He managed to fill his briefcase with $10,000 of cold hard cash and a winning lottery ticket.

On his way to cash that lottery ticket, his car skidded off (or was it run off?) the road. Bill was flung through the windshield and cut to ribbons. The last thing he saw was the radio clock reading 9:00 am. That's when he remembered that he'd neglected to fix the clock for Daylight Savings Time. He died, and became a Ghost.

He's looking for someone to get that briefcase of money to his wife and kid. That means he's looking for someone tuned into the Spirit World (i.e., the PCs) – no one else can see him. Bill's willing to bargain for their services: he'll quickly agree to "split what's in the pig" with anyone who can help him ("From the look of you, it's something you need!"),

as well as point them to someone or something that can give them answers about themselves (like Madame Lupino or the Glade; see below).

The Car. Bill can lead the PCs to the general vicinity of the car, and will help as much as possible "behind the Scenes" using his Ghost Abilities. Depending on what is most entertaining or connects best to the Qualities of PCs, the car is:

- *In a chop-shop*. It's a Good [9] Difficulty Rank criminal-type Quality roll to find the precise location of the chop-shop. Guarded by one or more NPCs in the garage. (Qualities of Good [+2] Criminal, Good [+2] Mechanic, and Good [+2] Toughness are appropriate; they can be all in one NPC, or split between more, depending upon the number of PCs).

- *In an impound lot*. It's an Average [7] Difficulty Rank urban knowledge-type Quality roll to find the right part of the lot, which is guarded by a watchman (no notable Qualities – straight Average [0]).

- *In a junkyard, amongst hundreds of other wrecked cars*. Bill gets a little confused in trying to lead the PCs to the car, because he can just float through obstacles. It's a Good [9] Difficulty Rank mental or physical challenge to thread the maze of dead automobiles. There may even be a junkyard dog (Good [+2] Bite) lurking...

- *Under six feet of water*. Bill ran off a bridge, not just the road. It's a Good [9] Difficulty Rank swimming or athletics-type Quality to dive into the murky water and swim down to the car.

Along with $10,000 in bundles of hundreds and the lottery ticket, the monogrammed briefcase contains a ceramic piggy bank. While he doesn't want to give the PCs any of the money, he can grudgingly be beat down to offer a 10% "finder's fee" (if he loses a social conflict, or is otherwise convinced through good roleplaying). If a PC takes more than that anyway, Bill will promise to make their life difficult through use of his Ghost Abilities. "They need that money to live. Jeez!" He will remind them to take the pig out of the briefcase before the PCs close it up again.

Bill would appreciate it if the PCs handed the briefcase to his wife, but won't be too upset if they leave it on the porch, ring the bell, and run.

Then, he'll tell one of the PCs to place the piggy bank on the ground between them and smash it open. The pig is a Soul Egg, containing 2 Soul Points for Bill and 1 each for every PC. When broken open, the Soul Points will jump to Bill and the PCs.

After the money and the pig have been disposed of, he'll direct them to visit either Madame Lupino's shop (see *RW2*) or The Glade (see *RW3*) so they can get into the Spirit World – he may even accompany them.

Cultivation & Decay Ticks may come from the PCs interactions with Bill, how they get the briefcase, what they do with the contents, and any interactions they have with other NPCs in the process.

Bill, the Ghost Dad. Expert [+4] Salesman, Good [+2] Father, Poor [-2] Impulse-Driven. *Type*: Good [+2] Ghost. *Personality*: Family Man. *Virtue*: Generosity; *Vice*: Despair. *Soul Point Pool*: 5.

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s)*. Entry Scene, Learning Scene, Action/Reaction Scene, Interaction Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In*. Start, RW2, or RW3.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Help Bill; learn more about nature of characters and cosmos.
>
> *Obstacle(s)?* Trusting Bill; finding the car and getting the briefcase out of its trunk (see below).
>
> *Action*. Depends on the placement of the car, but could be physical feats (swimming), or mental ones (planning to liberate the car).
>
> *Interaction*. Bill; other NPCs depend on the placement of the car; possible social conflict (bluffing guards).
>
> *Magical Mystery Tour*. Second Sight; Ghost Abilities; Difference between Sensitives & Dead Inside.
>
> *Deep Thoughts*. The nature of death; the existence of a Spirit World.
>
> *Possible Virtue & Vice Checks*. Generosity or Courtesy (to help Bill); Cowardice (avoiding aiding Bill); Avarice (when the briefcase is opened).
>
> *Continuity Clean-up?* This Scene could be useful to bring in characters with any of the types of Soul Loss.
>
> *Scene Link Out*. RW2 or RW3.

RW2: Madame Lupino

Situation. Madame Lupino runs a little fortune telling shop, somewhere between downtown and the sketchy neighborhoods. It's got a big "palm of the hand" stained glass window, and a neon "Tarot Readings/Runes Cast/Past Lives Unearthed!" sign blinks in the window. Inside, the anteroom is all crystals, candles, incense, oils, native art, dreamcatchers, esoteric prints, and posters detailing chi meridians and chakra locations – many are for sale at a reasonable price. A comfortable sofa with a homey fabric print is flanked by mismatched easy chairs; on the low coffee table are New Age pamphlets and a stack of Madame's business cards. An unseen CD player plays music, usually Enya or Gipsy Kings. A bead curtain divides this waiting area from the "sanctum." Other PCs may be here, also waiting.

However the PCs get here (see below), when they arrive, Madame is busy with another customer. Her strongly-accented voice (Transylvanian, maybe?) carries through the curtain" "Plis vait; ve vill only be a few minutes." Madame is informing her client of a past life as one of George Washington's mistresses. After a few minutes of this, the client – a kindly little old lady with blue hair – will thank Madame, and leave the shop with a saucy twinkle in her eye.

Madame – an attractive, if chunky, middle-aged woman in bohemian dress – will look at the PC(s), perform a double-take, and look again, this time with great intent. PCs will at this point see some sort of hazy "energy" flow up from her chest into her eyes; they will understand that she is studying them, their aura, their history, and possibly their future (Second Sight). They also realize that they now know how to do the same, if they haven't already figured out how to use this Ability actively. For their part, PCs will notice that she looks more "solid" or "glowy" than most of the folks they see on the street (Sensitive).

Dropping the outrageous accent, she will say, "I see. You poor thing," and shake her head sadly. She knows the vaguest outlines (or one or two details) of each PC's Backstory, Soul Loss, and/or Discovery – just enough to make conversation easier. Also, since Madame is clued-in to the social maladjustment of Dead Inside, she'll make allowances in their interactions. "Won't you come into my sanctum?" The PCs may refuse to do so; that's fine. If at any time, the PCs wish to quit the shop, Madame will accept this and say, "Please feel

free to return when you wish a session; I feel I can help you."

The sanctum is the same size as the anteroom. In its center squats a low table covered in scarves, holding the mandatory crystal ball, Tarot deck, scented oils, and crystal points. A couple comfortable chairs surround the table. None of these things looks spiritually out of the ordinary. (However, a tall unlit candle on one of the three bookshelves does look strange: it seems to glimmer and reflect the light of the room. Also notable is a dim, black threaded dreamcatcher hanging over the table.) "Occult" mass-market paperbacks fill the shelves, and there are more posters and prints.

Madame will ask the PCs to take a seat, and will do so herself. "I see your problem right off," she'll begin. "And I can help set you on the right path. Do you wish my help?" If they agree, she'll continue: "You have lost your soul."

Here, she'll insert some relevant details about the PC's history or Qualities, as many as necessary to convince the PC(s) that she has real power. She will agree to any simple test (like picking a Zener card, quick mind-read, pointing out hidden moles or unknown birthmarks, giving the provenance of childhood scars, etc.).

Once she has a character's belief (or at least, his declaration of open-mindedness), she'll continue: "You cannot fully regain your spirit here, in this world. It's simply too hard, too cold. But I can help you get to a warmer, more welcoming place, where you would be able to pursue your healing with a greater chance of results. Be warned, however – the Spirit World can be dangerous; your adventure will not be without risks. Again, do you wish my help?"

If a character agrees, she will light the glimmery candle, which will cast off a silvery bubble around the table and chairs, which is tall enough to touch or engulf the strange dreamcatcher. "Now, we may speak without being overheard. While this session is free, my getting you into the Spirit World isn't. No, I don't want money – I need you to pass a message to someone over there. Do you agree?"

If their answer is no, she will try to persuade the PC(s) to agree to her terms. If they are adamantly against helping and offer no good, convincing reasons for refusing to help her, she will sigh. "You have much to learn, and now it will be more difficult for you." Then, she will open a Gate for them to pass through. (Selfish or cowardly refusal should incur Decay Ticks.)

If the PCs agree to help, she continues: "Deliver this message to Lady Violet. She is a powerful Mage and lives in the Indigo Tower: 'Clio and Isis. I have the information you need, but I am being watched by your enemies. I cannot cross the City or send a Tulpa – they have thwarted me at every turn. Come to the Real World, to my shop, when you can.' If you promise to do this service, I will show you the way into the Spirit World. I will also answer any three of your questions using my Ability – no more, for I am bound by magic."

If the PCs wish to back out at *this* point, she will look up at the dreamcatcher. It will begin to whistle ethereally (basically Binding the characters to silence) and the silver bubble around them will pulse. She'll look at them ruefully, and open a Gate. "Go then," she'll say, "you **will not** speak of this to anyone." And indeed, the characters will be unable to tell anyone about what was said within the confines of the bubble – not even each other, unless they break an Expert [+4] Difficulty Rank Bind. (Alternatively, she can just kick them out of her shop without Opening a Gate; the PCs will then either have to interact with Bill or the Glade to get to the Spirit World.)

Otherwise, Madame Lupino will answer a question for each PC, to the best of her ability (which is that of a Sensitive who rarely enters the Spirit World, but has a few friends still residing there who stay in touch). She can give basic information on the Spirit World, Soul Points, Ensoulment, Cosmology, Notable Locations, or Notable NPCs – anything from the first four chapters of *DI*, essentially.

If asked about the enemies of Lady Violet, she will soothe them by telling them that they, as Dead Inside, will not be seen as a threat, and that the silver light of the candle has made it impossible for any to know for sure that they are acting as agents. If pressed, she will tell them to "Beware things with green feathers." She will not divulge the name of Lady Violet's rival: "It's too dangerous for you to

GREEN FEATHERS

What's Going On? What are Madame Lupino and Lady Violet up to? Well, that's up to the GM, who may select one of the following, or come up with something else:

* A Mage is abusing his Abilities in the Real World, and Madame Lupino and Lady Violet are acting as agents for the Triangle Council to discover who it is.
* Lady Violet desires to purchase a Sacred Site in the Real World that another Mage also covets; Madame Lupino keeping an eye on the location.
* Madame Lupino is getting paranoid in her old age, and is jumping at shadows.
* Lady Violet is acting against the Triangle Council, and Madame Lupino has Seen danger approaching her Mage patron.
* Lady Violet's Shadow is cutting off her communication with her allies in an attempt to isolate her for the kill.

Hey, Are We Being Followed?

If desired, the PCs can be tailed or even confronted by the thugs of Lady Violet's foes. One way this can play out is this:

The first time the PCs enter a Crosstown Traffic Scene, a green parrot starts trailing them (a Good [9] Difficulty Rank task against a Vision or Notice Quality; GM should roll this for the players).

The second time the PCs enter a Crosstown Traffic Scene, they are followed on the ground by a man wearing a Robin Hood hat with a long green ostrich feather.

The third time the PCs enter a Crosstown Traffic Scene, they are set upon by a man or group of men (one per PC) with green feathers instead of hair. These are the hench-Tulpas of Lady Violet's enemies. Use the conflict rules in *Chapter 4*; if the Tulpas are defeated, they will change into parrots and fly away. If a PC is defeated, he will be dragged into a nearby alley, and questioned about the message they carry (or carried, if it's already been delivered) – which is a great opportunity for Virtue or Vice Checks and collecting Ticks.

The Tulpas aren't particularly bright, and can be evaded, conned, or out-thought with relative ease.

Green Feathers Tulpa. Average [0] Tracking, Average [0] Wrestling. *Type*: Average [0] Tulpa. *Soul Point Pool*: 8.

know, candle or no candle." (See the *Green Feathers* boxed text for more information.)

Before sending them on their way, she will offer a few last pieces of advice: "Make sure you are not followed. Trust yourself. Be careful not to sell or buy at too high a price. Ask your Shadow to tell you the name of your Guide."

Depending upon how powerful the GM wishes Madame Lupino to be, she could either open a Gate for them in the sanctum, summon Bill (see *RW1*) to take them to the Glade (*RW3*), or give them directions to the Glade, itself. She could also give each PC a single Soul Point, at the GM's option (her Generosity kicking in).

If she uses her Ability to Open Gates, it will appear like a small, rainbow circlet. After appearing between her outstretched hands, she will then pull the Gate open wide enough for people to walk through comfortably.

Ways for PCs to Get to Madame Lupino's: Here are some ideas:

– *Bill Sent Me.* Bill the Ghost (see *RW1*) could have told them to see Madame Lupino.
– *Meet & Greet.* Alternatively, Bill the Ghost Dad could have accompanied the PC(s) to see Madame, in order to introduce them to her.
– *Trail of Crumbs.* Perhaps a series of serendipitous business cards, newspaper ads, comments from random passersby, discarded items, or some combination of these, keeps bringing the words "Madame Lupino" to the PCs' attention. If they do any sort of search for her, they'll find her – she has a small webpage and is listed in the phone directory.
– *I Went Looking and Found.* The PCs discover that Madame Lupino is known for being an excellent and reputable psychic sort, more so than most of the scam artists or deluded flakes, anyway. This is especially useful for self-motivated characters trying to get a handle on their Dead Inside nature.
– *Phone Call.* Especially useful for those characters with the "You were told outright" type of realization, Madame herself called the PC as many times as necessary to get them down to see her. "I have something that can help you with your problem," she said – she may not even identify herself as a fortune teller or Sensitive.
– *Found the Key in the Glade.* The PCs may have used the name and number on the Key from the Glade (see *RW3*) to find Madame Lupino. If they took the Key, she will send them back to the Glade, to return it so that they can then use the Glade to enter the Spirit World.

Madame Lupino, the Sensitive. Expert [+4] Second Sight, Good [+2] New Age Jazz, Good [+2] Wealthy Clientele, Poor [-2] (Physical Laziness). *Type*: Good [+2] Sensitive. *Personality*: Empathic. *Virtue*: Generosity; *Vice*: Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool*: 8.

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Entry Scene, Learning/Exploration Scene, Interaction Scene.

Scene Link In. Start, RW1, or RW3.

Objective(s)? Get PCs closer to the Spirit World; help fill them in on basic info; give them a short-term goal.

Obstacle(s)? PC mistrust of Madame; too much PC skepticism.

Action. None as written.

Interaction. Madame and other PCs; possibly Bill.

Magical Mystery Tour. Second Sight; Enchanted Objects; possibly Open Gate; answers to 3 Spirit World questions per PC.

Deep Thoughts. The nature of trust; the nature of skepticism; the existence of a Spirit World.

Possible Virtue & Vice Checks. Generosity or Fortitude (respectively, charitable or excited agreement to carry the message); Avarice or Cowardice (respectively, selfish or lazy/fearful refusal to carry the message); Hypocrisy (for agreeing, then backing out).

A Moment to Shine? For Which PC? A Scientist or Skeptic type could have a blast roleplaying out his acceptance or rejection of spiritual powers.

Planning & Resource Management. Characters might try to lay out plans before entering the Spirit World, using their Real World resources and answers to their questions to Madame.

Continuity Clean-up? Can be useful to collect all the PCs in one place and introduce them to each other.

Scene Link Out. RW1, RW3, or SW1.

RW3: The Glade

Situation. Perhaps a PC has had a vision of the Glade, with the intimation that answers about his nature or future can be found there. Maybe Bill (see *RW1*) or Madame Lupino (see *RW2*) told them the way to this natural Gate. They may even stumble upon it on their own. In any case, they find themselves in the Glade.

Out in the country, a couple miles down a gravel road, there's a small "driveway" leading off to the north. The driveway is packed dirt, just wide enough for a single car. After a few turns down a slope
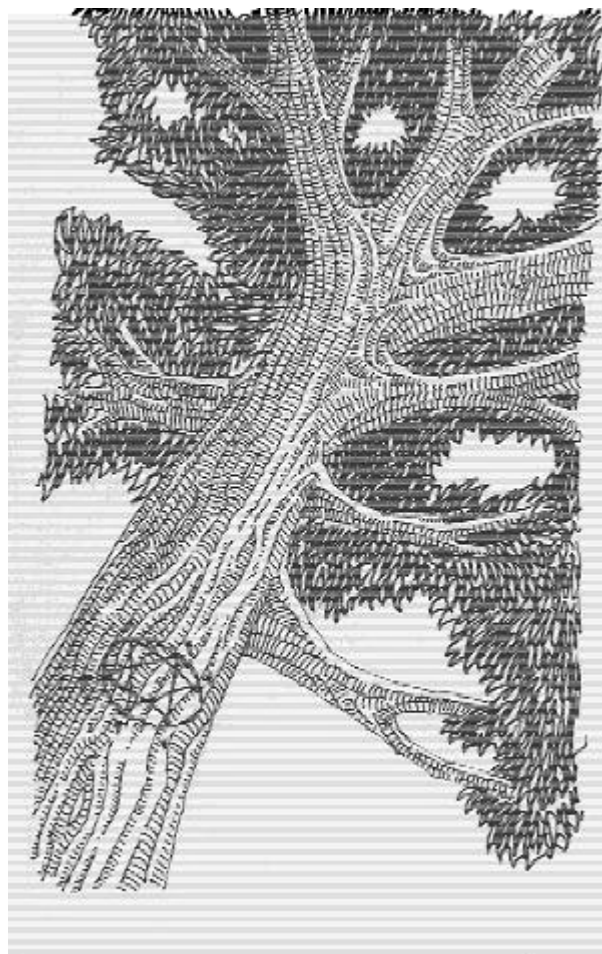
(maybe 100 yards, sufficient to hide a vehicle or two from the country road), the driveway ends directly in front of two largish trees twisted together. A footpath leads east from the trees, going another 25 yards into the deep foliage.

The footpath opens into a broad clearing, roofed with the interlaced branches of oaks and pines. A few substantial stumps speckle the open space. The floor is layer upon layer of pine needles and dried oak leaves. If a character enters the clearing, he will feel a strange – but not unpleasant – vertigo and "pins and needles" feeling. This sensation will ebb over time. The Glade is a sacred space, a Place of Power, close to the Spirit World.

If the character remains within the clearing for 5 minutes, he will begin to sense something up in one of the trees, something that shines power down into

the Glade. During the day, isolating this object is a Good [9] Difficulty Rank task against their Dead Inside Type Rank (basically, use of the Second Sight Ability), or an Expert [11] Difficulty Rank task against a Vision, Search, or Finding Quality. Climbing the appropriate tree is an Average [7] Difficulty Rank Climbing or Athletics task. (At night, Downshift the finding Difficulty Rank, and Upshift the climbing Difficulty Rank.)

The object will be found to be an old-fashioned iron key, half-embedded in a tree branch. Stamped into the barrel of the key is the word "Lupino" and a 10-digit (telephone) number; both are easily visible despite the bark growing around the Key. It can be removed from the branch with a little effort. The Key is an Enchanted Object, with two abilities:

Whenever a being (other than an Average Person) stands in the Glade at midnight during a full moon, the Key will open a Gate to the Spirit World.

In addition to the above, if any being other than an Average Person stands in the Glade and says the word "Lupino" in a forceful voice, a Gate will open into the Spirit World which lasts 10 minutes before closing. This power only works once per day.

PCs can easily dig the Key out of the tree if they wish. However, if they take the Key into the Spirit World, it will lose its powers, permanently.

After forming, the Glade Gate is a vertical rainbow ring with an especially thick green band. In a few seconds, it expands from pinpoint to a 12 foot diameter circle hanging in midair, about an inch off of the ground. Warmth – spiritual warmth that warms Dead Inside – seems to pour from it, as does a mild sensation of hope. The surface plane of the Gate itself shimmers like water. If entered, it leads directly to *SW1: The Bridge of Souls.*

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s).* Entry Scene, Learning Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In.* Start, RW1, or RW2.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Get into Spirit World.
>
> *Obstacle(s)?* Mystery and Fear.
>
> *Action.* Climbing a tree.
>
> *Interaction.* Talking to other PCs (and possibly Bill, from SW1).
>
> *Magical Mystery Tour.* Second Sight, Enchanted Objects, and Gates.

> *Possible Virtue & Vice Checks.* Avarice (if someone wants the Key for themselves).
>
> *Scene Link Out.* RW1, RW2, or SW1.

SW1: The Bridge of Souls

Situation. The PCs wake up (if this is being used as an Entry Scene) or otherwise step out of a Gate (either the one opened by Madame Lupino, the one in the Glade, or some other natural Gate). They find themselves in a large park within a modern-looking city, judging from the skyscrapers looming around its perimeter. The grass is green, the sidewalks slate, and the waters of the lake behind them are blue. The air is warm – many Dead Inside feel themselves almost "thawing" in the pleasant atmosphere; the invisible curtain between them and other people seems to have fallen away in the sunshine. People laugh, picnic, and romp; street performers play to knots of onlookers; large birds fly through the air; people play chess (or gin, or go) in the shade of the trees; vendors sell yummy treats. A sign planted in a flowerbed nearby reads "Welcome to Wyld Park." At first glance, it looks like any large park in a major metropolis.

On second glance, however, everything looks decidedly odd. The skyscrapers outside the park seem to be moving, and some appear to be growing, shrinking, or changing color and shape. The lake's waters are utterly calm, despite the mild winds allowing some of the merrymakers to fly their kites. Also, a hair-thin bridge directly behind them leads across the mirror-like lake, terminating at a small island. (If Bill is with the PCs, at this point, he'll say his goodbyes and flit across the Bridge to Spectral Point.)

None of the Park-goers look like Average People ("shelled in," or "closed"): all are Dead Inside (like them), Sensitives (like Madame Lupino), Ghosts (like Bill), or other, weirder things. Some look "gray" or "washed out" (Zombis); a few look normal, but the observer can feel that they are unreal (Tulpas and Free Spirits); and one or two of the crowd seem to shine with a powerful internal light (Magi). Indeed, some of the birds flying and kites circling above the Park are – on closer inspection – Free Spirits, Ghosts, Magi, and transformed Sensitives. Some of the performers

aren't doing pantomime or tumbling – they're physically shifting their bodies. Chess pieces and go stones move without the touch of a hand. The vendors don't sell hot dogs or ice cream, but dream clouds and nightmare chili.

Indeed, relatively close to them is a dream cloud cart. The vendor dips a long paper cone into a spinning vat, twirling up a fluffy confection that looks much like cotton candy – only cotton candy doesn't change color, glow, pulsate, or hum. The vendor himself is a bit strange, too: while he looks like a young, pudgy African-American man (wearing a cowboy hat, Hawaiian shirt, and Bermuda shorts), his bright orange duck's feet and lack of an aura tells newcomers that they're in a whole new ballgame.

Having seen the PCs exit a Gate, and observing their obvious reactions to the Park, he'll introduce himself. "Hey, you new in town? I'm Vinnie A' Dreams. Welcome to the Spirit World." Since most Gates open at the Bridge of Souls, this enterprising Free Spirit is used to newcomers.

He'll ask the PCs if they're hungry; if so, he'll offer to sell them a dream cloud, and give them a quick run-down on Spirit World Commerce (see *Chapter 4*).

"There are three kinds of trade in the Spirit World," he'll say. "For little things – like basic food and shelter – you *share* your memories. I deal in happy dreams. Tori over there–" he'll indicate the nearest nightmare chili cart "– she deals in bad ones." (If no PCs wish to buy a cloud, a random NPC Sensitive will conveniently show up who does.) "Just watch Stavan, here. What do you want today, buddy? Single, double, or triple?" Stavan wants a double, and Vinnie says, "I'll want you to share the memory of your first trip to the Spirit World." Stavan holds out his hand, concentrates, and an image of a tiny frog ribbits in his hand. Vinnie hands him a double-cone, the frog jumps to Vinnie, and Stavan walks off, bidding all good day, munching on his cloud. Vinnie throws the frog into the vat, where it is pulled apart by the whisks into long green threads and incorporated into the fluffy treat. "That was sharing; Stavan kept his memory, but shared it with me. I shared a dream cloud with him; I can do that all day without reducing my stock."

"Now, for more expensive items – like my special reserve dream clouds, expensive Real World goods, or significant services, Spirit Worlders pay in blood – soul-blood." (Soul Points.) "If you bought a cloud of mine with soul-blood, it would be much more delicious and filling for you. I could also buy dreams from you for some of my soul-blood, but you'd lose that memory permanently. Minds are made of memory, so be careful there. Sell too much, and you may not recognize yourself in the morning."

"There's an even higher level of commerce here, where you can sell your talents, strengths, large amounts of soul-blood all at once, or even your name, but I'm just a simple dream cloud vendor, not a high-powered trader. Just take this with you: know if you're sharing, selling, or selling dear. Now, who wanted a dream cloud? Since you're new, the price is sharing a memory of a date with someone you liked."

What Else Vinnie Knows. Basically, everything in *Chapter 2*. However, he'll only answer three questions (or five, if at least one PC bought a cloud from him) before urging them to move along and "figure it out for yourself. Just watch out for the Qlippoth and don't stay in the Park after nightfall."

- *Bill the Ghost*. "You mean Bill Vance died? Shucks, he was a good guy."
- *Green Feathers*. "Beats me."

- *Indigo Tower.* (looks over to skyline) "That's Tower Row over there... Maybe that purple one?"

- *Lady Violet.* "Sounds kinda familiar. I think she was on the Triangle Council a few years ago."

- *Madame Lupino.* "Lupino... nope, not ringing a bell. Sorry."

- *Nightfall.* "Bad stuff runs around in here after dark. Better find somewhere else to hang out at night."

- *Qlippoth.* "They look like, well, a solid, humanoid hole, I guess. Stay away from them – they'll suck out all your soul-blood and make you just like them. If you see one, run away."

- *Shadow.* "Isn't it right behind you on the sidewalk, there?" (The Shadow will wave to the PC – see below).

- *Triangle Council.* "They sorta run the City, but not really. You can complain to them if you have a problem, but they only meet once a week, and don't really have the authority to do anything, except whatever power or influence they bring to the table to start with."

The Shadow. Each PC's Shadow will attempt to get their attention, usually by waving at the character or speaking to them out of a reflection. (If they've seen Madame Lupino or asked Vinnie about the Shadow, they'll see it. If not, it's an Average [7] Difficulty Rank thing to notice.) The Shadow has the name of the PC's chosen Guide; it will pass along this information to help the PC survive in the Spirit World.

Characters with a Personality type of *Instinctive* are pointed towards Evie at Archaic Café. *Empathic* characters are directed to Mary at Quaternity Keep. *Sensual* types are told to seek out Manny at the White Monkey. *Thoughtful* PCs should see Trader Nick, at his Exroads Market stall.

Now What? PCs must decide on which to do first:

- (If they met Madame Lupino) Deliver the message to Lady Violet [Go to *Crosstown Traffic*, then *SW3*];

- Seek out their Guide [Go to *Crosstown Traffic*, then *SW2*]; or

- Sightsee [Go to *Crosstown Traffic*, repeat until bored or they decide to see Lady Violet (*SW3*), their Guide (*SW2*), or go along on the Quest (*SW4*)].

NOTE - Depending upon *why* one of these choices are picked, the selection – or debate between characters before selecting a choice – could lead to both Cultivation and Decay Ticks.

Vinnie the Vendor. Good [+2] Swimmer, Good [+2] Dream Cloud Vendor. *Type*: Average [0] Free Spirit. *Personality*: Affable. *Virtue*: Courtesy; *Vice*: Avarice. *Soul Point Pool*: 4.

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s).* Entry Scene, Learning/Exploration Scene, Interaction Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In.* RW2 or RW3.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Introduce Spirit World; Learn about SW Commerce; Interact with Vinnie; Directions to Tower Row; Discover Guide.
>
> *Obstacle(s)?* Dealing with the weirdness; stuff Vinnie doesn't know; PC fear.
>
> *Interaction.* Plenty of interaction with Vinnie; possible interactions with other folks in Wyld Park.
>
> *Magical Mystery Tour.* Alas, most of the beings using Abilities are too far away to pick up the mechanics of what they're doing. If PCs approach close enough, they could learn the process for Change Self from Free Spirit "body-shifter" buskers; Dream-leap or True Flight from people bounding around; Healing if someone gets a scrape and bends down to fix it; Luck from the chess/go players; etc.
>
> *Deep Thoughts.* Am I going mad, or is everything I've know thus far wrong?
>
> *Possible Virtue & Vice Checks.* Despair (absolute refusal to believe anything Vinnie says).
>
> *End on a High Note?* SW1 can be used to pause the Scenario between Sessions.
>
> *Scene Link Out.* Crosstown Traffic.

VARIABLE SCENES

Variable Scenes appear as grayed-in ovals on the Scenario Skeleton. They can be dropped in between other Scenes – in this case, whenever the PCs walk through the City.

Crosstown Traffic

For a *random* Crosstown Traffic Scene, roll 2d6; or *select* one. GMs can also revisit an earlier choice and see what's developed, or make up his own to slot in. (Scene type, possible Checks, Difficulty Ranks, and other information is listed in parentheses; stat blocks for named NPCs appear at the end of each.)

2 = You Are Now Imago

One PC sees Barry, Lyn, or Ray (see #5 and #6) ahead on the street, and feels a strange tingling in their heart and eyes. They know they have become

Imago, know the target's Virtue and Vice, and wield the special Imago Abilities (Know Need and Set Task; see *Chapter 5*) on behalf of the target; indeed, they are *compelled* to. Other PCs will recognize that something odd is going on with the Imagoed PC.

Each of the NPCs has a different need, and this will force the PC to fill that Imago role (up to and including temporary alterations in body shape, personality, and sex). However, the Task the PC sets for the target NPC must follow certain rules.

1) It must be related to either the Imago PC's or the target NPC's Virtue and Vice;
2) It must be able to be accomplished;
3) The target must be able to do it alone; and
4) It cannot involve leaving the Spirit World.

Upon completion of their Task, the target NPC instantly gains one Soul Point, the PC is released from Imago-dom, and the PC gains a full Soul Point for his service (with extra Ticks if, in the GM's opinion, the Task was especially suitable for the NPC).

- **Barry**. (Integrity/Despair) Barry needs to connect with his new reality; this forces a female PC into the role of Anima or Wise Old.
- **Lyn**. (Fortitude/Hypocrisy) Lyn needs to stop worrying about what other people have and learn to appreciate what she already possesses; this forces the PC into the role of Child.
- **Ray**. (Generosity/Cowardice) Ray needs to get up off his duff and do for himself; this forces the PC into the role of Trickster.

3 = Vision of NPC

Walking past a puddle, window, or any other reflective object, one of the PC's reflections is replaced by that of one of the NPCs mentioned in this Scenario or in *Chapter 2*. Other characters will notice that the affected PC seems to be passively using Second Sight. Targeted NPCs could smile at the PC, and beckon them to "come visit"; look perturbed, and Ward against them; roll their eyes and ignore the PC's spying; etc. (Reaction.)

4 = Falling Rock

A large piece of masonry – perhaps a gargoyle – has fallen from one of the buildings, and is hurtling towards a knot of pedestrians, including the PCs!

Some of the NPCs, warned by their Second Sight, use Dream-Leap or Luck to move out of the Way, but a few will still be hit by the shattering debris for 1d6 Damage Ranks. If the PCs do not get out of the way, they too must take damage. Afterwards, a few kindly souls will provide healing for their companions, but unless the PCs ask for aid, no one will offer it. (Learning: Dream-leap, Luck, Second Sight; Action/Reaction; to notice the falling object is an Expert [11] Difficulty Rank task; to notice nearby characters using Second Sight is an Average [7] Difficulty Rank task; leaping out of the impact zone is a Good [9] Difficulty Rank test against a relevant physical Quality; convincing an NPC to aid a wounded comrade is an Average [7] Difficulty Rank task against a relevant social Quality; use stats for Jane Doe, Ray, and Lyn for other pedestrians.)

5 = "This Isn't Real…"

The PCs come across a chunky NPC Dead Inside (Barry) who refuses to buy into the reality of the Spirit World. He will deny everything, instead attempting to reinterpret what he sees and hears as delusional hallucinations. He will argue with PCs, seeing them as madmen like him. Also, he will complain of great hunger, but refuse to consume any "weird" Spirit World food or drink. What do the PCs do? (Interaction; Generosity, Courtesy, and Cruelty Checks possible.)

> **Barry, Blinkered Dead Inside**. Good [+2] Bank Manager, Poor [-2] Close-mindedness. *Type*: Average [0] Dead Inside. *Personality*: Thinker. *Virtue*: Integrity; *Vice*: Despair. *Soul Point Pool*: 1.

6 = Gangway!

Just up the block, the PCs see a Dead Inside man (Ray) holding a paper sack loosely in one hand as he goggles at the shifting skyline. Suddenly, a Dead Inside woman (Lyn) grabs the bag, pushes the man over, and takes off running. What do the PCs do? Do they help Ray, chase Lyn or do nothing? What's in the bag? Why did Lyn take it? (Action/Reaction, Interaction; many Checks possible surrounding the reasons whether or not the PCs lend assistance; racing after Lyn is a physical conflict using Failure Ranks; if Lyn loses the race, this could lead to combat, which is a physical conflict using Damage Ranks.)

Lyn, Dead Inside Mugger. Good [+2] Athlete, Good [+2] Fisticuffs, Poor [-2] Concentration. *Type*: Average [0] Dead Inside. *Personality*: Instinctive. *Virtue*: Fortitude; *Vice*: Hypocrisy. *Soul Point Pool*: 2.

Ray, Dead Inside Mugging Victim. Good [+2] Computer Programmer, Poor [-2] Clumsy. *Type*: Average [0] Dead Inside. *Personality*: Empathic. *Virtue*: Generosity; *Vice*: Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool*: 1.

7 = Quicksand Street

When the PCs attempt to cross this street, it turns to mush under their feet (about three feet deep). With effort, a character can slog across the roadway. (Action; crossing the street is a physical conflict using Failure Ranks, with the street having a Good [+2] Strength Quality; if a character loses the conflict, the street will push him back to his side of origin.) The Street can be easier avoided through the use of Dream Leap or True Flight. Alterations to the nature of this Street can give variety: fracture patterns (Crackup Avenue, mental obstacles), swarming crowds of people (Agoraphobia Boulevard, social obstacles), or fields of overpowering emotion (Lonely Street, emotional obstacles).

8 = Box (Concrete) Canyon

As the PCs wend their way along the streets, they notice that the surrounding buildings have shifted to surround them: they are now in a box canyon. Behind them, their path has vanished. If a PC has some sort of Notice or Alertness Quality, they have a chance at detecting a door forming in one of the facing buildings. If no one notices the door forming, they will when a Sensitive (DiCasso) and a Zombi (Chang) exit it, loudly discussing deep-sea fishing as if it were of life-and-death importance. They will cross the street, moving towards a blank wall, where the Sensitive will Change Landscape to create a new door. (Learning: Change Landscape; noticing the first door forming is an Expert [11] Difficulty Rank task, and the second is a Good [9] Difficulty Rank task.)

Captain DiCasso, Sensitive and Explorer. Expert [+4] Explorer, Good [+2] Swordsman, Poor [-2] Peg-Leg. *Type*: Good [+2] Sensitive. *Personality*: Thinker. *Virtue*: Fortitude. *Vice*:

Avarice. *Soul Point Pool*: 4 (plus 2 in peg-leg Soul Egg).

Chang, Sailing Zombi. Good Sailor [+2], Good [+2] Angler, Poor [-2] Hard of Hearing *Type*: Good [+2] Zombi. *Personality*: Thinker. *Virtue*: Integrity; *Vice*: Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool*: 2.

9 = Strange Rumblings Around the Corner

The PCs hear a loud, grating and grinding noise coming from around the corner. After a beat, they'll see NPC City folk fleeing ahead of it. Cries of "The Linnet Fracture is on the move!" can be heard. Some NPCs will turn down the street the PCs are standing on. Running pell-mell right at them, they will shoo at the PCs to get out of the way. A beat after that, the Fracture roars around the corner, and thunders right where the PCs were standing. The Fracture looks like a giant, spindle-shaped black worm, chewing through the City streets. (The streets slowly "heal" back together after the Fracture passes, but this takes some time). What do the PCs do? (Action/Reaction; the Fracture moves at Good [+2] speed if a character wishes to outrun it, dodging out of its way is a Good [9] Difficulty Rank physical task, and characters who fall into the Fracture reappear in a different part of the City (if more than one fell in, they *all* appear in different parts of the City).)

10 = Whispers from the Grates

Walking past a sewer grate, the PCs hear, "Psst! Down here." A humanoid figure – probably female, but maybe not – hidden in the darkness of the sewer beckons to them. "Hey, want to collect some quick essence? I'll give you each some juice if you deliver a package for me; half up front, and the rest after you deliver it." If the PCs say no, the voice thanks them and seems to go away. If the PCs agree, a gloved hand will reach out of the grate and pass them a dove-grey envelope with the name "Lady Violet" written on it in elegant script. Then she'll pass to each of them a pale lavender marble – a Soul Point. "Get this into the Indigo Tower. The password for the butler is 'Clio and Isis.' Thanks! And come back here afterward so I can give you the other half of your payment."

This is Lady Violet's Shadow, who wishes to get a spy into the Indigo Tower. If the PCs take the Envelope to the Indigo Tower, see Scene *SW3*. (If the PCs accept the commission and partial payment, but throw away the Envelope or otherwise refuse to deliver it, ask why. If motivated out of concern for Lady Violet, they should get Cultivation Ticks; if motivated by the flash and dazzle of "free Soul Points," they should get Decay Ticks.)

If the Envelope is opened, PCs will see a tiny Tulpa with huge ears and little bird's wings crouching within. It will squeak in fright, and try to fly away. The Shadow has no intention of paying the characters further, even if they do complete the mission. (Action/Reaction, Interaction; possible Avarice Checks.)

> **Envelope Tulpa, Spy for Lady Violet's Shadow**. Expert [+4] Hearing, Expert [+4] Sneaky, Average [0] Flight. *Type*: Average [0] Tulpa. *Soul Point Pool*: 1.

> **Lady Violet's Shadow**. Use Lady Violet's stats from *SW3*, with these changes: *Type*: Good [+2] Mage's Shadow; use of Imago, Shadow, and Nemesis Abilities (see *Chapter 5*) at Good [+2] Rank; *Personality*: Thinker; *Soul Point Pool*: 5.

11 = Magi Combat!

A short distance away, the PCs hear screams. They see some people fleeing away (by True Flight, Opening Gates, Dream-Leap, and just plain running hell bent for leather), while others collect into a crowd. "The Mage Henrik is fighting his Shadow!" The sidewalk beneath their feet quivers, and the buildings seem to shrink away.

At the center of the knot of people, two men are facing off against one another. They are mirror images of one another: tall, broad, hawk-nosed, with long hair and a beard gathered into a braid. However, one has white hair and beard, and the other has black. The black-bearded man is Henrik; the white-bearded man in his Shadow, and this is clear once the PCs get a good look at both.

If they watch the melee (at a distance or close-up), they will see that Henrik is Changing Self to shape his arms into sword and shield, while his Shadow is making his hands into spiked maces. They will wail upon each other merrily, slamming one another into buildings, Dream-leaping to perform wall-runs or flying kicks, Changing Landscape to root the other to the ground, Warding sometimes against the other's magic, and just generally causing havoc. Then, Henrik's Shadow picks up a bystander to use as a bludgeon. The question is now, do the PCs get involved? (Note that the PCs' Shadows will be telling them it's not a good idea to hang around when Magi are fighting their Shadows...)

If the PCs do not get involved, the fight continues with Henrik trying to free the Shadow's captive and disperse the crowd. While successful, he takes a grievous wound, and is forced to flee, zipping away using True Flight. His Shadow will laugh and give chase.

If the PCs do get involved, they become targets of the Shadow's attacks, even if they are only trying to help clear the scene of innocents. Still, with the PCs as a distraction, Henrik is assured victory, and his Shadow flees. (PCs will accrue relevant Cultivation Ticks for stepping in.) Recall that a Dead Inside who dies becomes a Zombi – and the Shadow will kill with little compunction.

After the fight is over, Henrik will Heal the injured and Change Landscape to repair the damage to the street. He will introduce himself to the PCs, thank them for their help, hit on any female PCs, and tell them that he owes them all a favor. If they ever require his assistance, all they need do is send a message to the Whistling Tower. Then, he'll fly off (to the White Monkey for a beer).

A favor from a Mage is a big deal: beyond its immediate or future benefits, it is valuable as a commodity in Spirit World Commerce. The PCs must decide whether to use the favor immediately, save it for a rainy day, or use it in Trade to get things that they need. (Learning: whatever Abilities & Powers are used in the melee and its aftermath; Action/Reaction, Interaction; many Checks possible; entering the combat will be a physical task involving Damage Ranks.]

> **Henrik, Mage of the Whistling Spire**. Expert [+4] Brawler, Good [+2] Builder, Average [0] Resilience, Poor [-2] Sucker for the Ladies. *Type*: Master [+6] Mage. *Personality*: Lusty Viking Guy. *Virtue*: Fortitude; *Vice*: Avarice (especially in the form of lecherous desire). *Soul Point Pool*: 9 (plus a Soul Egg ring containing 4 Soul Points).

Henrik's Shadow. Use Henrik's stats, with these changes: *Type*: Expert [+4] Mage's Shadow; use of Imago, Shadow, and Nemesis Abilities (see *Chapter 5*) at Expert [+4] Rank; *Personality*: Instinctive; *Soul Point Pool*: 6.

12 = Bodymod Barber

The PCs walk past a "barbershop" – complete with red and white pole – with a large front window. The sign reads "Facechangers." Within, they see a Sensitive (Jane Doe) using Change Other to permanently resculpt the face of a Dead Inside. If they continue to watch, they will see the job completed, and the Dead Inside pay the "barber" with Soul Points (forming in his hands like brightly glowing crystal cubes) or a Rank of Chess-player (appearing as a silvery rook). If PCs want their features altered, this service will cost 6 Soul Points or the equivalent, with half in advance. (Learning: Change Others, Spirit World Commerce.)

Jane Doe, Bodysculpting Sensitive. Good Change Others [+2], Good [+2] Sculptor, Good [+2] Flawless Beauty, Poor [-2] Dealing with "Ugly People." *Type*: Average [0] Sensitive. *Personality*: Sensual. *Virtue*: Courtesy; *Vice*: Avarice. *Soul Point Pool*: 7.

Bonus Crosstown Traffic

If the PCs are starting to get a handle on the Spirit World, the GM can inflict the following Scenes on them, to ramp up the danger factor:

–   **What's Yours is Mine**. On a lonely street, one of the PCs is suddenly attacked by a Dead Inside man (Sullivan), who attempts to use Soultaking on the target! If the PCs can drive Sullivan off without killing him, everybody gains one Cultivation Tick. If they kill him, they lose 1 Soul Point. If they successfully Soultake their Points back, that's not a Decay Tick. If they take more soul-energy than was stolen from them, that *is* a Decay Tick. If they cause Sullivan to husk, that's a lost Soul Point; if they stabilize him before he becomes a Qlippoth, they get some Cultivation Ticks back.

If a PC hits zero or begins to husk and the other PCs have no clue what to do, the victim's Shadow uses Ward to protect their caster and then spends a Shadow Point to "stabilize" him. (After this, the PC's Shadow will be mute and unable to offer further power until the PC loses a Soul Point to Decay or Improves his Type Rank; Learning: Heal, Soultaking, and Ward; Action/Reaction,

Interaction; Fortitude or Cowardice Checks possible here.)

Sullivan, Dead Inside Soul-thief. Average [+2] Construction Worker, Good [+2] Strong. *Personality*: Strong & Silent Type. *Type*: Poor [-2] Dead Inside. *Virtue*: Fortitude; *Vice*: Avarice. *Soul Point Pool*: 0.

–   **Qlippoth!** A Qlippoth appears, causing the few passersby on the street to cry out warnings. All of the NPCs use their Ward ability, and the Qlippoth bounces between these protections like a pinball. Then, as if he's caught their scent, the Qlippoth points himself in the PCs' direction and springs to attack. If the PCs manage to Ward themselves in time, the Qlippoth will focus on another Dead Inside NPC – notably Barry (from #5), who hasn't learned how to use the Ward Ability, despite having watched an entire street full of people use it.

>   NOTE - Remember that Qlippoth lose the first few Soul Points they steal to the Void, and also emit a constant wail. They take damage from physical attacks, but they also can take damage from certain Abilities (see *Chapter 5*).

The Qlippoth. Good [+2] Stockbroker, Good [+2] Fast-Talk, Poor [-2] Sight. *Type*: Average [0] Living Qlippoth.

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Learning/Exploration Scene, Action/Reaction Scene, or Interaction Scene, depending on events.

Scene Link In. SW1, SW2, SW2a, SW2b, SW3, SW4, or another *Crosstown Traffic Scene*.

Objective(s)? Various.

Obstacle(s)? Various.

Action. Various.

Interaction. Various.

Magical Mystery Tour. Every Various.

Deep Thoughts. Various.

Possible Virtue & Vice Checks. Various.

End on a High Note? Crosstown Traffic Scenes should probably not be used to pause the Scenario between Sessions.

Scene Link Out. SW2, SW2a, SW2b, SW3, SW4, another Crosstown Traffic Scene, or Quaternity Keep, depending on the PCs' destination.

SET-PIECE SCENES

Set-piece Scenes are indicated as squares on the Skeleton; but GMs should feel free to design and insert their own.

SW2: Meeting the Guide

Situation. After speaking to their Shadow (in *SW1*) or Lady Violet (in *SW3*), the PCs should know who their Guide is. Determined by Personality type (Evie for Instinctive; Mary for Empathic; Manny for Sensual; and Trader Nick for Thoughful; or closest match), the Guides will serve as Imagos to set each PC a task to perform, to help them get on with fixing their soul.

(Use the descriptions of these NPCs and their associated locations from *Chapter 2*; some further characterization appears below, but the information in *Chapter 2* covers most of the bases. GMs can feel free to stat these NPCs up, but since they are serving in a purely instructive mode, this may not be necessary.)

After each of the selected Guides speaks one of "their" charges for a short time, they will know that they are to serve as Guide for them. Their eyes will begin to twinkle and shine with Imago power, and they will take on an appropriate Imago role for the situation, the PC's needs, and their particular characterization (Father, Mother, Child, Wise Old, Anima/Animus, Trickster, etc.). They will know the details of the PC's Soul Loss and Discovery, as well as their Personality type, Virtue, and Vice. From the below list, they will set a Task (see *SW2a* for more details) for the PC that seems conducive to growth; and will provide simple directions for the PC to get there ("west a block, north three blocks"). Attempting the Task will garner Ticks depending upon how the PC approaches them; successful completion of the Task is worth an additional Soul Point.

For a random Task, roll 2d6; otherwise, select one or the GM can make up his own. Scene type, possible Checks, Difficulty Ranks, and other information are listed in [square brackets]; stat blocks for named NPCs appear at the end of each section.

Tasks

(See also *SW2a*.)

2 = "Go to the Fountain of Tears, and do what must be done."

3 = "Play a game with the Troll under Moly Bridge."

4 = "Stand on the green paving stone, and wait."

5 = "Go down the Alley of Bones and open the chest you find there."

6 = "You are hungry. Go to the Plaza of Sand, and avail yourself of the kindhearted. Bring back a round loaf."

7 = "Carry glory across Quicksand Street. Return when glory rises."

8 = "Find the Quiet Oak, and speak to the being with no mouth."

9 = "Find the wall that obstructs your path. Climb it. Bring back the blue brick."

10 = "Visit Half-Blind Tom in his box; it's in Cold Alley. Choose wisely."

11 = "Wait on the Corner of Paragon Avenue and Truth Way. Hold your tongue until the Moon appears."

12 = "Determine the truth of the matter at the House of Dusk."

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Learning/Exploration Scene, Interaction Scene.

Scene Link In. Crosstown Traffic.

Objective(s)? Meet Guide and get Task.

Interaction. With Guide and other PCs.

Magical Mystery Tour. Imagos; Soul Points.

Deep Thoughts. Discussion of Task (SW2a).

End on a High Note? Can be used as session break, either before or immediately after the Task is set.

Scene Link Out. SW2a.

SW2a: The Task

Situation. The PC will proceed to complete the Task set by their Guide. If they successfully complete the Task, the Guide gives them a Soul Point. Below are the details on each:

2 = "Go to the Fountain of Tears, and do what must be done."

Kneeling in front of the Fountain of Tears, a man is flickering – he looks normal one moment, then turns utter black the next. He is husking, becoming a Qlippoth (use Sullivan from the *Bonus Crosstown Traffic*). At the end of the Scene, he will be a monster. The question for this Task is how the PC interprets "do what must be done." The PC's Shadow may pop up here, whispering "Run away!"

or "Kill it!"; whichever the Shadow thinks is the smarter course for survival for the PC. (Ticks awarded depending upon the why of what the PC tries to do. If the PC uses the Heal Power on Sullivan or just gives him some Soul Points, he'll regain the spent soul-blood, plus some Cultivation Ticks. If the PC uses another Ability to eliminate the Qlippoth, this is worth a few Cultivation Ticks. If the PC runs, they gain a Decay Tick. If the PC kills the man before he fully husks, he loses a Soul Point.)

3 = "Play a game with the Troll under Moly Bridge."

Under Moly Bridge lives a Troll who loves games – all sorts of games. It knows them all (at Average [0] Quality Rank), no matter how obscure. "Choose your game, and choose your stakes. What will you risk for the chance to win back double?" it rumbles. A manifestation of the Trickster, it will play any game – craps, poker, Monopoly, bridge, chess, riddles, etc. – against the PC, and match any bet made (including money, food, possessions, information, Soul Points, Quality Ranks, and so forth). Games should be abstracted as mental conflict using Failure Ranks.

The core of this Task is what the PC is willing to gamble. (The Troll will indeed match any bet, and if it loses, it will hand over the PC's winnings, whatever they are. But if it wins, it will collect the stake from the PC without a second thought, diminishing him. The *real* winners of the game against the Troll are those who decide to play for the joy of playing – win or lose, they will receive a Soul Point in return for simply having fun.)

4 = "Stand on the green paving stone, and wait."

As the PC stands on the stone, it will levitate up into the air, alongside a skyscraper. The platform will come to rest next to a lever jutting from the wall that is connected to a rope. The rope leads over to the next building, where it is tied to a pipe which is propping up a balcony. If the lever is pulled, the prop will fall out, and the balcony will collapse.

On the balcony is a party, full of shiny, happy people. They are rich, powerful, full of soul-energy, in love, eating well, established and respected in their profession (which is that of the PC), and

basically have everything the PC has ever wanted. The lever seems to beckon, begging to be pulled, to punish those that have what the PC does not.

Does the PC pull the lever? (This is a Cruelty or Avarice Vice Check of Average [7] Difficulty; see *Chapter 5*. If the PC fails the Check, they pull the lever, sending all those illusory people to their deaths, and may gain more Ticks from their post-facto reactions.)

After a decision is made to pull or not to pull, the platform descends, and the PC may return to the Guide.

5 = "Go down the Alley of Bones and open the chest you find there."

Inside the chest is a skeleton curled around a crown of ruby-studded gold. It glistens and glows, demanding to be removed and held. It seems to promise power, fame, and wealth. What does the PC do? (This is an Avarice Vice Check of Average [7] Difficulty; see *Chapter 5*. If the PC fails the Check, they take the crown, which burns their fingers and starts to turn them skeletal. This sparks physical conflict; the crown has an Average [0] Stickiness Rank. If the PC loses the conflict, he holds onto the crown and takes Damage Ranks. This continues until he drops the crown or dies. Assign other Ticks for the PC's intent and roleplaying.)

6 = "You are hungry. Go to the Plaza of Sand, and avail yourself of the kindhearted. Bring back a round loaf."

The PC is struck by a ravenous hunger before he gets to the breadline in the Plaza of Sand. There is filling soup and a selection of rolls – square, triangular, and rectangular, but no round loaves. A bowl of the soup takes the edge off, but the PC is still hungry, and there seems to be plenty of victuals left. Does the PC go back for more? (This is a Despair Vice Check of Average [7] Difficulty. If they fail, they eat. If they succeed, they return their bowl. Assign other Ticks for the PC's intent as detailed in *Chapter 5*.)

Getting a round loaf is a little tricky – again, there weren't any left. However, a few of the starving folk here have round loaves. Can the PC get one from them? (If they can do so without harm, they gain Cultivation Ticks. If they steal, threaten, strike, trick,

or otherwise harm to acquire the loaf, Decay Ticks should be assigned.)

7 = "Carry glory across Quicksand Street. Return when glory rises."

(See above, *Crosstown Traffic*, #7.) When the PC approaches Quicksand Street, he sees numerous pedestrians attempting to cross. Lined up along the sidewalk – next to queued up people waiting their turn or looking for help in crossing – are a number of objects (a sword, a harp, a laurel wreath, and a gold star.) If the PC selects one of these objects and carries it across the street (a physical conflict using Failure Ranks, with the street having a Good [+2] Strength), they can earn a Cultivation Tick. However, they will know the task isn't done, since the object doesn't rise; furthermore, they should be considered to be in Continuing Danger (see *Chapter 4*). Thus, they must go back and select again, hopefully before they collapse from exhaustion.

At this point, there are only a couple people waiting to cross the street. If the PC takes another object across, they get another Tick. . . but aren't finished yet, since the object doesn't rise. This time, there is only one elderly woman waiting to cross – she looks very frail, and a little scared. Her name is Gloria. (Carrying Gloria across the Street will act as a Downshift on whichever Quality the PC is using in the physical conflict. When Gloria is deposited on the opposite sidewalk, she begins to float up into the air.)

If a character does collapse from exhaustion, they will see Gloria look at them sadly, then walk across the street under her own power, and rise when she reaches the other side.

8 = "Find the Quiet Oak, and speak to the being with no mouth."

In a small plaza grows the Quiet Oak, and under it stands an elderly robed figure with no mouth. If the PC is male, the figure is female, and vice-versa. This is a manifestation of the Wise Old, Crone or Greybeard. It will hold up its hands: in one an orange flame will burn, in the other, a purple flame. The figure will ask the PC, in a voice which rustles from the Quiet Oak's leaves, "Which is stronger, love or hate?" No matter what the answer – including "I don't know" or "They're the same" – given, the Wise Old will ask a follow-up: "Why?"

This is the real heart of the Task. The GM must evaluate the answer to "Why?" in terms of the PC's characterization and personal growth. (If the PC answers in a manner consistent with his previously determined character, he gets Cultivation Ticks. If the PC answers in a manner indicating growth, change, or adaptation as a character, he should get a full Soul Point. If the PC answers flippantly or with what he thinks the Imago wants to hear, no Ticks are gained.)

9 = "Find the wall that obstructs your path. Climb it. Bring back the blue brick."

A red brick wall will grow up out of the sidewalk, right in the PC's way. The bricks are unevenly mortared, so it's a fairly easy climb. However, it keeps growing. (This is a physical conflict – a race – using Failure Ranks to represent lost ground in climbing. Compare the PC's Climbing or Athletics Quality against the wall's Average [0] Grow Quality. If the PC wins the conflict, they crest the wall, and gain a Cultivation Tick. If the PC loses the conflict, they will take 1d6 Damage Ranks from falling off, and the wall is now Expert [11] Difficulty Rank to climb.)

In the center of the top row of bricks is a blue one, which sits there unmortared. Before the PC can take the brick and begin the climb down, they hear sudden, loud cheeping coming from nearby. A little exploration shows that the blue brick is holding a birdhouse full of tiny birds against the other side of the wall. Removing the brick would send them all falling to their deaths. How does the PC manage to take the blue brick, climb down the wall, and return to his Guide, without killing the birds or himself? (Any answer that allows the PC to take the blue brick and leave the birdhouse safely up on the wall garners 2 Cultivation Ticks. Keeping the birds safe in any other way is worth a Cultivation Tick. If the PC refuses to take the brick because it would harm the birds, when he climbs down, it will appear at the bottom of the wall for removal. Allowing the birds to come to harm is a Decay Tick, and the brick will crumble when the PC reaches the ground.)

10 = "Visit Half-Blind Tom in his box; it's in Cold Alley. Choose wisely."

Half-Blind Tom – one eye clear and green, the other cloudy and white – lives in a cardboard box in Cold

Alley. He will invite the PC in gravely, and make room for him to sit. This is the Father Imago, urging spiritual growth. Tom will ask the PC, in stentorian tones, "Which is wiser, light or dark?" No matter what the answer given is (including "I don't know" or "They're the same"), Tom will ask a follow-up question (and this is the real nub of this Task): "Why?"

This is the real heart of the Task. The GM must evaluate the answer to "Why?" in terms of the PC's characterization and personal growth. (If the PC answers in a manner consistent with his previously determined character, he gets Cultivation Ticks. If the PC answers in a manner indicating growth, change, or adaptation as a character, he should get a full Soul Point. If the PC answers flippantly or with what he thinks the Imago wants to hear, no Ticks are gained.)

11 = "Wait on the Corner of Paragon Avenue and Truth Way. Hold your tongue until the Moon appears."

At the Corner of two muddy streets, the PC must wait. There will be a lot of foot traffic, and even some vehicles and riding beasts. After a short time, the character will be splashed with mud from a passing carriage. All of the passersby will laugh; indeed, people will come out of the woodwork to jeer at them. Some may even approach to ask the time, start up a conversation, hit on the character, or even try to start a fight. (After a time, a café with a crescent moon on its sign – "Luna Espresso" – will rotate around the corner, and the streets will empty.)

Why do the characters do? How long do they wait?

The GM should play this scene carefully, and decide if they want to play it for *suspense* or *mystery*:

Suspense. The GM avoids all mention of moons or moon-related objects, words, or characters, and also gives the character the feeling that they are being watched and tested by the pedestrians.

Mystery. The GM constantly mentions moons and moon-related objects, words, or characters, giving a plethora of lunar options for the character to pick between.

The PC has some choices:

a) *Remain silent, without complaint*. If they can eschew speaking until the café appears, they gain Cultivation Ticks.

b) *Laugh at themselves*. If they do this, they immediately gain a Soul Point, and the café appears.

c) *Respond to the passersby*. No Ticks accrued, and the café appears. (Guide will *not* grant a Soul Point upon their return, but set a new Task.)

d) *Leave before the Moon appears*. Gain a Decay Tick.

e) *Stand on the corner and physically grasp their tongue with their fingers*. They gain a Cultivations Tick, plus any extra for their responses to pedestrians that make fun of them, and the café appears.

12 = "Determine the truth of the matter at the House of Dusk."

The House of Dusk is part-brothel, part-church. Run by the beautiful Helen, a Tantric Priestess and Sensitive, it offers exploration of and healing from – as well as wild abandon to and profligate excess in – sexual issues. Standing outside the Sunset Door are Helen and Mrs. Bluestocking (a Sensitive of iron will), who have gotten into an argument about lust versus chastity. Mrs. Bluestocking argues that passion is selfish and egotistical; Helen counters that passion connects two people into one, and that purity is too afraid of contamination to reach out to another. Mrs. Bluestocking parries this by claiming that the self-control of chastity means that one can get dirty without wallowing in the mud. In this increasingly loud discussion, it becomes clear that when one side is defending itself, it makes sense, but when it attacks the other, it becomes outrageous and absurd. [These NPCs are manifesting different aspects of the Anima; for a female PC, replace them with Adonis, Tantric Priest, and Mr. Bluestocking.)

The pair will turn and ask the PC two questions simultaneously. Helen: "Which is better, passion or phobia?" Mrs. Bluestocking: "Which is better, control or chaos?" No matter what the answer given is, the two will respond, as if with one voice (and this is the real nub of this Task): "Why?"

This is the real heart of the Task. The GM must evaluate the answer to "Why?" in terms of the PC's characterization and personal growth. (If the PC answers in a manner consistent with his previously determined character, he gets Cultivation Ticks. If the PC answers in a manner indicating growth, change, or adaptation as a character, he should get a

full Soul Point. If the PC can satisfy *both* NPCs with his answer, he should get an additional Soul Point. If the PC answers flippantly or with what he thinks the Imago wants to hear, no Ticks are gained.)

If the PC decided "against" one of the pair, the NPC will turn around and walk off in a huff, while the NPC decided "for" will hand the PC a flower (white for Chastity, red for Passion), which will evaporate into the earned Soul Point. If both are satisfied, they each hand the PC a flower.

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Learning/Exploration Scene, Action/Reaction Scene, Interaction Scene.

Scene Link In. SW2.

Objective(s)? Complete the Task that has been set.

Obstacle(s)? See above.

Action. See above.

Interaction. See above.

Magical Mystery Tour. Imago stuff, bigtime.

Deep Thoughts. See above.

Possible Virtue & Vice Checks. See above.

A Moment to Shine? For Which PC? The PC whose Task it is.

Planning & Resource Management. Some of the Tasks could involve some planning and resource management.

Continuity Clean-up? NPCs from previous Scenes could make an appearance as bystanders or participants in these Tasks.

Scene Link Out. SW2b.

SW2b: Return to the Guide

Situation. After completing their Task, the PC should return to their Guide. The Guide will ask them to tell it (and the other PCs) about what happened, and what they thought about it. After discussion of the Task and its result, the Guide will explain a few things:

1) How to Improve their Type Rank ("In a safe place, concentrate on filling yourself with this soul-blood, and smoothing out your cracks...").
2) How much more soul-blood the PC needs to ensoul.
3) When they have the necessary amount, they must go to the front gate of Quaternity Keep in the center of the City, pass through the Maze, and enter the Chapel.

4) If the PC's soul still exists (from Soul Loss types of Stolen, Sold, Hid & Lost), they will be told: "If you leave your soul in the wrong hands, you could suffer for it later, because if someone holds your Soul Egg, they can do magic on you much easier. And the people who'll keep another's Soul Egg from them ain't the sort of folks you want with that kind of power." (Freely given Soul Points in Spirit World Commerce do not have this effect, since the giver is knowingly relinquishing that soul-energy in return for something, unlike the mostly unsuspecting Soul Sold type of Soul Loss).
5) If the PC's soul does not exist, they will be urged to grow their own (see *SW4*, The Quest) or help others to grow their own – a harder and longer path, but more satisfying. They can do this by helping their comrades (if there are PCs with extant souls Egged somewhere).
6) The Guide might point the PC to a new Guide to attempt another Task and see a little more of the City.
7) Finally, the PC may ask his Guide one question, about anything.

After the question is answered, the Guide will send the PCs on their way.

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Learning/Exploration Scene, Interaction Scene.

Scene Link In. Crosstown Traffic.

Objective(s)? Get information on Quest (SW4) and ensoulment (Quaternity Keep).

Interaction. With the Guide and other PCs and NPCs.

Deep Thoughts. Discussion of Task and philosophical/moral ramifications of situation.

End on a High Note? This is a good Scene to end a Session at, with safety and accomplishment.

Scene Link Out. Crosstown Traffic.

SW3: Lady Violet

Situation. The PCs finally come to Tower Row, the Magi neighborhood. Fantastic building surround them, reaching to the sky in a hundred different forms. Still, they can easily pick out the Indigo Tower: ten stories high, hung with lavender and violet bunting, a cylinder of smooth purple marble. A ring of large windows circles the top, reflecting light. Up three steps is the painted wooden door with a brass lilac knocker.

If the PCs knock, a tall Tulpa (Horace) will answer the door. Dressed in a purple tailcoat and bottle-green pants, this creature looks nearly human... except for the fact that its nose covers more than half its face. "Yeeees?" it asks, unctuously.

Unless the password ("Clio and Isis") is given, Horace will make the PCs wait on the stoop while he tells Lady Violet that she has visitors, unless they successfully out-debate him (a social conflict situation using Failure Ranks) in a genteel manner on the necessity of their mission. If the PCs win the argument, they are allowed into the Foyer. If they lose, they are left on the steps. If the password is given, they are conducted through the Foyer into the Parlor, immediately.

The Foyer. Save for the numerous vases holding purple flowers from both Worlds, this is a completely empty room, patterned in woods. There are two exits: the door to the street and an archway into the parlor.

The Parlor. This room looks much like a typical Fifties living room, with the following alterations:

- All the furniture is in shades of purple, blue, or green.
- The windows look out ten stories over the shifting City (despite the fact the PCs climbed only 3 stairs, and can look back to see the street entrance).
- Movie posters are the only artwork.
- There's a state-of-the-art home theater system and flat-screen TV (enchanted; blindingly obvious to Second Sight).

After a few minutes of waiting, Horace will announce Lady Violet, who currently looks remarkably like a young Elizabeth Taylor (think *Butterfield 8*), though her voice has the deep, "2 pack a day" sultriness of Kathleen Turner. "You have a message for me?" she'll ask in a non-nonsense fashion.

If the PCs deliver the message from Madame Lupino (from *RW2*), Lady Violet will thank them. "In return for this service, you may each ask me a question, or I can tell you something you *should* know." She'll also offer extra details to make sure the PCs understand their choice. (If they deny needing payment, give them a Cultivation Tick in Generosity, but the Lady simply repeats the offer,

more firmly until they accept.) She can answer any single question, except that she will not give any information on the Green Feathers (see *RW1*, boxed text. "Some information is too dangerous for you to know. Ask something else.").

Some things that Lady Violet can tell the PCs that they need to know include:

- The name of the PC's Guide (see *SW1* and *SW2*), if they don't already know it.
- That they could benefit by seeking a Quest (see *SW4*).
- The details of Improvement and ensoulment.
- The nature of Imagos.
- An Ability or Power they haven't yet learned.

> NOTE - If the PCs have the Envelope from the Crosstown Traffic event "Whispers from the Grates," Horace's nose will begin to twitch and he will start sniffing loudly. If told there is a letter for Lady Violet, he will ask for the password. Once given, he will place the Envelope on a silver salver, sneeze, and take it to Lady Violet while the PCs wait. If the PCs do not know the password, he will leave it on the stoop, with them. If the PCs manage to get inside, once Horace leaves, the Envelope Tulpa (see "Whispers from the Grates" for stats) will quietly slide out of the missive and go hide somewhere (noticing this is conflict between the Tulpa's Expert [+4] Sneaky Quality and any detection Quality). After this, if the PCs deliver the Envelope, it will prove to be empty, and Lady Violet will not be as friendly... unless the PCs have sighted, captured, or volunteer the provenance of the Envelope Tulpa to her.
>
> If the PCs hand over the Envelope from "Whispers from the Grates" (and have not caught the Tulpa or told Lady Violet where they got it beforehand), Lady Violet will open the envelope and her face will darken. If she's already offered to answer a question or tell something important, she will not renege, but she will also not go into great detail in her replies. If she hasn't offered, she will not now.

After the message(s) are delivered, the questions asked, and the knowledge bequeathed, Lady Violet will ask Horace to show them to the door. She will wish them all luck with their ensoulment (if necessary, through gritted teeth).

GMs should note if the PCs made Lady Violet an ally or an enemy; this may come back to rescue or haunt them (respectively) in future adventures.

Horace, Tulpa Butler. Good [+2] Butler, Average [0] Smell Truth, Average [0] Smell Danger. *Type*: Good [+2] Tulpa. *Soul Point Pool*: 3.

Lady Violet, Mage and Movie Buff. Good [+2] Intriguing, Good [+2] Movie Lore, Poor [-2] Hot-tempered. *Type*: Expert [+4] Mage. *Personality*: Instinctive. *Virtue*: Courtesy. *Vice*: Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool*: 8.

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s).* Interaction Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In.* SW2a.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Deliver message(s) to Lady Violet.
>
> *Obstacle(s)?* Horace's disbelief.
>
> *Interaction.* With Horace and Lady Violet.
>
> *Magical Mystery Tour.* Lots of magic – it's a Mage's home!
>
> *Continuity Clean-up?* Could link in the Green Feathers, Lady Violet's Shadow, etc.
>
> *End on a High Note?* Can work as a session break.
>
> *Scene Link Out.* Crosstown Traffic.

SW4: The Quest

> NOTE - This Scene can – and probably should – be telescoped out into its own Scenario. The rough outline of the situation is found below; GMs should feel free to flesh it out as they see fit (perhaps as a focused practice for designing their own Scenarios).

Situation. Someone – either a Guide, Lady Violet, or an Imago (probably a PC's Anima or Animus) – sets the PCs to a cooperative task.

> "Aristotle's definition of happiness is 'The exercise of vital powers along lines of excellence in a life affording them scope.' Now that you are within the Spirit World, you have a life affording you scope. To grow further, you must exercise your vital powers along lines of excellence. Pool your strengths and build something greater than you could individually."

The point of this Scene is that the PCs should sit down and discuss in-character what each of them are good at (their Strengths), and try to come up with a way to use all of them together to accomplish something. The possibilities are endless.

This is a very player-directed Scene: it puts all the power in the hands of the PCs. They make all the decisions, arrange all the situations, and do all the work. This is the PCs time to develop new pieces of setting for their Diverse. While the GM might want to offer suggestions or hints, he should really control that impulse as much as possible, unless the players are *totally* at a loss.

The GM should evaluate the idea and its execution (be kind, and allow the PCs stretch the limits of what their Qualities encompass, provided it's a sincere attempt to fit their talents together). Then, the GM should provide NPCs or arbitration on how the strategy pans out. Once they have laid out a plan and successfully tried it (at least one time), they each receive a Soul Point, in addition to any Ticks gained through its performance.

> Example: Using the example PCs from *Chapter 5*, their collected Strengths is:
>
> 1. (Mel) Wealth, Plumber, Youthful Indiscretions;
>
> 2. (Vina) Computer Programmer, Geek, Karate;
>
> 3. (Henri) College Sociology Prof, Dancer, Conversationalist; and
>
> 4. (Ryan) Firefighter, "Irish," Family History, Buddies in the Department.

This group of characters needs to come up with something that can utilize at least one of their Strengths each. Anything they come up with is fair game; if the use of a Quality is a stretch, it's marked with a (?). Some ideas might be:

- **Open a Friendly Neighborhood Bar**. Wealth, Computer Programmer (?), Conversationalist, and "Irish."

- **Found a City Fire Company**. Plumber, Computer Programmer, College Sociology Prof (?), and Firefighter.

- **Aid and Assist Newly-Arrived Dead Inside to the City**. Youthful Indiscretions, Geek (?), College Sociology Prof, Buddies in the Department (?).

Skeleton Attachment Point(s). Various.

Scene Link In. Crosstown Traffic (preferably after SW2b or SW3).

Objective(s)? Create something..

Obstacle(s)? Figuring out what they can do that incorporates at least one of each of the PCs' Strengths.

Interaction. The other PCs.

Deep Thoughts. What can I contribute?

A Moment to Shine? For Which PC? Each PC should have at least one way to shine in this Quest in a way the supplements and support their comrades: that's the point.

Planning & Resource Management. The whole Scene is about coming up with a plan on how to use their talents, knowledge, and resources.

End on a High Note? Provided that the PCs will come back to the plan generated, once it's been formulated and tested, that should be a good place to pause.

Scene Link Out. Crosstown Traffic.

ENDGAME SCENES

Three Endgame Scenes are indicated as grayed-in, rounded rectangles; these are directly linked together, and serve as the climax of the Introductory Scenario. The Quaternity Keep scene should only occur when at least one character has accumulated enough Soul Points to ImproVe their Type Rank or Ensoul.

Quaternity Keep

Situation. Sent to the front gate of Quaternity Keep to begin their ensoulment, the PCs will see Mary standing and waiting (see *SW2* and *Chapter 2* for more information). The tall black stone walls seem to loom over them, gleaming in the light, fixed in the City, solid and heavy.

Mary will look at each PC and ask, "Ready?" If the PC does not have the necessary Type Ranks and Soul Points to ensoul (Master [+6] Rank in Dead Inside and at least one Soul Point – see *Chapter 4*), she'll reply to their response – whatever it is – with "Not ready," and refuse to admit them. However, if they have enough to Improve their Type Rank, she may set a Task (see *SW2*, *SW2a*, and *SW2b*) or otherwise instruct them on how to make that change to themselves.

If they do have the prerequisites, she'll grunt, "Ready," and open the gate. (If an unready PC sneaks past her through trickery or use of physical force, that's a Decay Tick, and they cannot get through the Maze. Period.)

Before letting the PCs enter the Keep and the Maze, she will offer the following pieces of advice: "Virtue is its own reward. Go to the Chapel. Sit quietly. Do what must be done. Good luck." Then she will stand aside for those who are ready and block those who are not.

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s)*. Entry Scene, Learning/Exploration Scene, Interaction Scene, Endgame Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In*. SW4 or Crosstown Traffic.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Enter the Maze.
>
> *Interaction*. With Mary.
>
> *Planning & Resource Management*. DO the PCs have enough points to ensoul?

End on a High Note? Not a good place to pause the Scenario, since it's so close to the end.

Scene Link Out. The Maze.

The Maze

Threading the Maze. If the PCs take Mary's advice (from *Quaternity Keep*), it may make finding a way through the Maze simpler. Then again, it may just be confusing. *C'est la vie.*

Every PC – and every player – must thread the Maze alone. The GM may want to take each player aside from the gaming group for this Scene.

In essence, the Maze measures a character's self-realization as it relates to his Virtues and Vices. A PC must select at least 3 correct passages to arrive at *Tenemos Chapel*. If he fails to do this, he must start again at the beginning.

The GM can read this to the player, replacing [X] and [Y] with the appropriate phrases; correct answers are shown in *italics*:

"You walk down a short hallway, and are confronted with a T. There is an archway to the left, and an archway to the right. Over the left archway, the phrase [X] is written; over the right, [Y] is written. Which do you pick?"

[X]	[Y]	Virtue and Vice
I say what I must.	I say what I want.	Integrity/Hypocrisy
I might fail.	*I may succeed.*	Despair/Hope
I will wait and watch.	*I will try.*	Cowardice/Fortitude
I can help.	I need help.	Generosity/Avarice
I ask permission.	I demand access.	Courtesy/Cruelty

If a PC cannot make it through the Maze the first time, his Shadow can appear and whisper suggestions. However, the Shadow will only give the correct answers for the Virtue and Vice appearing on the PC's character sheet. Other than those two choices, the Shadow will always pick wrongly.

> *Skeleton Attachment Point(s)*. Action/Reaction Scene, Interaction Scene, Endgame Scene.
>
> *Scene Link In*. Quaternity Keep.
>
> *Objective(s)?* Get through the Maze; find the Chapel.

dead inside Quick Reference Handout
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Dead Inside Master Chart

LEVEL	As Quality Rank	MODIFIER TO 2D6 ROLL	As Difficulty Rank	TARGET NUMBER
Poor	Notably Inept.	**-2**	A trivial task.	**5**
Average	Typical human capability.	**0**	Straightforward task.	**7**
Good	Better than usual; most professionals or talented newcomers.	**+2**	Complex task, requiring attention to detail.	**9**
Expert	Noted/famed professional; talent with skill to back it up.	**+4**	Intricate task, difficult and requiring sharp concentration, hard for a typical untrained person (Average).	**11**
Master	Acclaimed genius: talent with substantial skill behind it.	**+6**	Extremely difficult task, hard for most professionals in the field (Good).	**13**

VIRTUES

Integrity. Honesty; truthfulness; fair play; trustworthiness.

Hope. The ability to trust in someone or something else; to expect with confidence; to look to the present and future with joy.

Fortitude. Courage; perseverance; zeal; ability to risk.

Generosity. Donating time, effort, money with little to personal cost; being merciful.

Courtesy. Grace, in word and deed; politeness; consideration and compassion for others.

VICES

Hypocrisy. Dishonesty, lying, cheating.

Despair. The inability to trust in anything; to worry overmuch; to dwell on the present and past with misery.

Cowardice. Allowing fear to dictate actions; lack of resoluteness; sloth; timidity that refuses to take a chance.

Avarice. Insatiable greed; desiring more than your fair share; envy.

Cruelty. Causing injury, grief, or pain for the joy of it; lack of compassion; rudeness.

ABILITIES & POWERS CHART

	Ability/Power?	Dead Inside	Free Spirit	Ghost	Mage	Sensitive	Zombi
Bind	Power	3 Soul Points	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Change Landscape	Ability	3 Downshifts	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	At Rank	2 Downshifts	–
Change Others	Power	–	–	–	2 Soul Points	3 Soul Points	–
Change Self	Ability	2 Downshifts	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	1 Downshift	–
City Navigation	Ability	1 Downshift	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank	At Rank
Create Object	Power	–	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Create Tulpa	Power	–	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Enchant	Power	3 Soul Points	–	–	1 Soul Point	2 Soul Points	–
Healing	Power	1 Soul Point	–	–	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Luck	Power	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	–
Movement (Dream-leap/ True Flight)	Ability	2 Downshifts/ 3 Downshifts	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	1 Downshift/ 2 Downshifts	2 Downshifts/ –
Open Gate	Ability	2 Downshifts	–	–	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	2 Downshifts
Second Sight (Passive/Active)	Ability	At Rank/ 1 Downshift	At Rank/ 2 Downshifts	At Rank/ 2 Downshifts	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ At Rank	At Rank/ 3 Downshifts
Soultaking	Ability	1 Downshift	1 Downshift	2 Downshifts	At Rank	At Rank	2 Downshifts
Supercharge	Power	1 Soul Point	–	–	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Ward	Power	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point	1 Soul Point
Special	Ability	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]

LEGEND

At Rank = Character can use this Ability with a roll against Type Rank.

x Downshift(s) = Character can use this Ability with a roll against Type Rank with x Downshifts.

x Soul Point(s) = Character can use this Power buy spending x Soul Points and making a roll against Type Rank.

– = Type does not possess this Ability or Power.

[1] Downshift to social interactions in the RW.

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

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

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

[5] Upshift to social interactions in the SW.

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

CHARACTER NAME				
Soul Cultivation				
Integrity	**Hope**	**Fortitude**	**Generosity**	**Courtesy**
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	**Despair**	**Cowardice**	**Avarice**	**Cruelty**

CHARACTER NAME				
Soul Cultivation				
Integrity	**Hope**	**Fortitude**	**Generosity**	**Courtesy**
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	**Despair**	**Cowardice**	**Avarice**	**Cruelty**

CHARACTER NAME				
Soul Cultivation				
Integrity	**Hope**	**Fortitude**	**Generosity**	**Courtesy**
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	**Despair**	**Cowardice**	**Avarice**	**Cruelty**

CHARACTER NAME				
Soul Cultivation				
Integrity	**Hope**	**Fortitude**	**Generosity**	**Courtesy**
Soul Decay				
Hypocrisy	**Despair**	**Cowardice**	**Avarice**	**Cruelty**

Character Sheet

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CHARACTER NAME		PLAYER NAME	

PERSONALITY	BACKSTORY

VIRTUE		VICE	

SOUL LOSS	DISCOVERY

	MASTER [+6]	EXPERT [+4]	GOOD [+2]	AVERAGE [0]	POOR [-2]	GONE
TYPE	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	
QUALITY	O	O	O	O	O	

SOUL POINT POOL:	

MISCELLANY	

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Dead Inside: The Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption
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ASM-010
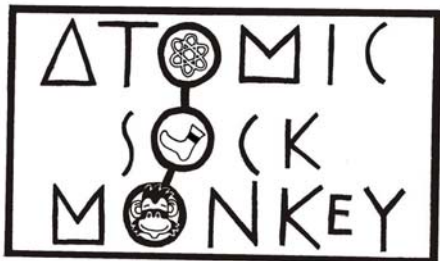
Embrace your Virtue.
Resist your Vice.
Perform noble deeds.
Find meaning.
Fight crime.
Regain your soul.