

T H E

V E I L

C A S C A D E

POST-CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING
POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE

A few years ago I would have never dreamed I would be designing a game, let alone have more than one out! The second on the path to a ambitious and daunting design goal made possible by people who believe in creators and support us,

Thank you.



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G+ COMMUNITY

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COMMUNITY SHOUTOUTS

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IN THIS WORLD, TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED TO GROW IN

leaps and bounds. Neurochips were just the beginning, allowing for every human to bridge the gap between the digital world and physical one. This new hybrid reality gave birth to a wave of technological advancement.

But that's all in the past now.

Today, immortality is possible. Neurochips – microchips grafted into the brain of every man, woman, and child – were made smaller, better, and faster. Though initially used to perceive an augmented, hybrid reality, their once antiquated capacity germinated into being able to comprise the contents of a digitized human brain in its entirety.

These advancements moved our culture away from traditional notions of human identity. Flesh, limbs, non-synthetic food, and even real death, were discarded when technology modified the perception of what it is to be human.

In *Cascade*, this shift is systematic. Governments and law enforcement possess tech to decant anyone's digitized mind into the Neurochips of Slacks – empty bodies devoid of consciousness.

Immortality has resulted in the commodification of human life; the removal of real death has changed the enforcement of criminal acts. With the increasing threat of overpopulation, the guilty are removed from their bodies and uploaded into completely virtual constructs: Caches. People, ripped from their sense of self as they are made to vacate their own flesh and blood. The authority uses Caches to store criminals serving their time, outside of the hybrid reality normal citizens enjoy, to simulate anything the authority wants—a virtual paradise, or a living hell.

As exploitation of this tech spreads, it is either condemned or lobbied for, depending on the polarizing ideologies and goals of those holding some shred of power, to exercise over the denizens of humanity, spiritually or otherwise.

Voluntary or not, Caches store more and more digitized minds every day. Aside from being transferred as data, the only way to get off of a Cache is to be decanted into a Slack. However, not all of humanity wants to continue in the current hybridized reality that is now the norm. Some prefer virtual life, and have given up their bodies entirely in favor of a completely digital existence.

Humanity's past is returning to the future to fill in the gaps of those that left to explore a new world, and to help pave the future with the skills and knowledge out-of-time from their own. Governments began to decant people from the past: people's lives cut short but their minds preserved on out-of-date Neurochips.

As it became apparent that there was a substantial profit to be made in decanting people from out-of-date Neurochips from the past, more and more organizations operating outside of the law began to also decant people from these Neurochips.

Eventually, and entirely too late, it was discovered that this process had one major flaw: they were all missing a piece of themselves. You are one of these people, these *Glitches*. You are in a new body, a future foreign to you, and you are missing some of your memories.

Did someone pay Cred to have you decanted outside of the law?

Were you a victim of a crime and brought into the future to have your case, and justice, prevail?

Perhaps nothing so good as that. Maybe the people who operate in the shadows of society want you for their own ends.

Or, perhaps you are an asset in other ways, to be used for or against the power structures in place, to make *real* change occur.

In *Cascade*, there are mechanics, playbooks, additional custom moves, and Plugins that work in tandem and in addition to the playbooks found in *The Veil*. *Cascade* is a supplement meant exclusively for *The Veil*, which means you *will* need a copy of it in order to make full use of this text.

I blinked, and the world exploded with data. Images, scanned documents and photographs, a whirlwind of numbers, under-the-table deals, and whispered words.

Cyberworld: Tales of Humanity's Tomorrow

DEFRAGGING



THE DATA STREAM



A CYBERPUNK DECONSTRUCTION

BY CLARE WALL

So, you're asking me "what is cyberpunk?" The short answer is: look around because for better or for worse, we're living it. But you wouldn't be reading this if you just wanted the short answer. So, sit tight, the long answer is complicated, and I don't have enough space to give you the full picture. All I can give you are a few pixels and hope you'll fill in a bit more as you go along.

Whether you're new to cyberpunk or have been with it since it coalesced in the 1980s, trust me when I say it's a part of us all. But let's go back to where it started. You can't run possible futures if you don't know your own past.

First, we'll explore how Cyberpunk evolved from the 1970s and 1980s into the post-cyberpunk of the 1990s and beyond. These next sections introduce cyberpunk's overlap with society, identity, and cultural norms. In particular, we'll draw out the literary "punk" aspects of cyberpunk, and how it resists discourses of race, gender, and sexuality nested within the system.

We'll then look at living within Cyberpunk worlds, and its implications for the physical and not-so-physical self. I encourage you to explore all of these concepts in your games of *The Veil* and *Cascade*, drawing upon Cyberpunk's roots whilst also resisting its and society's tropes.

EARLY FIRST WAVE CYBERPUNK

Early cyberpunk focused on characters at the social margins; those who made a living fighting against or living outside of mega corporations. This image is the one most people first think of when they first think 'cyberpunk', which spread through literature, film, comics, and into an aesthetic itself—mirror shades, leather clothing, techno-consumption, even implants. These concepts began in the mid-1980s, through works like Philip K. Dick, and James Tiptree Jr.'s fiction. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) is often considered one of the first works to kick off cyberpunk, and was also the text which coined the now-popular term "cyberspace". Its popularity was further established through the Internet and films such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982). Early cyberpunk established an aesthetic of integrated technologies, virtual culture, and consumerism.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, the “punk” of cyberpunk rebelled against corporate culture, Hollywood glam, and the American dream. It sought an escape from corporate society and its superficial consumerism, and rigid social structures. As a pop-culture movement, these concepts came to life in rebel identities, such as the hacker and the rocker.¹ Cyberpunk explored what the technologies of post-industrial economics meant for identity, knowledge, and laboring bodies.²

However, even within its narratives of self, bodies, technology, and identities, these constructs became commodified and mass produced. This development is what many attribute to the “death” of cyberpunk—that it too became eaten and mass produced as a capitalist product, integrated into serving the machine. In many ways, cyberpunk anticipated our own “clone” culture, even while the cloning of complex life was still in its research stages.

CYBERPUNK AND POST MODERN BODIES

Cyberpunk is closely linked with postmodernism, an artistic and cultural movement in the 1970s and 1980s reflecting our consumer habits. At its core, postmodernism believes that people create knowledge and truths. Therefore, as people are constantly learning and making new discoveries about the world, knowledge and truth are never certain or static. If people believe an idea or fact is true, then it must be true until it is otherwise proven. Postmodernism therefore focuses on motifs of replication, and a disorienting loss of certainty.

As a postmodern offshoot, cyberpunk explores concepts of a unified “self” dissolving, fragmenting, and endlessly replicating inside the virtual. It often embraced the body disappearing, and the lines between reality and simulation unraveling. Cyberpunk worlds frequently blur virtuality and the real, inviting you to question “what is real?” And, “what is an authoritative, universal truth.” Its heroes are anti-heroes with moralities in shades of grey; the malnourished tech nerd hacks his way to stardom inside the matrix where the physical capabilities of his body mean nothing. The woman living hand to mouth, or selling her body, may find new life and fame adopting a virtual persona, or undergoing surgery to “become” the “real” thing.

Cyberpunk invites us to take these questions of self and reality, and apply it to our present lives and identities. We may not be jacking our minds into the matrix right now. However, we sure are cultivating a multitude of digital personas that reflect facets or highly idealized aspects of ourselves. Instagram, Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter—how many versions of you exist out there anyway and which one is the “real” one? Is there even a *real* one to begin with?

THE PROBLEMS WITH DISSOLVING BODIES

One critique of some traditional cyberpunk texts is the lack of diverse identities when technology erases the body to leave it all behind. Yes, Cyberpunk heroes come in a variety of types: Some have been transformed by technology into superweapons, while others are physically weak yet capable of badass feats of technowizardry in cyberspace. However, while many traditional cyberpunk characters live on social margins, the white, straight, emotionally distant male protagonists typically dominate mainstream cyberpunk. They are able to get through the system because the field they play on is equal, even if their social circumstances aren't. They are privileged in that they are assumed to *belong*.

In terms of gender, we also see limited representations of masculinity. Technomascularity in cyberpunk often comes in one of two forms. The first is the "man of steel", who is both a champion of hyper masculinity and rationality in his highly modded and powerful body. Think *Robocop* or *The Terminator*, where machinery enables the hero to overcome his body's weaknesses. The second form is the cowboy/"technowizard" types, like Gibson's Case, or *The Matrix's* Neo. These figures may be physically weaker, but are masters of hacking and quick draw reactions in cyberspace. For those heroes who do battle in the matrix, their flesh is their weakness; it is what must be protected while they lie prone and helpless. Meat matters less for these characters who aren't marked as "other" by race, gender, sexuality, or disability.

Additionally, these traditional male figures of cyberpunk are often emotionally distant. These protagonists reinforce tropes of rationality, and the mind's significance over the body and "feelings". As an icon of masculinity, this role seems to me both damaging and restrictive.

Traditionally, cyberpunk women are also often white and frequently femme fatales, whose fetishized cyborg bodies are both beautiful and deadly. Rachel from *Blade Runner*, Molly Millions from *Neuromancer*, and Trinity from *The Matrix* come to mind as popular examples. Often, these women end up grounding the male hero in reality through her materiality. In these cases, transcendence is not an option. She returns him to his "meat" body, protecting him so he can complete his cyberwizardry. Their bodies are also typically expected to fit traditional norms. For a genre that suggests technology might grant you any kind of body you desire, body diversity in cyberpunk, especially visual media, is often grossly lacking.

THE RISE OF SECOND WAVE/POST-CYBERPUNK?

Some will tell you that after a few short years, cyberpunk died. Most will admit it wasn't dead after all. Maybe cyberpunk just left its meat for a while, and jacked out of the machine. Arguably, cyberpunk never really died at all. In fact, it was certainly well and healthy in the 1990s as more women, people of colour, and queer authors started to gain notoriety.

While cyberpunk didn't die, it did, however, change.

By the 1990s, more women were writing cyberpunk, which changed its focus and overall topology as a subgenre. Pat Cadigan, Laura Mixon, Melissa Scott, Misha, Marge Piercy, Afrofuturists such as Octavia Butler, and many others have challenged the definitions of what most imagine as cyberpunk. They brought cyberpunk back to the body by emphasizing how material conditions weigh on our physical forms. Women's bodies are marked bodies; in cyberpunk, the privilege of transcendence is not so freely attained, nor necessarily desired by female characters. Female cyberpunk authors and theorists tend to resist transcendence in favour of reimagining new possibilities for the body without its erasure.

Some call this shift post-cyberpunk, where individuals negotiate how technologies will operate in their lives, rather than fighting mass corporations. Advances in biology, social movements, reproductive technologies, disease narratives such as AIDS, and the rise of social media, all contributed to changing the genre. To stay "punk" means "change for the machines"⁶—or perhaps, change *with* the machines—to continue subverting, fighting, and reinscribing. The Pandora's Box of technoscience can't be closed, so the question becomes how to maintain agency over your body, mind, privacy, and humanity.

If the "post-" makes you more comfortable to differentiate, then please, embrace the term. However, if you frame cyberpunk along the lines of questions of "*what defines the human?*", "*how much of you can be replaced before you aren't you?*", and "*how do we negotiate ourselves and lives with technology?*" If you ask, "*how does technology shape our culture, minds, experiences, and forms of knowledge, in addition to how our bodies are read and understood by ourselves and others?*", then you're talking cyberpunk. As people, we continue to explore these complex questions.

In second wave or post-cyberpunk, we also see an increase in non-western forms of the sub-culture. The popularity of Japanese films like Katsuhiro Ottomo's *Akira* (1988) and Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost In The Shell (GitS)* (1995) serve as examples existing outside the Western canon. They greatly influenced later films, RPGs, and the way we imagine cyberpunk worlds.

Additionally, more recent cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk works have drawn attention to the frequent exploitation of using racialized groups to produce and trade technologies for Western consumption. POC communities continue to fight against the erasure of racialized bodies. For example, the controversy over casting Major Makoto Kusanagi as a white woman in *GitS* (2017) drew attention to the gross whiteness of cyberpunk, and reminded us that technology should reflect the multiple and unique perspectives that different lived experiences bring to the subgenre. The fight to reimagine cyberpunk, to create space and explore marginal identities and intersections of technology, human beings, futurity, and bodies, is still ongoing.

Theorists examining disabled and non-normative bodies beyond enhanced or super-human bodies opened new conversations in second wave/post-cyberpunk. These conversations are important, as cyber-technologies should have liberatory potentials for selves and worlds, but not at the cost of alienating those on the margins.

The virtual world has not become a vacuum where one can suddenly be free of day-to-day marginalized sexual orientations, disabled bodies, and oppressed racial or gender identities. However, what cyberpunk *does* possess is the potential to explore how bodies, selves, spaces, and identities are inscribed—and how we might reimagine them or give them new meaning without erasing them.

How do you classify something only your **soul misses?**

K.C. Alexander, *Necrotech*

LIVING WITHIN CYBERPUNK WORLDS

WE CAN BUILD YOU—AND BUY YOU

Whether it is information, technologies, or bodies, cyberpunk asks your price and assumes that you can be bought. Maybe, like Gibson's Molly Millions, you're willing to rent your body out for sex to pay for mirrored eyes and razor nail implants because you have no alternative options. You might sell data illegally, even at the risk of having your body or brain iced by encryptions because the money and fame attracts you, or to pay for new organs because your own are giving out. Perhaps, like Major Makoto Kusanagi, your body belongs to the military, or some other organization who employs you. You could be hooked on the latest mind blowing drug, willing to do anything to get your next hit. Maybe you are a victim of circumstances and poverty from an uncaring society with no social safety net. Whatever your reason, in the cyberpunk future there are currencies beyond money, and nearly everyone has a string or hold on somebody else. Whatever you need or have, there's always someone out there ready to buy or sell.

Be wary, though, some prices might be too high to pay, or worse, attract unwanted attention.

NAVIGATING THE TECHNOLOGICAL AND VIRTUAL SELF

As humans, we've always used technology and high technology as a platform for exploring the boundaries of biology and the self. Emerging during the latter half of the cold war, cyberpunk was in part possible because of the many technological contributions by Norbert Weiner, Alan Turing, and others in early cybernetics and robotics. The rise of the home computer, including public access to the Internet, inspired significant and necessary foundations for texts which dreamed of a global, accessible, cyberspace network. Ideas like gene splicing, genetic modifications, and biotechnologies take a greater role in cyberpunk texts. Biological advances, such as major advances in genetic knowledge, IVF, and vastly greater success rates in organ transplantation, underpinned these imagined worlds. The cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, and the progression of the human genome project which concluded in 2003, also left their mark.

However, one should not forget that while these technologies and advances made the world of science look bright and cheery, they also raised increasing anxieties. The 1980s was also the rise of the AIDS panic, which had a significant impact on plague and disease narratives, as well as fears around perceptions of queer identities and sexual intimacy.

Cyberpunk extrapolates from these technological possibilities, projecting their potentials into the future. It imagines some of its own unique concepts, such as virtual space, AIs, and various biological and non-biological existences that extend the self beyond the body. Part of what made cyberpunk unique was the way it inspired an aesthetic of technology. It imagined how technology would colonize our lives to the fullest extent, including our possessions, bodies, minds, social interactions, and even the very way we perceive and construct our identities. Many cyberpunk narratives feature fragmented characters or virtual forms of themselves. This again returns to the postmodernist movement in art and literature where fragmentation, virtuality, and paranoia become major motifs, along with a blurring of truth/reality with the virtual.

IT'S A DARK WORLD OUT THERE

Cyberpunk futures are gritty places. The protagonists of cyberpunk stories are often struggling to stay afloat in a system that won't save them. These are dark and dystopic futures where the 1% have isolated themselves from everyone else, sometimes even living on off-planet space stations, leaving everyone else to eke out a living and pick up the pieces. Immortality, like everything else in the future, can be bought at a price. If you have the money, you can acquire clones, full body transplants, you name it, allowing you to preserve you or your family. Some of the things you do may not be legal on earth, but that's why there's space stations.

You are never alone or safe in virtual space. When the Internet was young, cyberpunk recognized its power as a tool of oppression and control by the authorities. The ugly side of high technology is woven through cyberpunk futures in oppressive military, police, and crime organizations that have access to the latest in hostile technology to deal with deviants and rebels.

Cyberpunk's own imaginings also frequently touch on the motifs of surveillance and threats that come through cyberspace and technology. Frequently, its postmodern paranoia is channeled through the fact that you are not alone in cyberspace or the real world. Someone may be watching, tracking, and monitoring your actions, and they may have it in for you. As we currently fight over rights to Internet privacy, our physical and real world actions are increasingly being monitored through surveillance technologies and policies. Cyberpunk futures aren't so much the future, but are rather our lived present warning us of darker days to come.

TECHNO-WASTELAND

Cyberpunk protagonists have often lived hard lives, carrying the baggage of their experiences with them. Drugs, virtual realities, cyberspace, and various forms of technologically mediated pleasure are often present in excess in cyberpunk futures. You don't like your reality? Then escape into the virtual. But in a world with such high technology, what are you escaping, exactly?

In many cyberpunk futures, there is little or no social safety net; the suburban communities are dying or dead. The crowded cities are full of junk, smog, and pollution. Corporations may ensure income and security, but often exploit their labor force. Diseases, organ failures, homelessness, and other social problems plague urban cities. Mass extinction may not be at the forefront, but is often implied through casual references to extinct species and a lack of natural flora or fauna. The future may be full of cool body mods, high technologies, and liberating virtual realities. However, under those virtualities is a material world full of trash, pollution, and the discarded remnants of human consumption.

While cyberpunk downplays the physical body, its worlds are overflowing with junk and refuse. When you look at the dark worlds of cyberpunk, you see people living in slums, sifting through scrap, and living life on the edges of society. In the cities, garbage, scrap, and discarded technology are literally everywhere, alongside the poverty, crime, and a distinct lack of "nature". It is no wonder that those in cyberpunk futures turn to the virtual world and seek escape and transcendence via cyberspace, drugs, implants, and dreams of liberation from a body trapped in an unpleasant material reality.

If some of these themes sound uncannily familiar, they should. Call me cynical, but we're living a dark cyberpunk future. Our climate has reached a global tipping point; droughts, tropical storms, and forest fires devastate the land while we poison and overfish our oceans. We may not jack into the matrix, but we lose ourselves to video games, social media, and our smartphones. Our e-waste and plastics pile up while we consume the latest gadgets, products, and high fashion -- many made through exploitative labor processes. Perhaps this is why cyberpunk RPGs, video games, and films are undergoing such a recent revival; cyberpunk isn't just nostalgia of those who grew up with the original films when cyberpunk emerged. It's also about how these themes reflect our present situation and anxieties regarding our future.

TRANSCENDING THE MEAT

When many people think of cyberpunk, they think of transcendence. By transcendence, I mean leaving behind the physical restrictions of your physical body for life in the matrix. Cyberpunk argues that as the mind is what truly defines you, you can be freely replicated and transferred. However, this belief is not unique to cyberpunk. It dates back to Cartesian philosophy and its belief in an immortal soul: Descartes' "ghost" in the "machine". This melding of mind with soul appears in cyberpunk through haunted technology and afterlives existing in the matrix. The minds of people whose bodies are long dead, virtual afterimages of dead loved ones, and powerful artificial intelligences who act like strange spirits or gods are all major players in cyberpunk futures.

However, many cyberpunk texts question the cost and consequences of transcending the meat. It may surprise you that many cyberpunk texts, even ones such as *Neuromancer*, actively resist leaving the "meat", despite their male heroes typically desiring it. By the second wave of science fiction in the 1990s, texts such as Pat Cadigan's *Synners* (1991) and much of Greg Egan's fiction, openly resisted leaving the meat for the matrix. They rejected the idea that an exact and complete "copy" of the self could be easily reproduced and transferred out of its flesh. While entertaining the possibilities of transcendence, cyberpunk also asks why, and at what price? These questions should not be taken too lightly.

Now, if I'm raining on your parade of dreaming to become a brain in a box, don't worry. I admit my own strong skepticism of the transhumanist³ goal to "transcend" the physical world for the virtual. While transcendence of the body may be liberatory in certain circumstances, I see it as problematic for a few reasons. For one, such movements from the physical world to the machine world are escapist. "Yeah, we fucked up the planet but don't worry, we made a pristine virtual world you can go live in so it's all good". They also often embody narratives of colonization, treating the matrix of cyberspace as a new, and often feminized, frontier to be mastered by those who "jack into" it. Additionally, such projects leave some nasty questions about how that might be achieved, and who is allowed to "transcend". Cyberpunk futures are often dystopic, and so are the ugly sides of our biotechnologies.

However, if Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* taught us anything, it should be to take responsibility for the monsters we create. In this case, we created technology from which we desperately seek escape. Cyberworlds may have amazing technologies, but those technologies also become a prison of our own making. While discussing Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy, posthuman Theorist, N. Katherine Hayles observes that, "in a world despoiled by overdevelopment, overpopulation, and time-release environmental poisons, it is comforting to think that physical forms can recover their pristine purity by being reconstituted as informational patterns in a multidimensional computer space. A cyberspace body, like a cyberspace landscape, is immune to blight and corruption⁴."

N. Katherine Hayles' point easily applies to a number of popular staples of cyberpunk. The opposition created by the dystopic reality and the seductive possibilities of technology and virtual realities contribute to a strong tension running through cyberpunk between the "mind" and the "body"; one where the mind is frequently privileged above the body—which is seen as replaceable or even disposable—and where the body must be left behind in order to become one with the machine/matrix. These ideas lead to my other concern with dreams of transcendence: that it is an act of erasure which rarely considers the social circumstances that weigh very differently on individuals.

**He was still wondering what
would become of him when
he felt the first shock wave,
followed by the last message
he would ever receive from the
meat.**

Pat Cadigan, *Synners*

CYBERPUNK AND THE VEIL

At first, *The Veil* may not reflect the pure first-wave cyberpunk aesthetic of noir-esque worlds with mirror shades, leather, technogadgets, and megacorps, i.e. the genre which got termed the very embodiment of late capitalism⁷. Therefore, at first glance, the *The Veil* may not seem quite cyberpunk enough compared to other cyberpunk RPGs, such as *The Sprawl* or *Technoir*. However, I argue that as the system is an open interface, it can be adapted to those parameters.

The Veil, through its diverse archetypes and State mechanics, enters into the second wave feel for me. It firmly raises questions about technologies and virtual worlds as rooted within lived bodies and experiences. Second wave is also harder to characterize and less iconic in popular culture, as much of it responded to the first wave by reacting against or playing off of its tropes.

I appreciate the potential that *The Veil* has is in its openness to blend first and second wave cyberpunk. Its design keeps some core principles from first wave in the integration of technology, blurring of virtuality and reality, and the potential for dark worlds with hidden truths and motives. At the same time, it brings in the second wave's focus on how to mediate technology and bodies, as well as technology's oppressive invasiveness in society.

This openness is also why I argue *The Veil* is necessary for contemporary cyberpunk. As a subgenre, cyberpunk changed drastically with time, for and with machines. OncoMouse, the first lifeform to be both a "natural" living creature, and "unnatural" transgenic creation of Harvard Medical, was legally ruled corporate property in the USA in 1988. Dolly the sheep was cloned in 1996. The Human Genome Project was only completed in 2003. Our bodies are now understood as code and data. As technology evolves, we're mapped, traced, compiled, synthesized, and sold in the digital world, or spliced up in the lab. We need contemporary cyberfictions to consider those implications, now and moving forward.

The technologies we are exploring in our current social and cultural landscape are vastly different compared to the 1980s. Cyberpunk's origins are a mix of noir, technogothic, postmodernism, punk/rock music culture, hard science and cybernetics, and even high fantasy magic turned technowizardry. Yet, while cyberpunk may be rooted in the digital, as a genre it also features the incorporation of technologies in the body and world. With that in mind, why should cyberpunk then not embrace modern technologies of ecopunk, solarpunk, and biopunk? Upgrading our codes for the twenty-first century means expanding beyond the digital and technologized super-abled human body to consider embodied individuals, transgenic creations, organic and techno-ecologies, and the complex globalized economies that build technologies.

When Fraser approached me for *The Veil: Cascade*, I was impressed to see his vision of Prudence—a unique, green, and corrupt city. His eco-future setting offers a clean, green city—but at what costs? What technologies shaped it and maintain it? What aesthetics of clothing would a green metropolis have? How does that city stack up against others around it? Is it a green jewel in a sea of slag and techno-waste? Is it leading a growing revolution? Such settings project our own current anxieties, problems, and ideal futures generate fresh, and much needed spaces for exploring questions of technology in cyberpunk.

For me, this is why *The Veil* is an open and fluid form of cyberpunk. If being cyberpunk means integrating technologies and taking on an open and shifting identity, then the body of cyberpunk itself should not be a closed system. Cyberpunk should embrace and integrate with the technologies and questions of the present. I said we live in a cyberpunk future, but it is not a closed dystopia. As technologies embody potentials, cyberpunk gives us a way of considering, negotiating, and imagining new ideas and futures that allow us to explore our current reality.

The Veil's emotional State mechanic also strikes at the heart and tension of cyberpunk. As I've mentioned, traditional cyberpunk protagonists are stereotyped, emotionally “dead” characters, rubbed raw by their social circumstances. However, *The Veil* lets emotions guide decisions that are also firmly rooted in the “meat”. When your characters base their choices on emotions, you're invited to think about how they feel right in the core of their mediated meat-machine.

As an RPG, *The Veil's* playbooks stay true to the classic motifs of cyberpunk. They reflect archetypes from corporate workers, synthetic beings, and individuals wishing to integrate with as much technology as possible. *The Veil's* archetypes also center themselves on various questions about mediating technology as an extension/prosthesis of the body and mind.

Your character in *The Veil* will reveal hard truths about their world, just as characters in early cyberpunk. You deck yourself out with technology and implants as you see fit. The tech gives you awesome new skills and abilities, but there's always risks and drawbacks. Nothing is free. Every “body” has its price, and every technology and alteration brings complications and consequences. Change for the machines may be necessary, pleasurable, and liberating. However, it's also dangerous. *The Veil's* archetypes also ask questions relating to technology and bodies in futures that expose our current technological anxieties, and the boundaries and norms we have established regarding divisions of “natural/unnatural”, or human/animal/machine.

The Veil's use of the X-Card is significant here, because often contemporary questions of technology involve themes of consent and violation. What does it mean to hack someone's mind or body? What does it mean to be "made" rather than born, or treated as disposable because of it.

The Veil may require you to flavour it yourself, but it also gives you a tool kit to code an Afrofuturist Lagos, a green metropolis in Prudence, or a post-robot economic crash New York. To some, this freedom may be daunting, or feel too loose and unhinged. However, immersing the players in your world, or inviting them to help you build it, will produce surprising and unique results well worth the effort. I said we're living some elements of the cyberpunk of 30-odd years ago, so I ask you to consider what new, dark, and gritty technofutures do we dread today.

Be the Futurist, run the simulations, and settle on the possibilities. It's an open canvas, baby. Grab the reins, and ride like information on high-speed. If the present world looks like crap, the future's likely to be downright techno-hell in a virtual handbasket.

1 See Bruce Sterling's "Preface" to *Mirrorshades the Cyberpunk Anthology*. Arbor House, (1986) pg. Xi.

2 See Lisa Yezek's chapter "It's All About Getting Things Done" in *The Self Wired*, Routledge, (2002) pg. 97-126.

3 I make a distinction between those that embrace full "transcendence" of the body through technology (transhumanism) and a critical posthumanism which seeks to deconstruct boundaries between animals, machines, and humanity and carefully consider the mass ramifications of technologies beyond their impact on humanity. For more on this distinction, see N. Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press (1999).

4 Hayles pg 138.

5 See Daniel Dinello *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*, University of Texas Press (2005), pg 121.

6 See Pat Cadigan's *Synners*.1991. SF Masterworks ed., Orion Publishing Group, 2012, pg. 105.

7 See Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke UP (2003), pg 419.

CHAPTER TWO:
TRANSITIONING



CONTINUING A VEIL CAMPAIGN

First and foremost, you're good to go if you have an existing campaign in *The Veil* and want to transition to *Cascade*. Since all the protagonists in *The Veil* have incomplete memories, you can fill in gaps between your existing campaign, and what's happening "now", in *Cascade* as you go. Although the exact time is deliberately left vague to accommodate an existing campaign's established parameters, *Cascade* could take place generations past the events of *The Veil*. Whatever your time frame, the additional mechanics in *Cascade* will allow for you to unravel the mystery of what's happened to each of the protagonists during this time period as you play. *Cascade* relies on emergent storytelling to find out what happened to these characters, and why.

Cascade and *The Veil*'s narrative flexibility means, you may continue playing any current campaign, as well as go on with this one, alternating between time periods, should you wish it. With the addition of Flashbacks though, the need to alternate could be stripped back, allowing for your protagonist's story in *The Veil* to be revealed while playing *Cascade*.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY ASPECTS FROM THE VEIL

When you began your existing campaign of *The Veil*, you and the others at the table collaborated to create a cyberpunk future. You extrapolated technological, societal, and cultural aspects from what you know of today, and played out what those aspects looked like in your cyberpunk future.

In *Cascade*, you'll extrapolate those aspects further, ideally focusing on those that interest everyone at the table. This process is also an opportunity to create new elements stemming from those same existing strands. As you play more, and perhaps consume more media, don't be afraid to insert additional aspects you want to explore as your story progresses. This way, you can propel forward the most interesting version of your cyberpunk future.

STEP 2: RADICALIZING ASPECTS FROM THE VEIL

While *The Veil* is about the near future with advances in technology, *Cascade* is about pushing that future further. Take aspects of *The Veil* that interest you, and radicalize them to explore the ramifications of such technology in *Cascade*. By radicalize, I mean taking your established social and political ideas, and pushing them to the extreme.

You should specifically explore the technology you've introduced and highlighted in *The Veil*. With each of these aspects you will decide, based on events in your current fiction, what radical forms they will take in the future. For instance, if your *Veil* campaign explored "humanoid robots being introduced into society," you could take that concept to the extreme in *Cascade*. Your fiction could now explore "Humanoid robots that are used solely for warfare, illegal to own, and have an built in four year life span."

STEP 3: ADDING ADDITIONAL ASPECTS

In addition to whatever other aspects you have extrapolated from *The Veil*, you may find it helpful to add any and all of the following aspects. In *Cascade*, humanity has left the earth for the first time, and the resulting benefits and detriments to its people should be made apparent. After all, humanity left for a reason. For example, overpopulation doesn't mean it's become a dystopian fiction necessarily, but it could. Whatever the challenges on Earth, people must have devised ways to survive until they left. How much you touch on them, if at all, is up to you.

Note: these aspects are a part of the implied setting described earlier in this text.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS:

- How has the introduction of Caches impacted humanity?
- What do cybernetics look like now, so far in the future, and have they changed with humanity?
- Has technology taken on human characteristics or gone in a different direction?
- What technology is there, or was there, to cope with overpopulation/pollution dangers from lack of food, housing, energy, water, etc.?

CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS:

- How has eliminating real death changed society?
- Are there specific cultures or groups who refuse to be decanted into Slacks? If so, who and why?
- Is there a system or authority in charge of selecting Slacks available for decanting? If so, who does it benefit?
- How has humanity changed, or begun to change, since releasing a portion of its population into the unknown?

**We all get our dreams stamped on
from time to time, right?
And if it didn't hurt, what kind of
second-rate dreams would they be?**

Richard K. Morgan, *Woken Furies*

CRAFTING A NEW WORLD

If you don't have a current ongoing campaign or series running with *The Veil* and are starting fresh, have no fear. Take the steps and advice included in *The Veil* and craft a world utilizing the World Building Chapter on page 271. When you and the other players add cultural and societal aspects to explore in the fiction, be sure to also add the ones mentioned on the previous two pages. This way, your campaign will come "preloaded", so to speak, with a fiction ripe for exploration, to hone in on, and help build your world going forward in *Cascade*.

Feel free to include *The Veil* as a narrative backdrop, or use its playbooks. As *Cascade*'s technology has virtually eliminated death, players could be from various time periods leading all the way back to the time in *The Veil*, when Neurochips were relatively new. Any playbook can be on the table, provided it makes sense for the kind of fiction everyone wants, articulated when world building.

There are two approaches to getting a new cyberpunk adventure started: **settings from playbooks** and **playbooks from settings**. Both methods have benefits and potential pitfalls, which will be discussed later. The question you need to pose is: do you want to build your fiction from the player concepts, or do you want the setting to drive the character dynamics. Both have merit and in the end, it's just what you prefer.

To craft your adventure using playbooks, first pick playbooks, then build your setting. Playbooks are your ingredients, so mixing them with your social, cultural, and technological aspects will produce a unique cyberpunk flavour only achievable by a collaboration of minds. As you create, make sure you and the other players are happy with the tone. See the Settings from Playbooks section on the next page if you want to use this method.

To create your adventure from a setting, ask everyone about the type of game they want to play; talk about the desired tone, themes, and media touchstones. After that, consider which playbooks make sense for your setting. Look at the playbooks carefully; some bring specific themes with them that may either enhance or frustrate your cyberpunk story depending on your agreed tones and themes. See the Playbooks from Settings section on page 30 if you want to use this method.

SETTINGS FROM PLAYBOOKS

In general, it's best *not* to begin with the media associated with the playbooks. There's a risk everyone may get stuck piecing together a mash-up of *The Matrix*, *Inception*, *Ghost In The Shell*, and *Mardock Scramble*. Also avoid adopting an entire media touchstone when picking a playbook. These approaches will put a large cognitive load on you and your players, and leave you wondering how to bash together all these fictional worlds and their various, potentially mismatched, themes.

Instead, start smaller by hand picking the specific tropes that are written into the playbook. Broader book and movie touchstones are helpful anchors to other players once they understand what you're going for. But media touchstones can also work against you when creating a unique fiction. For example, the Architect playbook invites you to explore and create the digital world. However, that digital world isn't necessarily similar to *The Matrix* or *Inception* at all, even though the moves in the playbook lean heavily on those media touchstones. Instead, consider the digital world *you* want to explore and how it affects and interacts with the other players' characters. Is having the digitized world look similar to past fiction relevant? Does that matter to you? Does using the media touchstone excite you, or would everyone have more fun building an entirely new framework for such a world?

I recommend choosing playbooks and the tropes they invoke, and then build the setting from the ground up. Make the world fit your playbooks. Cherry pick the world building ideas you get from the chosen playbooks, and set those aside as ingredients for world creation. Once all playbooks are chosen, discuss how these cherry-picked ideas might fit together to create your idea of cyberpunk. Ask yourselves how you want to subvert, invoke, or disregard these tropes, tweaking the protagonists until you're happy. Do this, and you'll have the satisfaction of building your world with the help of established works of fiction, but not *defaulting* to them completely.

Next, discuss technological, societal, and cultural aspects you want in your fiction. You should talk about the inspiring parts of your playbooks, and what you want to explore in the world you're crafting. Mention your touchstones, as well as your own ideas that haven't come from media. Some of these ideas you may want, some you may not. The playbooks will bring these aspects to life when you play, so it's really important to get everyone on the same page. For example, *The Architect* playbook implies a dystopian world from its connections to *The Matrix*. However, the playbook still sings if you discarded that imagery for a more hopeful future. Likewise, *The Apparatus* implies tropes from *Ghost In The Shell*, as well as trench coats, cool shades, cars, guns, and other things synonymous with older cyberpunk media, but it does not require any of them to truly serve a purpose in the fiction. Someone who is unfamiliar with all these touchstones can still create and play a protagonist.

After selecting playbooks and discussing the world you want to explore, answer the questions posed in the setting playbook. These questions are designed to help you discover where your environment is located, and make you think about invoking or subverting existing tropes. These questions guide you through motifs linked with the genre, so are especially useful if you have no cyberpunk experience. They will also prompt you to consider concepts you may have overlooked that will come up regularly in your fiction.

You should end up with a setting that revolves around the playbooks, interesting aspects to explore derived from your characters, and a well realized environment. As you play, be aware of tropes associated with the playbooks so you can make a fiction compatible with everyone. Likewise, continue to look critically at what you and others find interesting in your game as you play out your narrative.

PLAYBOOKS FROM SETTING

It's a good idea to start with the setting if you're running a oneshot, playing with cyberpunk beginners, or have a specific setting in mind going into the game. Starting with a setting is also a good way to include touchstones beyond the playbooks.

However, keep in mind this approach may fictionally exclude certain playbooks that may not fit the setting's tone or theme. On the plus side, removing playbooks that don't fit the fiction may make it faster and easier for players to choose. Of course, you can always change your fiction to accommodate playbooks after the fact.

First, everyone should take turns voicing their media touchstones – books, anime, movies, comics, manga – everything. Talk about what you like and dislike in those stories to focus on what you want to see in your game. Use this discussion to create a list of things everyone wants in the fiction, nested within *Cascade*'s setting. Everyone should contribute to the list so it becomes everyone's setting and fiction. This is key to collaborative play and getting everyone invested in the fiction.

Next, categorize each list item into whether it's technological, cultural, or societal. These categories will make it easier to analyze how each aspect links together in your fiction. You'll be able to sit back and look at how your technology overlaps with societal beliefs, and cultural norms. These categories will also be a useful reference guide as you play to remind you of the core aspects underpinning your society.

Lastly, be sure to build a setting that includes *Cascade*'s aspects from page 25. Be sure to fill out the setting playbook as you go. Now that the setting is completed, select playbooks that fit the aspects and fiction you've just established. If desired, tweak the playbooks to fit your vision.

PLAYING AT A CONVENTION

If you are running a game at a Con, prepare a setting that accommodates a range of playbooks. Choose these playbooks beforehand, allowing for one or two more than the expected number of players so your table is focused on the theme while still having choice. Tailoring this selection to your setting means you'll end up with more time for an engaging game, whilst giving players the flexibility to customize and interpret their protagonists.

The playbooks allow for multiple interpretations of the core archetype, so don't worry about your choices limiting the fiction. Lots of fun can come from subverting or twisting the playbook tropes, so encourage players to turn their playbook into something unique.

First, explain what the players need to know about the setting, and then have them choose playbooks. After they choose their playbook, ask them to contribute some aspects they want to explore, and then tweak the setting to accommodate. You should then be ready to get rolling with your game.

BEST PRACTICES FOR A CON GAME:

- Have a setting and pitch for the game created already.
- Limit playbook selection to fit that pitch and setting.
- Keep your play time in mind: pre-fill some character info if needed.
- Have players add at least one aspect; be it societal, or cultural, technological ones.

EXAMPLE SETTING CREATION

When creating a setting, consider picking a place that you, and preferably your players, haven't visited to avoid defaultism. When you choose a location, research it beforehand while considering your own biases and assumptions about the area.

As an example, I'll use Taiwan for prep, and create a game setting unique to my own perspective.

When I fill out Taiwan's setting playbook, I focus on how it looks and feels in the present before extrapolating it into the future. I *need* to research what the world looks like now, and then inject the things I want to explore into the fiction using this data.

The current culture of Taiwan shows a blend of Confucianist Han Chinese and Taiwanese aborigines cultures, which I want to explore as a foundation for a cyberpunk setting. Right now, the political and legal status of Taiwan is in question as people debate if it should become part of mainland China. Currently, the status quo is maintained—but in the future... perhaps this is not the case.

In cultural and societal aspects, I'll take it to an extreme, radicalizing them in one direction or the other. Either Taiwan becomes independent and generates a great deal of contention with China, or China assimilates Taiwan, changing the culture, most likely, to an occupied state. All of this is conjecture leaning toward dramatism in my own mind, of course. I still need to do a lot more research beyond these broad political strokes, since they are not nuanced enough to provide a sense of culture. I need to research colloquial terms, food, and customs so the city isn't portrayed through a western lens on a foreign culture and place, thus decreasing the risk of defaultism.

At the time of this writing and research, current market trends show Taiwan as a hub for tech companies. Taiwanese information and communication technologies make up a *huge* niche in the world in terms of a few things: liquid-crystal displays, mobile phones, and semiconductors. Taiwan has been steadily rising in the global markets at an exponential rate, owed mostly to strong performance in R&D. Without going into too much detail, as a whole Taiwan appears to be great at procurement, design support, and commercialization of the ideas other people conceptualize. This technological niche means a lot of tech companies do business in Taiwan, such as Acer and D-link.

In terms of future market trends, some of the fastest industry growth appears to be products that save energy and reduce carbon emissions. These trends are something worth adapting into our radicalized cyberpunk Taiwan.

I'm going to add these two trends as technological aspects for our cyberpunk setting: "predominate arm of technological production in the world" and, "tech that harms the environment is illegal and now in the black market. Violating this law lands people in a Cache". I find these concepts interesting because they subvert existing cyberpunk tropes: dystopian worlds resulting from technological advancement, for example. Plus, I expect these concepts will inspire players to invoke tech that is more organic and less traditional in cyberpunk archetypes, which fits into *Cascade's* tone. I anticipate these concepts will help establish how cybernetics will look in this future as well.

Ultimately, these ideas are what I'll bring to the game to kick-off the session and world-building. However, I'll consult with the players at the table to see if these ideas align with what they want out of the game. Over the course of play, we may not even end up staying in Taiwan. But as a stepping point, I have some exciting ideas to explore as the MC regarding what the world could look like from the perspective of one place right now.

Lastly, I will find and prepare pictures of Taiwan (probably Taipei), and incorporate major landmarks into my game. I'll then take in what it looks like, what is unique about it, and what it might look like in the future. While doing so, I need to make sure I'm not depicting this culture from a western viewpoint to avoid defaultism as mentioned earlier. To do avoid that, I'd need to do a lot of research on the culture in order to do it justice, as mentioned above.

If I'm unable to research this particular place, I may consider creating a completely new cyberpunk city. This city will be pure extrapolation, since I haven't researched the culture and the integral things about the city and region. The scenario on page 38, "Holistic Blame", illustrates this approach in a nebulous city: Prudence. The city will not resemble anything in Taiwan, but it will have the technology profile of the region extrapolated into a cyberpunk scenario, grounding real world events in a fictional city.

Once you're happy with your rough idea for a cyberpunk city, it's time to bring the place to life with threats, tension, and drama.

BUILDING THE WORLD

Using the information I've gathered on Taipei, I will create a cyberpunk city framework and introduce a couple threats to kick-off the fiction. The purpose of which is to have this ready to go for any one-shot game that could arise while not having the time to do a proper setup with the players. Additionally, text for transitioning this one-shot into a campaign, should it be extended for any reason.

This scenario is considered an adventure starter. It is also condensed, incorporating only one main plot thread that can be resolved in a oneshot. It also includes Threats to make the MC's life easier if the fiction needs more tension or narrative drive.

TO CRAFT A SCENARIO, I FOLLOW THESE SIX STEPS:

Add in the aspects built into *Cascade*.

Research a potential city setting by focusing on technological, cultural, and societal trends that complement *Cascade*.

- Create a simple plot thread in the form of a threat to drive the players' fiction.
- Describe a few sections of the setting in detail to convey the cyberpunk city's feeling and tone (food, culture, the tech, etc.). Establish key details and landmarks before play to give your players solid hooks into the fiction.
- Create ulterior threats that touch on or personify aspects.
- Limit or recommend specific playbooks that work well with the setting and fiction.

In this scenario, the main plot thread is solving the murder of an aged and affluent member of society whose Slack was killed. This story is emergent, meaning the clues, facts, and murderer will be established during play, rather than being pre-determined by the MC. This scenario uses the research on Taipei to begin a story players can resolve quickly, and keep things interesting for the MC since not even *they* know what will happen next.

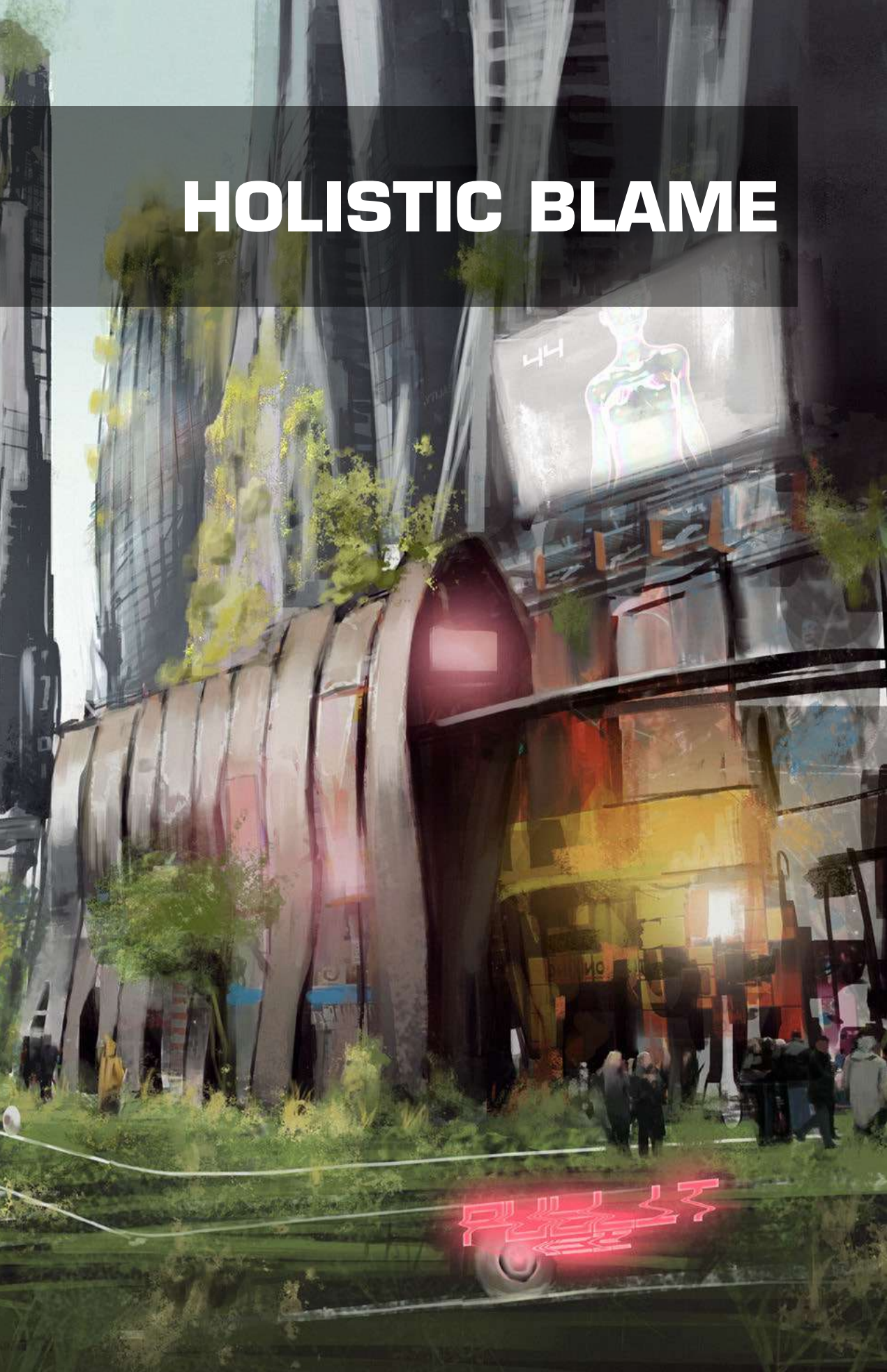
The stage is set with a primary question (who done it?), secondary introspective questions about the characters and setting, and the task at hand. These hooks should be more than enough for this session—and if needed, turn it into a campaign launching from this single sitting.

CHAPTER THREE: SCENARIOS





HOLISTIC BLAME



Now a sovereign state and city, Prudence, referred to worldwide simply as the “Clean Zone”, has isolated itself from the world. Slacks are not allowed in or out, effectively controlling and policing the population inside in order to preserve Prudence’s equilibrium with the environment.

Well, that’s the PR pitch, anyway.

The rest of the world relies on the manufacturing done here, which is how its economy survives. However, even *more* vital to the city’s economy, culture, and society are the many artists in the Clean Zone—fabricating Prudence as a destination for creative work and innovation in the most lucrative fields: tech that goes into manufacturing synthetic Slacks; augmentation tech that integrates with traditional human bodies (advanced cybernetics); and tech that enables the Green Zone to create an equilibrium with their natural surroundings and habitat.

Prudence dubs itself a “clean zone” and is referred to as such because it strictly employs policies that regulate technology that is good for the world and the immediate environment within its purview. Tech that harms the environment is vehemently banned. The technology coming out of Prudence is at a premium because it is built to last while also being built ethically.

Those living within Prudence pioneered and continued to perfect this new lifestyle. Highly sought after and prized artists within the city consistently conceptualize and innovate technology, contributing to Prudence’s prestige. Targeting body modifications and augmentation, while also having a lifestyle that focuses on using tech that does not hurt the environment around them but improves and nurtures it—an outlook shirked by the rest of the world until now—has led to the commodification of this outlook... and the gatekeeping of it from those in power.

This technology is expensive, hard to get ahold of, and ruthlessly coveted by the city and its inhabitants. Principles of sustainable living and goodwill toward nature do not extend past the city’s borders. In this multi-tiered city, hypocrisy abounds. This outlook is undeniably good for the environment around the Clean Zone, but what of the rest of the world and what of commodifying such practices?

The more well off you are, the lower you live in Prudence. The benefits of these practices then only benefit a new power structure instead of everyone. So, while doing “good”, these practices contribute to the oppression of those people not benefiting from the system.

The residents who benefit within the city and in the natural world prevalent at the base of the city, existing in two worlds while those less well off barely subsist in neither. Here, nature is maintained and cultivated and made to flourish. It is affluent, prestigious, limited, and coveted.

The lowest tier of the city is integrated with the natural realm, forming an architectural style designed with nature in mind; enhancing the aesthetic and functionality of both. The most desirable space in the Clean Zone is in “The Nethers”, where humanity thrives along with nature. The most valued citizens prosper here; artists and educated minds charged with keeping the city and zone flourishing and desirable. Innovative, and most importantly, lucrative.

These curated forests are allowed to run rampant, provided they don't interfere with traffic and dwellings, but otherwise thrive as they wish. Most buildings here transition into nature seamlessly with art and tech, and may have graffiti splayed across them. Dwellings are made of natural resources, reinforced to keep it architecturally sound, and always project The Veil; keeping the hybrid reality active in every home, as well as the streets.

Few places do not broadcast this hybrid reality and so, few places have any real sense of privacy unless you've got the tech to preserve it. Privacy is therefore a commodity coveted in society. Most people have some sort of tech, ranging in quality sure, but it is nevertheless tech that most people possess.

Just one tier above though, it's a different story.

The middle class is well off, but lacks the infrastructure needed to integrate with the natural environment as readily as below. Custom tech has to be employed in order to make green spaces viable. They can also access better Slacks, better tech, and are typically climbing the socio-political ladder in order to procure a spot in The Nethers.

At the pinnacle of the city: the tallest, third tier. Green spaces resemble contained, small patches in the concrete jungle-like cities we are familiar with today. Neon signs on the streets blink in a shorthand combination of many languages bleeding together. Orally, speech combines colloquial terms from many tongues, translated through one's Neurochip into a precise language. This trend results in a language constantly changing like the fashion trends of today, requiring updates available for purchase. Language, much like Prudence's nature, is a commodity used for social stratification.

Each upper tier of the city is engineered to collect and filter much needed—and revered—rain to the bottom level; the before mentioned Nethers. Much like the rain, what Prudence’s society reveres and lauds all runs downward, or is commodified in such a way that makes it unattainable for the average individual. This culture places a high priority on sustainability and the nourishment that nature provides. Yet it has also placed most of its people in a position where they will never witness what that fusion looks or feels like.

In this future, cybernetics exist but are seamlessly integrated into Slacks, such that these augmentations, or mods, can’t normally be distinguished by the average human eye.

Only Slacks in Prudence are so perfectly made – and this perfection is one of the main draws for those outside of the city.

Visas are issued to those people who want, and can afford, these premium services. Vying for artists that push the boundaries of what can be done in this market of customization and new body modifications is commonplace. Foreigners rent Slacks to be in the city, and the super rich drop serious Cred to enter the city with their own flesh. Despite possessing the Cred, the system still expels them from the city when their business concludes.

All other Slacks in the world have serious flaws, and getting a Slack modified or created in Prudence is a mark of status. As such, the Slack market here is strictly controlled to maintain demand.

If you can’t afford passage, there are those who help people disappear into the Clean Zone, fooling the tech that keeps track of who is “valid” in the space and who is not.

All Neurochips connect to a centralized and proprietary network controlled by Foresight; the megacorporation that has a towering building, jutting straight up in the center of the city. Foresight is the only building that stretches from the very bottom to beyond the third tier, into the clouds. Its signage is thought casted via a direct feed to everyone’s Neurochips, and is always present when looking at the looming tower. It watches, serving a constant reminder that should someone step out of line—Foresight will see them.

People with augmented vision who are able to see data streams as visible and tangible things, may feel compelled to follow them. And should they do so... one way or another, they will all lead to Foresight.



Foresight provides security, and owns and operates the facilities that construct new Slacks. They own proprietary technology that enables Glitches (like the player characters) to be downloaded from antiquated Neurochips into their new bodies. They are the global embodiment of cutting edge tech, as well as Prudence itself. When any one person thinks of the city, they ultimately must think of Foresight too. They are synonymous and unable to be divorced from each other, so intricately are they entangled.

Street vendors – a collection of garment, food markets, and recycled old tech – line the streets. Streams of people so thick that from above, they move and behave like a snake weaving its way through the concrete jungle of the upper tiers. Making use of Neurochips—black markets and legitimate vendors alike thought-cast their wares directly into the minds of passersby, customizing ads precisely to their tastes. These manmade streets spiral around the middle tower, forming the concentric city of Prudence.

Visual blocks are employed through Neurochips to quarantine the eyes of the people in upper tiers, never allowing them to see how different life is like below them. However, stories are passed from person to person in the upper tiers about what life is like in The Nethers. These whispers create a pervasive, mythical association around The Nethers, as so few people ever see the place, let alone visit or live there; never returning afterward.

These spaces are protected by Foresight, too. Any action perceived as endangering nature is listed as a serious offense, and can potentially land you in a Cache. If your tech causes waste, if green spaces are defiled or harmed, if you question or attempt to tear down the facade of a harmonious existence between people and nature, there will be consequences. Foresight always enforces these laws, implementing them in such a way that ensures citizens that this is the way things are. And how they always will be.

In *The Veil*, you should constantly ask questions—here are five potential ones to help players invest and customize the setting further:

- What is their position in the city hierarchy, what tier do they exist in?
- What ads do they see custom tailored for them while wandering the streets?
- How can you tell that this city exists in the future?
- What do Slacks look like, how do the best ones differ from others?
- What is the actual and/or rumored punishment for breaking the law, specifically banned tech?

THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT – THE RESERVOIR

All people can jack into a completely virtual world called The Reservoir (locally referred to as “The Res”), the virtual confines of which only extend within the city. People have to be hardwired into a node to access The Reservoir. This place exists completely apart from the hybrid reality society walks around in on a daily basis. It also costs Cred to jack in—1 Cred for limited time, available only at specific locations in the city.

Multiple franchises offer this service, some more seedier than others. They permeate the landscape, just as fast food places permeate our cities now. It’s the source of somewhat secure virtual entertainment; a place where it makes Foresight harder to monitor what people are doing and saying. Like Caches, they can simulate other virtual environments, as programmed and designed by whomever is in that space.

The Reservoir lifts the constraints of a physical body. When you jack in, it’s like falling, or diving, into water; depending on your ability to cast a digital self image. Because this digital environment’s default space is water, avatars vary from fish, to octopuses, to sharks, to whales, etc. Otherwise, you’re a human floundering in a vast ocean of sea life, outclassed by those more adept in the virtual realm.

The Reservoir’s expansive environment represents the wealth of data inside. There are structures rising up from the deep dark below of the water, permeating the area with both simple and complex structures. Anything within this ocean that is not an avatar represents data visualized. Some manipulated, sculpted by people in the space, else grown organically from The Reservoir’s depths.

These structures represent the contributions to the digital world and may correlate with the non-virtual world. For instance, when you go to a cafe and jack in, you would find yourself in a corresponding virtual space within The Res. Often these places will have gimmicks that subvert legal loopholes. For example, physical hookah bars are banned because they sell a substance that poisons the body. However, if people want that experience virtually, they just jack in and voila; they find themselves in a simulated environment where they can experience the substance in a manner indistinguishable from doing it physically in-real-life.

WHEN PLAYERS ENTER THE RESERVOIR, HERE'S SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are the players avatars?
- What does hacking look like, both in The Res and out?
- They've heard you can jack into The Res illegally, how?
- What are some of the most popular simulations, both nefarious and pleasant?
- Is there a way to tell who is more adept in The Res?

BACKGROUND

Arista is a highly successful retired scientist that used to work at Foresight. She and her partner Molly live in a large home in The Nethers. Their house is a restored older structure that is as opulent as it is large. Though retired from that work, she is dialed into local politics and still maintains plenty of influence at Foresight. She also now runs her own business that Foresight outsources its manufacturing of Slacks to: NewLife, which is where the backups of her and her partner's Neurochips and replacement Slacks are stored.

The protagonists will have been decanted into Slacks specifically by or for Arista; in order to investigate her own death, or the death of her Slack, rather. She has her Neurochip backed up every 48 hours while she's unconscious and typically sleeping. She's dropped Cred to have each player character, or one in particular who has then sourced the other PCs for help, solve her death. The authorities ruled it a suicide attempt with no intrusions in the perimeter detected. However, Arista is convinced she would not have committed suicide, especially knowing she has a data backup stored elsewhere. The threat of real death would not matter with her mind stored someplace else, after all. The last thing she remembers is transmitting herself digitally on a business trip. She arrived using a rented synthetic Slack to conduct standard, monotonous company business. However, she was killed before her scheduled backup that evening. As such, she is missing the time leading up to her supposed suicide.

Death occurred with a particle weapon aimed at her Neurochip, making it real death, if she hadn't had a backup. Convinced of the straightforward narrative in which she killed herself, a more thorough investigation was not launched, in part, she believes, because she's a Qin, which comes with some social stigma. She's resorted to get closure through the players instead.

Arista is colloquially referred to as an "Incessant" or "Qin." This prejudicial term is used refer to people who routinely decant their minds into Slacks, extending their life indefinitely beyond a normal life-span. They are typically wealthy enough to always afford a state-of-the-art Slack, are generally a desirable age, and outfitted with the newest augmentation. Living a long life in the best care. The term is used interchangeably with Qin, a reference to Qin Shi Huang, the first Chinese sovereign to proclaim himself emperor. He possessed a notorious obsession with attempting to desperately achieve immortality—at almost any price.

Most people can only bare to live a normal life span twice at the most, as getting a new Slack is expensive. Some people save up their whole lives to purchase another Slack, but can only scape up the Cred for a middle-age body. Only the wealthy can afford to stay young forever.

THE OAK EDIFICE

The protagonists will be summoned to Arista and Molly's house in The Nethers to solve the case of Arista's murder.

Most areas here have some kind of biopunk tech or art adorning them, such as cherry blossoms that bloom different colored petals daily instead of seasonally. The foliage, also differently colored, houses intelligent insects of all shapes and sizes that are used for various purposes by the residences. Only the discerning and augmented eye can tell the difference between natural insects from The Nethers, and insects designed and grown, kept as pets, or used for other designs by The Nethers' inhabitants.

Arista and Molly's house is known as "The Oak Edifice", and possesses none of these features of the neighborhood. It is immaculate and untouched by graffiti and art. Out front there is only natural greenery, pruned to a sterile but pleasant aesthetic. North of the house, a giant oak stands. It is the only thing not manicured to fit the exacting confines of grounds and house, allowed to grow free and feral by all appearances.

A large statue of a strong and androgynous build supports the oak. Hunched, arms raised, it holds up this tree, as it appears to have been previously badly damaged. Angled just so, as if someone pushed it over, the supporting arms of the statue are now entwined in vines, holding up the tree for some time now. While the statue's composition appears initially to be marble, a closer inspection reveals cutting edge tech, as the features on the statue's face change, and the eyes swivel when people come near. Scanning the surroundings with vigilance as it bares the weight of the oak with apparent ease.

A path of fresh fruit trees line a walkway from the entrance right up to the house and it's massive, automated wooden doors that swing forward.

Inside, there is a room for most any activity within the house and one main space in an open concept to which all floors can potentially witness the large bay window overlooking the oak tree and statue.

SETUP QUESTIONS:

- How did each protagonist come to learn about this job?
- What *else* can you see that illustrates the class differences between The Nethers and the upper tier people of Prudence, as you make your way to the house?
- What about the interior of exterior of the house shows that it is particularly opulent?
- What are some examples of technology and art fused in this area that is seen as they make their way to the house?

THREATS

ARISTA JORDAN

Threat type: Artful Gambit

Arista does not allow the things she loves to die. Herself, Molly; even the tree featured so predominantly on their grounds. A while back someone deployed black market tech that erodes organic material at a rapid rate, like rust decomposing chrome over time accelerated at a manic rate. The oak tree, a giant symbol of an older world, was constructed by her in order to have it propped up despite it's impending demise. Within the composition of the statue is nanotechnology that melded with the tree, nurturing it back to health. A cyborg tree, now made strong again, thanks to technology she designed. The statue stays there as a reminder to everyone, especially her, that nobody can kill what she loves. And is now a constant reminder everyday as to why her death bothers her so much, coupled with the pain of not being able to remember the truth of what happened. She has not been her usual strong self. These days she is the oak, not the statue.

Arista is confident and savvy. Threat subtype: artful. In this case, using the players to expose her enemy. She has Cred to spare and the mystery of her death gnaws at her. There is virtually nothing she will not do in order to have an answer to this riddle. She's patient and able to convey the nuances of gesture and body communication the way older people are able to... but in a very young and able bodied Slack, depicting a mind-body dissonance on occasion. When moves are called for, use Threat moves on her behalf often. She is *not* patient.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What did Arista offer them to procure their services?
- Why did she want them specifically when she has a lot of other resources?
- What is in the house that shows how old Arista and her partner are?
- How do you come to know that Molly, her wife, is very influential in society?

MOLLY WALKER

Threat type: Envious Devotion

Just as powerful and just as old as her partner Arista, Molly too is a Qin. She has been in a relationship with Arista for generations. But where her partner continues to deal with politics and business, her interests are reserved and guarded. Her perceived life is one of recreational hobbies, and she applies this sportsmanship to everyday encounters. She wants to hold the upper hand in every conversation and interaction, and win them all, too.

She's the epitome of consumerism; newest Slack, newest products, newest vehicle, etc. She's a collector; both of affluent people in her pocket, and hard to procure (and possibly illegal) tech. Whatever she should not or cannot have, she wants to possess it, and have control over it.

As is her subtype: envy. She continues to take and never be satiated. Perhaps she may try to collect one of the protagonists as well?

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What about her Slack conveys that it is cutting edge?
- What is it about her or her surroundings that show she collects things as well as people?
- What rumors have they heard on the streets about Molly and Arista?
- What room or space in the house or grounds, holds a predominant interest Molly has, and what is it?





HILDR EIR

Threat type: Loving Devotion

Hildr is the law. She's got a lot on her plate all of the time, and she investigated the murder of Arista. She's got a very strong sense of justice, and that is what she loves—justice—and, what that does for her community. She's strong willed, strong of heart, and her Slack is one hundred percent pure meat, sinew, and flesh. No augments like most cops, jacked up to help with physical altercations. And no mods for perception increases either. She trusts her gut, and uses tech that isn't invasive to her person, while never relying on it too much.

She's the head of the homicide unit, and like all people, she has a secret. She was romantically entangled with a co-worker who got put into a Cache when they were convicted of tampering with an investigation. Word is they were dirty and nobody knew, not even Hildr. But ever since, she's been investigating the case alone because her gut hasn't led her astray before. Something isn't right, or so she believes.

To make things complicated, one of the protagonists is wearing her co-worker's Slack. When you're convicted of a crime you go in the Cache and your Slack becomes appropriated by the state, used for whatever purposes they wish—if the price is right, it could even be sold off. The body is entirely subject to the state's whim.

Most likely, the player character wearing this Slack will want to get their hands on the Hildr's investigation files from Arista's murder. Make sure she acts differently towards that protagonist compared to the others. Portray her as prejudiced towards Arista for having a player character decanted into her lover's Slack, as well as towards Qins in general. She will direct the player characters to a seedy place in town known for anonymity and playing toward the unusual proclivities of Qins, hoping to embarrass Arista by outing her. This place, which Arista frequents, is called: Digital Illusion.

Hildr's devotion is love, for her ex lover and ex co-worker. She wants to solve the case and doesn't believe her gut would lead her astray.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What is different about the authorities in the future, visually or in practice?
- How can you tell Hildr is not augmented?
- What about her conveys that she is not a dirty cop?
- What about her weapon(s) is different than other cops?

HANSH GO

Threat type: Consumed coward

Hansh is a proprietor of Digital Illusion, a club in the seedier end of town. He's lived in Prudence all his life, which is unique since most people are foreigners, whether by their Slack's appearance, or from being decanted into Slacks inhabiting Prudence before it closed its borders. There's not too many people here born and raised in their own flesh. He is very old yet well off, meaning he can afford to keep his Slack in good working order, appearing much younger than his actual age. Arista frequents his establishment, a fact that would be embarrassing if made public. And since Digital Illusion is known for catering to Qins' very strange and illegal needs, it also begs the question: just what is Arista into?

While there are places in The Nethers that do the same as his establishment, people go here for the programs no one else will run, and the anonymity it affords its guests. He wants acknowledgment, respect, and just plain old Cred. As much Cred as he can get, in fact—so long as it doesn't put him in any danger.

Seedy places like Hansh's establishment are called "body boxes". Customers pay for small rooms just large enough for bodies so they can jack in, hence the term. People hook up to a private Cache or a shadier part of The Reservoir to experience things they can't in real life. Entertainment comes in all forms, and experiencing it digitally is just as good. Right?

Hansh's place could be somewhere an affluent Qin would wind up. Discretion and programs to satiate whatever desires one acquires after lifetimes of experience—things people may not be allowed to do anymore, get away with doing, or perhaps appetites that go unlisted on the menus of more reputable establishments; for good reason.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What does Hansh wear, or what about his Slack, telegraphs that he's a native to Prudence?
- To get into Digital Illusion, there's a very specific procedure to screen out the authorities, what is it?
- What about the physical location makes it nondescript?
- What are some of the unusual, disturbing, or esoteric things happening in Digital Illusion?

SETUP AND LONG PLAY

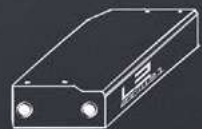
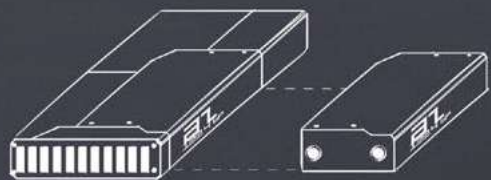
Go on Pinterest and look for pictures of people from all over the world that could fit the image of specific NPCs like Arista, Hansh and Hildir. When the player characters find one of these Threats using the Link move, it's important this NPC *feels* like someone they actually know or have heard of before, and that they have a unique voice. Ask the players to describe parts of character—their mannerisms, ticks, quirks—and mold the character's image around them. Because players can introduce these characters through a Link, and may have a say in what people in this world look like, lots of times assigning NPCs specific images beforehand is pointless. Otherwise it's all you, which is where looking at diverse pictures and being aware of your own defaultism will help create a fiction that's relevant, rich, and has representation.

In this scenario, have player characters start out on the streets and *get* them acclimated to the world. Ask the players world building questions, and then send them to Arista. From there, based on what the players do when they learn of their objective, feed the other Threats into the fiction as appropriate. Decide who, or what, is the culprit for the death of Arista's Slack. As they investigate, keep asking them who they think killed Arista's Slack, and what their motive was, choosing the culprit based on the information they feed you.

If the game turns into a long campaign after the mystery is resolved, consider the following: Arista's threat type is Gambit, which means she is probably being manipulated by something greater than even her. Whatever or whomever that is, it could be your Main Antagonist to explore the Final Question you'll eventually inject into your fiction.

Be concerned only with the starting point even though it is a oneshot. Be surprised by the outcome and have the players influence the fiction in such a way that would make replaying this scenario different every single time. Their decisions will dictate what point B is because the ending is something you will play to find out, every time. You have everything you need, save for a few other NPCs possibly, to focus on what the most interesting next step is for your fiction.

Remember, this is an adventure *starter*, not a plotted out adventure in its entirety.





DAY TRADERS



BY JOHNSTONE METZGER

Augmented reality is ubiquitous these days, and you can't be part of society without it. So, what else is new? We've been living in the future for ages now, so here's the next future shock: newly-invented neurosignal transmitters make it possible to see the world through someone else's eyes, or even walk a mile in their shoes. Spend a day as someone else, or give up your own days and get paid without even having to work for it. Go beyond *The Veil* and clothe yourself in borrowed flesh. I'd love to tell you "everyone's doing it" but they're not—yet. Get in now, before it's old news.

THE SOURCE

At the heart of this scenario are neurosignal transmitter implants. If you have them in your body, they can take the information that your sensory organs normally transmit to your brain and send it wirelessly to a machine somewhere else, which can then send those signals into someone else's brain. The result is exactly what you see in the classic oldies film *Being John Malkovich*—they can see through your eyes, hear with your ears, and feel whatever you touch, at the same time you do.

Above and beyond that, there is the possibility of neuro-possession. These implants can also receive signals, allowing someone to suppress your neural wiring and control your body, as if it were their own. Meanwhile, their body lies comatose in a remote location, faithfully attended by technicians. They're the important one in this situation, after all, not you. Once you get the implants you become a vessel, able to not only sell the sensory information of your life to viewers, but to rent your body to them as well, to do with what they will, while your brain—like their body—lies inactive.

It's called "day trading", and it's the hot new thing. The rich and famous are all over it. You haven't heard? I can't say I'm too surprised. It doesn't get more cutting edge than this.

That said, there's some caveats to keep in mind when this scenario begins:

Day trading only works if someone has a transmitter implanted. You can take a ride in someone who has the implant without needing cybernetics yourself (if you put your body in a special isolation chamber and attach wires to it), but if you want to transmit your own sensory input, or let someone take over your body, you need the implant installed in your brainstem.

A person needs to be prepped for day trading beforehand. Trying to hack someone's implant without properly syncing machines isn't really feasible.

This technology can transmit, but it can't record—at least not faithfully.

There's simply too much data to store it all.

Wireless transmission isn't foolproof. Maybe quantum particle sync offers instantaneous long-range communication, or maybe not. Reliability and the actual consequences related to transmission interruptions are up to the MC to adjudicate as they see fit.

THE SUPPLIER

Now we know what we're dealing with, the next question is: who supplies it? The following section gives you four different corporations that might have developed day trading technology. Choose one for your game—they hold a monopoly or at least the majority of the market. At your option, choose a second corporation to be their main up-and-coming competitor. You can introduce the others later on if your campaign calls for it.

If you're going to decide by vote or group consensus, here's the short versions of all four, so you can keep something secret for later:

6e: As American public infrastructure crumbles away, the corporate-military-industrial complex works to secure its power over every social class but its own. When drones aren't invasive enough, 6e builds windows into the human mind itself.

PsyberNet Solutions: Ex-CIA psychic research scientists make human intelligence sexy again by selling surveillance technology to the rich and famous. Only this time, with "secret" Chinese backing.

Razum Labs: Devotees of a comatose Russian mind-artist work to secure a new, Euro-American power base for a rogue intelligence officer inside the Kremlin.

Seishin: A Japanese cult of anarcho-cognitivists, developing neurotransmitter implants at the behest of a British billionaire, secretly pursue the possibility of becoming a hive mind.

6E

Satellite Industries Computing Complex (SICC) uses a vast array of aliases for its subsidiaries, fronts, and shell companies—Sink, Sinco, Saincom, Synplex, The Satin Company—but its best-known moniker is also its simplest: the 6e corporation. Between the fault-lines of a rapidly-fragmenting America, this shadowy conglomeration of businesses develops drone technology for the deep state corporate-military-industrial complex. They are currently expanding their neurotech and domestic surveillance portfolios, and fairly aggressively, too. The public testing of implanted neuro-transmitters is but one of their ongoing programs. Most of the others are secret.

ASSETS

The main 6e manufacturing complex is located in Florida, close to their satellite launch site. It remains occupied even through all three months of hurricane season (unlike the rest of the state). The newer, larger 6e complex began shortly after the governor of Mississippi signed over control of state administration to the federal government, but is still under construction.

6e can deploy a tactical unit anywhere in the world within 48 hours, and much faster within the Americas (outside of the Amazon, at least). They can hire more on short notice if they feel it's worth spending the money, or move security personnel away from the new complex if they don't.

Their intelligence capabilities are limited to drone operations, however, and while they are an integral part of the American corporate landscape, their Israeli and European allies aren't quick to deliver them favours without someone higher up cracking a whip—and 6e relies quiet heavily on those whips.

CULTURE

The 6e companies work for the largest, most powerful gang in the world—the US Department of Defense—and they act like it. They have nothing but contempt for local authorities and the democratic process itself. This arrogance is fuelled by the REMF hawkishness of drone commanders who never set foot on a battlefield, the elitist white supremacy of those working the corporate side of the business, and the devotion to American exceptionalism of both.



If 6e has a weakness, however, it's their over-reliance on drone surveillance and robot warfare. As much as they want to move into human intelligence, their deep distrust of "cheap talk and too much waiting around" holds them back. The only part they can get a handle on is the technological aspect—hence the neuro-transmitter implants they make.

ENEMIES

What foreign government doesn't want to get its hands on 6e technology? They're already copying everything that's publicly available. Even American allies would steal 6e secrets given the chance, and various heavy hitters—from Israeli and Russian intelligence to the Chinese military and Indian businessmen—already have operations in the works.

MOTIVATIONS

The board of directors aren't interested in just making a profit. Power is more important than money. They want to see their class of people—rich, white American men—stay on top for as long as possible, and they don't care who winds up on the bottom.

RESPONSE

When someone makes trouble for them, 6e escalates to threats and intimidation almost immediately. The exception is for important corporations and politicians that are considered "untouchable." They get lawsuits first, ominous men in black second.

SUGGESTED SCENES

While a raging hurricane cuts off outside support, day traders possessed by who-knows-what turn 6e's Florida complex into a nightmarish bloodbath.

You are approached by a foreign intelligence service to help kidnap one of 6e's head scientists. They want it done quietly, though, so as to "avoid the giant's ire."

You find yourself in 6e's underground fighting competition, where they test the limits of neuro-possession—even on unwitting victims. Nobody realizes you've got control of your own body back... but it's only a matter of time.

PSYBERNET SOLUTIONS

Everyone in psyops thought those guys were so last-century. We do targeted advertising, not telepathy! I kept telling Sujjul to just... take their study out behind the shed and put it out of its misery, you know what I mean? But he couldn't let it go. After Crenshaw and Bleaker backed him up, they all got transferred together, and that's the last I heard of them. Until this new company started blowing up, that is. Have you seen their advertising? "Don't just meet the stars. Be the stars."

Despite being not-so-secretly bankrolled by Chinese-Canadian millionaires with slightly-more-secret ties to China's Ministry of State Security, it's not the business side of PNS that has everyone talking about them—it's the people. No media needing an audience fails to lead with the fact that many of the company's senior scientists once conducted psychic research for the CIA.

ASSETS

Right now, PsyberNet Solutions only has offices in Toronto, Seattle, New York, and L.A., but they have more contacts than you can shake a stick at. Their primary service is access to celebrities. They let trust-fund arcology kids live the lives and experiences of z-grade celebrities as they hobnob with actual famous people. They sell hot, young bodies and Hollywood afterparties to bored housewives in the Emirates so they can have a shot at starfucking their favourites. They're flush with money from backers and clients both, and they're not afraid to flaunt it.

But PNS itself has nothing but it's eggheads, fixers, and managers. The backers behind their backers, on the other hand, are part of the Chinese intelligence services. They have a huge army of hackers, decent human intelligence embedded in the Americas, and even a few security operatives if violence becomes absolutely necessary. That's a tactic of last resort, however.

CULTURE

Between their oddly-retro cache and their boisterous "cybro" corporate culture, PNS has become the new gold standard for young American STEM graduates looking to get into exciting, "radical" fields of study. All the way up the ranks, this company is obsessed with party time and celebrity culture—the jet set lifestyle is as much a part of the job as calibrating fibre optic cables. As much as PNS uses its debauched reputation to attract clients as well as staff, when the ad copy says "no matter who you are, you're a star," everyone believes it, much more than they should.

ENEMIES

Nobody likes being blackmailed by Chinese state security operatives after a night on the town, and nobody likes discovering they're being spied on by groupies. But PNS isn't big enough yet to have big enemies. Other intelligence services know they're a vector for international espionage, but so are a million other companies. So far, the only people who really have it in for this company are those who've been burned by them.

MOTIVATIONS

The Ministry of State Security sees PNS as a means of gaining leverage over foreigners, while the company's scientists see a means to party harder. The backers can fall into either camp—they can smell the money or they just want to help their friends in the old country—but they don't fall far outside of those choices. The few people, both inside and outside the company, who see what kind of future neuro-transmitters might create will have to find that future outside of PNS.

RESPONSE

Online harassment and character assassination are the main tools PNS has to deal with interference. If they get assistance from the Chinese, this can be fairly severe. These scientists only think they're big time, though, when the truth is they learned nothing about tradecraft from the CIA. If they have to escalate to threats and violence, the difference between PNS and Chinese covert operatives becomes clear as day.

SUGGESTED SCENES

She was making eyes at pretty-boy Ely Rose all night, gushing over his latest blockbuster movie. Looked like she was making progress too, until she asked you for a light, and then that EMP went off. Typical terrorist bullshit, wasn't even nearby. We didn't lose The Veil over here, but she sure lost something. Now she's lying in your lap unconscious.

You arrive for the interview. When you check your notes again so you can remember this actor's name, he pulls a gun on you. Didn't you meet this guy before? He didn't act like this!

You were supposed to wake up back at the lab, where they put you under. But here you are in some hotel room with an ache in your head and a knife in your hand. Who's this guy screaming bloody murder? Where did all this blood come from?

RAZUM LABS

A major employer of freelance laboratories in the US and Europe, everyone assumes Razum has close ties to the Russian mafiya and state intelligence services, because of course they do. The gossip is exciting but nothing has ever been proven—plus, their money spends, so who wants to ask the hard questions? Nobody. Besides, the truth is always more complicated, and nobody wants to hear that, either.

Deep inside the headquarters of Razum Labs, in St. Petersburg, lies the comatose body of Natalia Savrasova, connected to what looks like a million wires and half as many machines. The disciples she gained as a cutting-edge mind-artist attempt to revive her by transmitting their own sensations into her unresponsive brain, always hoping the next breakthrough in their technology will yield a response. Always, they are disappointed.

Their research funding comes from the man they know as Yevgeny Golitsyn. Originally, he obtained this money from the secret intelligence operations he used to run, but now he gets it from the rich and famous of Hollywood (and occasionally Istanbul, or Milan, or New York), who pay top dollar for the exciting and novel experience of neuro-possession. His day trading operations don't just make money, either. Yevgeny collects as much compromising material as he can get his hands on—and not all of it gets passed on to his bosses in the Kremlin, because this intelligence officer is going rogue.

Yevgeny Golitsyn no longer sees a future for himself in Russia. War with Europe (again) is inevitable, and when it finally happens, China is perfectly poised to snatch up all of Siberia. He wants out before that happens, and that's why he's building networks of foreign influence. After all, he's not going to just become a civilian. Running an ordinary criminal network isn't nearly as good as running one that's state-sponsored, but it's better than nothing.

ASSETS

Through Razum and various front companies, Yevgeny hires numerous labs across the US and Europe to develop specific pieces of technology. This strategy both hides his own operations, and makes it difficult for others to copy the technical work. Most of these labs, and the technicians he uses for the illegal work, are all-too-happy to take the money and not ask questions.

While it's true that Razum has ties to the mafiya and state security, Yevgeny can only use these assets when directed to by his superiors. Otherwise, the networks he's building for his own use would be discovered. When he needs something done on the down low, he hires from the other end of the spectrum—child soldiers, gangsters from the slums of third-world megacities, and disillusioned jihadis. Typical Razum goons have trudged through the scummiest underbellies of crime and poverty in the world and they are merciless, unimaginative sledgehammers too brutalized to see other people as anything more than kneecaps and fingernails. None of them know any Russian.

CULTURE

Inside Razum itself, Russian art and literature take centre stage. No one who doesn't worship at the altars of Pushkin, Turgenev, and Shostakovich works there. Yevgeny has been forced to put technical localizers on salary, just to keep the lab staff from throwing a fit every time they have to read reports in English or German. In the end, it's actually cheaper for him. Less hassle.

Outside Razum, Yevgeny relies mostly on corrupt and opportunistic foreigners. Once a lab has served its purpose, or shown too much moral backbone, he discards it. His technicians operating in Hollywood have become a permanent team. However, it's only a matter of time before they see through his Flemish accent (they're not all Americans). Although it shouldn't be a problem as long as he still has dirt on them.

ENEMIES

Yevgeny has collected compromising material on a number of high-profile supporters of Israel in Hollywood. Since the Mossad is using them to combat one of those periodic surges of white supremacy in American entertainment, they see this material as a possible threat. A worse threat is Yevgeny's own direct superior in the Kremlin, who will not look kindly upon his independent operations, or his desire to "defect."

MOTIVATIONS

Yevgeny wants a secure position abroad, but can't give up the life of a spymaster. The people at Razum labs have come to worship Natalia, or at least her memory. Even those who can live without her resurrection are still devoted first and foremost to pushing the boundaries of art. Everyone else is in it for the money.

RESPONSES

When someone becomes a problem for Yevgeny, he has investigators comb through their life for anything compromising. He then tries to blackmail them, get them fired, or ruin their reputation. If they prove resistant to this tactic, he sends his goons.

Inside Russia, however, Yevgeny can use official resources to get rid of his problems, including state sponsored hackers, tactical security teams, harassment by police, and deportation.

SUGGESTED SCENES

The machines indicated no signal, and your implant logged no activity. Yet you were there, at the Bolshoi, watching Swan Lake. You saw it. But their Online schedule says they were "closed for renovations."

You sit across from Ely Rose, the Hollywood star (as handsome in person as he is on screen), while his agent does most of the talking. His other agent, the one with the Israeli accent, grills you about your broker, your connections, who you know, and what you've seen. Ely has to shush him more than once, but he still wants to take a ride inside your body. It's "research for a role," he says.

You wake up on a restaurant patio—not where your body was supposed to be deposited. It's just after dark. There's been a car accident down the street, maybe (in the direction you came here from, if you think to ask). You see flashing lights, and some signs of destruction. There's a mostly-untouched cup of coffee in front of you. In your pocket, there's a manila envelope with some cheap, laser-printed photographs of two men you don't know (unless you check out the "accident"). Your phone is ringing.



SEISHIN

British billionaire Imran Muhammad Khan has contracted the Japanese company Seishin to develop his theories on neurotech and turn them into functional applications. A mere decade ago, Mcleans declared him “Young Entrepreneur of the Year.” But in the time since, scandal has marred his African arcology schemes, and his R&D company Zero Point has entered receivership. He always wanted to be seen as a social visionary and a practical utopianist. But his highs no longer outnumber his lows, and he feels the pressure to perform.

However, the minds behind Seishin are wholly unconcerned with Khan’s wishes. Its upper ranks are entirely staffed by members of a radical anti-Pure Land cult of anarcho-cognitivists who are more interested in becoming a functional hive mind than making money. They are dutifully, but slowly, creating the functionality day traders see on the market, but behind the smokescreen of ever-more-complicated status report, they are putting their employer’s resources to other uses.

ASSETS

I.M. Khan is very rich and influential in British and American tech sectors, but his businesses have been suffering some setbacks of late that restrict his capital. He has easy access to most cutting-edge technology that is not specific to the military. Although if he has to hire investigators or a security team, he has no special connections. He will get only what money can buy and no more. His lawyers and public relations people are top-notch, however.

Seishin operates in the marine half of Tokyo Prefecture, inside the Environmental Protectorate of Japan, where they are mostly unknown. They have ties to local yakuza, mostly doing low-level electronic countermeasures. It’s through this connection they secured the plum government contracts that caught Khan’s eye. Their cult personnel are fanatically loyal. Many would rather die than give up on their dream of shared consciousness.

Most of the neuro-transmitter technology is manufactured in Khan’s factories around the world, then shipped specifically to heavily-guarded plants in Israel and Mexico for assembly. From there, the American and European markets are wide open, and the additional transportation costs to Asia give him an excuse to cut off the various Indian businessmen he is feuding with. Seishin operates a small manufacturing plant specifically for testing prototypes. They have been expanding it secretly, to house their hive-mind.

CULTURE

Seishin has a strict, hierarchical structure, and the lives of cult members are intensely scripted. Members undergo training to synchronize their thoughts and actions with other followers. Inside their labs, cleanliness and uniformity are the rule. Forest sounds play quietly over the speakers installed in every office. This level of discipline is what convinced Khan to hire them in the first place (though now it may be his undoing).

ENEMIES

Considered an egalitarian progressive in many ways, Khan is irrationally prejudiced against Hindus. He is on bad terms with numerous people in both Britain and India who might otherwise be inclined to invest in his projects. The fact that he holds grudges far longer than is healthy or reasonable only adds to his list of detractors.

Unlike Khan, Seishin feels no shame in surrendering to someone stronger, as long as they are able to continue their work. In spite of their ties to gangsters and government departments—notorious for infighting and corruption—this tactic has allowed them to stay free of any serious opposition.

MOTIVATIONS

As proud and vain as he is, Imran Muhammad Khan is also driven by altruism, and refuses to take on projects that do not, in his view, “contribute to a better tomorrow.” The people in Seishin want to experience their minds becoming one, and do not care what sort of consequences this may have for other people—or even themselves.

RESPONSES

I.M. Khan mainly uses legal threats to silence people. He can also get someone blacklisted from business circles that depend on his products. Seishin has no influence outside Tokyo, but inside the prefecture, they can hire yakuza to harass or even attack anyone getting too nosy.

SUGGESTED SCENES

I.M. Khan has an office on the twenty-first floor. It doesn't sound that high, but the view is spectacular. That's where he asks you to infiltrate Seishin, by joining their experimental program as a test subject, and spying on them for him.

A Seishin technician, possibly on loan to teach foreigners how to operate the technology, tries to convert you. Their perspective on the world seems strange and almost lonely.

You discover the wreckage of a Seishin operative's failed attempt to connect minds in a feedback loop while running a day trading operation in a foreign country.

**What's the point of anarchy when
the society you live in can shove
you into a box no matter how hard
you rebel? He can't help but think
that's why the system evolved.
To contain the uncontainable.
Limit the prospects of those with
limitless capacity for thought,
creativity and analysis.**

Ren Warom, *Escapology*

THE JOB

The PCs are either going to be trading days away themselves, or working with people who are.

PLAYBOOKS

Day trading explores the effects of physical sensory information being transmitted between human beings. As such, the Architect's focus on the digital realm, and the Apparatus' lack of a human nervous system put them at odds with this premise and might not be appropriate for your game. If you want to see what kind of layers they would add, however, you may find them better used as later developments of the technology.

The other playbooks have fewer conflicts, if any. Some have better reasons to trade their days away for money than others (the Attached, Catabolist, and Dying, for example). Others may see the submission required either beneath them, or too socially or emotionally demanding (like the Executive, Honorbound, and Onomastic). The Honed is supposed to be implant-free, but since the neuro-transmitter isn't part of the augmented reality of The Veil, perhaps it could be their one exception. Of course, your character's motivations are yours to detail.

You might also use day trading as a prologue, beginning play without playbooks, or with a playbook in mind but without the use of your special moves just yet. Perhaps you came by your empathic abilities or your faith precisely because of your experiences of other people inhabiting your body. Maybe it led to you developing your own version, and in turn, your own custom cyberware for other purposes as well.

GETTING THE JOB

When you get a neuro-transmitter implant and begin trading days, you sign up with a broker. The broker handles the surgery, manages the technicians who operate the machines during the process, and finds you jobs. If your body is in demand, your status with this broker starts at +1, otherwise it starts at 0. Either way, you owe them an Obligation for taking you on as a client. The first job you do for them covers the cost of the implant, so you don't get paid. After that, you do.

If you begin play as a day trader, decide why people would want to experience your life or your body, and why you are letting them. Also establish what you are not permitting people to do with your body, and how you might know if they transgressed your boundaries. Of course, if you are in a desperate financial situation, you might not be able to set your own boundaries. Roll the Link move to determine your relationship with your broker. Your status with them starts at +1, regardless of how much history the two of you have.

WORKING THE JOB

It's up to each group to decide how much trading a day actually pays, but it should be more than a good job's monthly salary. If there are a number of expensive payments someone needs to make, each should be covered by a single trade. If there's a substantial debt on the table, break it down into a set number of trades.

■ **When you trade a day, roll and add your status with your broker (instead of an emotion). On a 10+, you lose a day or two and you make the money. Your body isn't too banged up. On a 7-9, you get paid, but the MC chooses one:**

- Someone is looking for you (gangsters, the law, a stalker, etc).
- You feel sick for days.
- You've been injured (but not seriously).

On a miss, the job goes awry and you have to deal with the consequences before you can even hope to get paid.

When a job goes awry, the MC decides how and what evidence remains in the aftermath. Some possibilities include:

- The coma doesn't take and you're either along for the ride or fighting with your user.
- You are severely injured or physically traumatized when you awaken.
- You get hacked and used as a cat's-paw by covert operatives, then thrown to the wolves.
- You get used and dumped by the client. If you want to get paid, you need to see them in court.
- Your body was at the scene of a crime, and there are witnesses.
- Your broker sold you to criminals who aren't going to release you alive.
- Your user's body was killed or harvested for organs during the trade, making you an accomplice.

When you regain consciousness, the MC describes your surroundings and circumstances, and also how you feel, physically. You decide how that makes you feel emotionally. Add one tick to the appropriate State, but do not reduce the opposite State.

If this trade proves to be a major hassle for your broker, and you don't make it up to them (by solving it or owing them an Obligation, for example), reduce your status with them by 1. If this trade gained them some kind of advantage (favours, intelligence, stolen goods, etc), increase your status with them by 1. Your status with a broker cannot be higher than +3.

FINDING A NEW JOB

If you find a new broker during the game, your status with them starts at +1, unless there are good reasons to start with a different rating. You don't owe them Obligation, because you already have the implant, unless of course they have to fix it or "take care of" your old broker.

THE FALLOUT

Once you've played this scenario, and discovered what neuro-transmitter technology and day trading are like, where do you go next? Here are some options:

- Add more corporations. Imagine the technology spreading, being used by more and more people. The number of companies making it would also increase. What are these new manufacturers like, and what do they do with it?
- It leads to recordings of human senses and human minds. Skip ahead in time to the Glitch City Quickstart, other scenarios, or use the Apparatus and Architect playbooks. What's the future like when you can inhabit multiple Slacks at once? Or even escape your imprisonment by piloting a Slack remotely?
- Other technologies surge ahead. Perhaps neuro-transmitter implants are one of many cybernetic augmentations one can have? Use this technology along with another scenario in this book to add more possibilities and complications. How do the various advances interact with each other?



SWIM BABY SWIM





BY KIRA MAGRANN

As MerVamps, you and your #finsquad (group of friends who also enjoy modding like you) spend the late hours of the night in the subway and the sub-subway. The subway is the traditional underground system that's existed there since the early 20th century. The sub-sub system lies beneath and around it, built in the water surrounding the city. It's part of why you MerVamps all love hanging out here... you can actually detach from the sub-sub system and swim with your mods. It's not entirely legal, but most of the authorities turn a blind eye provided there's no property destruction.

It's real cool to hang out there and swim with the other Liquid Mods. You and your friends are Mermaid inspired, but there's also sharks, eels, rays, and anemones swimming in your waters. You're not really like gangs, more like cliques hanging out with similar styles. You've perfected your MerVamp look though—dangerous punk mermaid vampires, all dark aesthetic, seapunk aqua, and pinks. Implanted fangs of many femme varieties are essential to the style, as well as retractable tech wraps that can quickly surround the legs with a gorgeous mermaid tail when in the water. It's a classic liquid look—about five years old now—so it's one of the more popular ones. You and your #finsquad rock it, and a lot of the other Liquid Mods are jealous of your popularity.

Some MerVamps drink blood and take the vamp lifestyle very seriously. They only do this with consenting partners and use all kinds of safety tech, like blood purifiers and quickglue to heal the wounds. These MerVamps make seducing people an artform, inspired by dark mythological tales of mermaids leading sailors to their deaths. People drawn to MerVamp culture are attracted to this dangerous seduction, and want to be bitten as much as the MerVamps want to bite. It's a mutual feeling. Some of these MerVamps will be a little darker in aesthetic, wearing all black ink in their eyes, long dark hair, corsets, and glimmery black, blue, and purple tails. Lures are popular added mods for them too.

There's a series of connected Wetclubs attached to the sub-subway, which are mostly submerged under water. Whether swimming or relaxing poolside, patrons swimdance, commune with curated and protected wildlife, and inject a variety of alcoholic tinctures.

The Wetclub atmosphere is one of acceptance and safety. There aren't many places where the MerVamps can just be themselves without a million questions about their mods—why they do it, what their tails are made from, how they have sex, and what gender they are etc. In these Wetclubs they can be around other modders like them, relax, and just... *be*. No matter what kind of Liquid Mod you are, here you are welcomed and thought of as normal! Plus, it's easy to find other people who are into the same things as you. Interests vary from Liquid Mod tech obsessors, to liquid shoegaze revival music, to liquid creature kink roleplay, to gender identity affinity groups, to mod activism. Here, fellow Liquid Modders schedule meetups to get brunch, make zines, or meet IRL instead of on a dating app.

SCENARIO

This scenario focuses on the journey these Mervamps take from the streets to the club. It's a Mervamps' night out. They're all in their college years, and they're bent on having a good time. A great way to pace the scenario is through the following four scenes:

- They meet up on a street corner.
- Head to the sub-subway.
- Ride to the club.
- Party at the club.

A NOTE ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY: this starter is intended to be a queer setting, with genderqueer and queerly oriented young characters modding their bodies as a metaphor for being kinda different. Encourage players to create characters experimenting with these concepts, and how they identify and present their gender.

NPCS

EEL BOYES

Don't be confused by their name, the Eel Boyes are not "boys" at all. They're just a bunch of other modders who love being super queer and genderweird too. Eels are kind of a darker, harder, sharper style of Liquid Mod.

You MerVamps used to date all the Eels in this group. While the group date sitch was kinda cool at first it got, well, complicated. It was mostly monogamous, but sometimes someone hooked up with someone else and... it caused some drama, so you all broke up. However, they miss you all, and have tracked which liquid club you'll be at tonight on social media. You're not sure how you feel about seeing them. They can be kinda annoying and aggressive sometimes, and they're not above a casual street fight.

Some Eel Boye names: Julianna, Rizzla, Hari Nef, Raul Zepol, Spun, or La'fem Ladasha.

THE COPS

Ughhhhhhhh just because you look like a weirdo doesn't mean you're breaking the law. Many laws. Important laws. Look, some laws were made to be broken; like tagging back alleys with digigrams of cute MerVamp illos, scoring psychedelic inhalants for the club's light show tonight, and picking fights with catcalling jocks. So yeah, the MerVamps break some legit laws in this town on occasion. The cops are always watching. Sometimes they let you off easy, but sometimes they might fine you. Watch your tails.

Some Cop names: Officer Santiago, Officer Ovando, Officer Cruz, Officer Mendez, or Officer Wollens.

THE NORMS

That side eye you get on the way to the club, though. Sometimes it's amazing. I mean, part of dressing and modding so weird is just to get those looks. Other times, it's rude motherfuckers objectifying you no matter what you wear. There's catcalls and privileged asshole bros who think they can just grab your butt without consequence. WELL. Sometimes you just shake this shit off. But other times, it's worth teaching them a lesson. You've been known to post the odd embarrassing video of street harassers and butt grabbers. Sometimes, if you're really clever, you get them arrested, or do something worse without getting caught in the process.

Some Norm names: Ryan Burke, Jason Rodgers, Danielle Levitt, or Domonique Echeverria.

A FEW SITCHES

Utilize the NPC concepts to create fun obstacles for the MerVamps on their way to the club. Here's a few ideas to get you started.

THE EEL BOYES ARE BLOWING UP YOUR PHONES

The Eel Boyes wanna get back together with you all. You've been through this once already though, and it didn't work out. They keep pinging your devices all night, hearting your selfies, and tagging you in pictures of them getting ready for a night out saying they'll be at the same club as you. You've had nine missed calls already!

EEL BOYS INTERCEPT YOU ON THE STREET

Seriously, they tracked you down on your way to the sub-subway? Seems like they're not taking "no" for an answer. They get in the MerVamps' faces to tag along, escalating physically to try and stop them.

EEL BOYS SOMEHOW END UP AT THE LIQUID CLUB

Omg why can't you get rid of these eels. They waylay you at the club and try to buy you drinks in exchange for your company. SERIOUSLY??!!

COPS CATCH YOU BUYING DRUGS

Oh shit, I guess we shouldn't have bought from Savan again at this street corner. Maybe meeting in front of the convenience store was too obvious? We need to lose these cops.

COPS CATCH YOU SPRAY PAINTING SUB-SUBWAY WALLS

You just wanted to leave your hip tags somewhere for all the cool MerVamps to see. You even used backchannels to post it on the web. How did they even catch you doing this? Must've slipped up somehow.

COPS CATCH YOU DOING SOMETHING INNOCUOUS

You didn't even do anything this time! WTF! The cops know that subculture modders are up to no good though. They're ready to use extreme prejudice while upping their ticket count for the month.



NORMS CATCALL YOU ON THE STREET

Gross, why is this still something dudes on the street do to people? The lude comments really get to you. Plus, when a few of them join in it starts to feel dangerous. They're kinda big dudes too.

NORMS GROPE YOU ON THE SUBWAY

It never ceases to amaze how norms will at one moment say how modding is unattractive, and then grope your ass on the subway next minute. One norm dude grabs your buttcheek in the grossest way possible, then smirks at you.

NORMS AT THE LIQUID BAR

Sometimes the norms come here to observe the weirdos, or they have like, a thing for them—a kink. It's kinda gross 'cause they shoulder their way into our space and get really wasted. Then they hit on a bunch of people, making the whole place feel less safe. They'll try to hump people on the dance floor too, and occasionally cause a fight as a result.

This was what she hated most about the on-line world, the shadows as much as the bright lights of the legal nets: too many men assumed that the nets were exclusively their province, and were startled and angry to find out that it wasn't...rather than ever admit fear, they walked with raised hackles, looking for a fight.

Melissa Scott, *Trouble and Her Friends*



UPCYCLE



BY DANA CAMERON

Up-cycle / verb

To reuse discarded objects or material in such a way as to create a product of a higher quality or value than the original.

The first whispers began when we were still kids. Old men on the corners with their holo-eyes projecting “THE END IS NIGH” and “REPENT” up into the smog filled night sky, voices screeching in garbled tongues. Mysterious god-like ghosts in The Veil would appear out of nowhere, burning with infinite beauty. They would attract avatars like moths one moment, and then disappear into the void the next... along with the minds of all those they captured. Bodies washed ashore in droves, not quite looking “right”. Weird shit. Seriously fucked up shit. But shit we ignored because we were busy workworkworking, and then playplayplaying. That shit didn’t mess with our day-to-day beyond being the source of countless memes incessantly flashing across the periphery of our AR.

Until one day, when the whole Langfang-Sinopec datacenter blinked out of existence. Microtosh’s datacenter followed in quick succession, covering most of the North American Midwest, and then the entire PacRim underwater tech-arcology. Looking back, we should have figured out we were doomed when those huge portions of The Veil became nothingness. Maybe if we cared more about the thousands and thousands of people populating those city-like datacenter enclaves, if we put more value on them instead of the death of our data, we could have saved ourselves. Instead, people were pissed the 1,000,000+ photos of their food ceased to exist, and that they couldn’t log on to their preferred streaming service. There were riots, man, and none of them were about the people who died. At that point, we still hadn’t wrapped our minds around the fact that The Veil could only exist with people servicing physical servers. No, we still thought of bits and bytes as intangible things that existed by their own force of will—not as chunks of human-made plastic and wires.

No one officially took responsibility for the virus, but everyone agreed it was probably some corporate sabotage gone wrong. Datacenter enclaves had hella high security; they followed the “no one in, no one out” type of philosophy. Whole generations of technicians were born, lived, and died within those vast, sprawling compounds without ever stepping outside into the rain and smog. It must have been hell getting the virus inside. The enclaves were so contained, it took a long beat for the virus to spread into the cities.

The big corps knew about all of it long before we did, of course. They probably completed their research, found out how much they fucked up, and cobbled together their escape plan well before the first wave of datacenters fell. Not that it was much of an escape. The virus they created couldn't be stopped. There was no vaccine. There was no cure. There was only madness, and then death.

Food became scarce as farms could only grow bloated corpses of cattle, pigs, goats, humans, and any other mammals the virus infected. Curiously, cats weren't affected. No one knew why, and for a time felines were hated—were they the vectors? If not, why must they mock us with their vitality? Why should they live whilst the world collapses into screams, vomit, boils, pus, and rotting entrails?

One day, when the world was chest-deep in despair and death, salvation came for the masses. A message with an attached data-packet ended up in every still-functional email address across the globe. In all the tumult, no one noticed that some people got different versions:

```
>>>>>FAT CATS HACKED THE GHOST SYSTEM TO USE FELINE  
SLEEVES>SAVED THEMSELVES>LEFT  MASSES TO DIE>BUT WE  
WILL NOT>PROCESS ATTACHED>UPCYCLE YOUR GHOST ASAP IF YOU  
CAN>JOIN US>Y/N>>>>>
```

Congratulations!

You have been chosen to survive the apocalypse! Act now to claim your free* upgrade to a virus-resistant feline sleeve. This is a limited time offer. Upcycle today!

* Certain conditions apply. Offer good for those with approved credit. Sender is not responsible for any unwanted side-effects including, but not limited to, heart attack, stroke, dizziness, memory loss, nausea, thyroid enlargement, or death. Call your doctor if these symptoms last more than four hours.

YOUR PLACE IN THE CLOWDER:

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?

The apocalypse was years and years ago now, and the world order re-asserted itself: the rich and powerful are still rich and powerful, the poor still grovel at the bottom. The only real difference is the absence of human bodies. There are human minds, true, but they are constantly being upcycled into new, short-lived cat bodies. They are all old souls; no new people can be born. Even if your kink leads you that way, all you'd create are more mundane cats. Despite being a nonrenewable resource, "human" life is still rough, tough, brutal, and easily lost if you are part of the masses.

We shouldn't be surprised that something would get lost in the transfer. Cats weren't the tabula rasa (blank slate) we'd assumed. The invading human consciousness fought with feral feline instincts and lack of humanoid brain structures. Each time we 'cycled into a new body, we felt ourselves leaving something behind. Those who desperately clutched onto their human-ness went quickly and incurably mad. That's why, although we modify and enhance our new bodies with tech, we don't try to mimic human forms anymore.

We were told only 2% of the population transferred in time, and that subsequent attrition rates have steadily reduced that number. The corp strongholds gravitated toward each other for safety in the early years. The masses flowed in their wake, desperate for the resources they provided. The Veil is still patchy at times, and most of the technology we'd taken for granted is gone for good. However, we can thank the corp tech slaves for keeping the datacenters at the heart of each megacity alive.

It's easy to see where folks fall in the hierarchy of life these days. Just like back-in-the-day, it's all about what you're wearing:

- The elite corp execs are almost always housed in the deluxe bodies of the big cats. Panthers. Tigers. Lions. Kings of the fucking jungle, indeed.
- The tech slaves are feline husks bristling with spider-like cybernetic limbs. They keep the servers up and running. Their flesh bags have trouble accepting all that 'ware, though, and so they get cycled over-and-over-and-over again—sometimes more than once a year. After so many cycles, can you call them human anymore?
- House cats represent the unwashed masses—the toms and queens of the streets. We slink, prowl, and hunt by night, and sleep by day. Almost everyone has some sort of enhancement. At bare minimum, a Neurochip connects to The Veil, but most have one or two more obvious modifications of practical and cosmetic varieties. However, even non-heavily modified bodies experience shorter lifespans than our original feline counterparts. If you stay low and safe you might have 10 years before you need to jump. Unfortunately, most of us have to jump more frequently; hopefully you've worked enough jobs to afford a new meat suit before your two selves tear your current body asunder.

How easily we abandon those who have suffered the same persecutions as we have. How quickly we **grow impatient with their inability to transcend the conditions of our lives.**

Larissa Lai, *Salt Fish Girl*

CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT:

STORY RUMOURS TO START YOUR GAME

- You were lurking in a forum thread and saw a post pop up, but it vanished before you finished reading it. A couple days later you noticed it again, except this time it was inexplicably on a for-sale page. And then again, and again. Eventually, you pieced together the message. Someone suspects the virus' source didn't originate from the corps at all. Rather, it began in the wastes long abandoned, where metal devils rule, moved by souls who never lived; tech embodied. They are coming. Is it true? Regardless, it seems like something is intent on deleting information about it as soon as possible. THREAT: Devouring Domain.
- The past several years witnessed the growth of a new of death cult. The followers of The Last Breath reject tech, and therein upcycling. They live harsh lives on the outskirts of the city, scratching out their needs from the dust, waiting for their final deaths. Those extremists seemed harmless enough, so you never gave them much of a thought until a gaunt cat, missing half its face, stumbled into your den. Simard told a tale of kidnapping and imprisonment, of being forced to die true deaths against their wills. The cat invokes the Obligation they hold on you from a previous life. Will you risk your life or your honor? NPC: Simard. Motivation: Convince player characters to rescue their life partner from The Last Breath. THREAT: Consumed Martyr.
- There's a rumour about a strange pocket of The Veil. Apparently, tech slaves found a way to bend and warp pieces of The Veil to their own ends. It involves unnatural thoughts and mad impulses. Something about rending and resisting. The couple of tales you hear chill you to your bones and make your fur stand on end. However, you cannot deny your curiosity... you are, after all, part cat. THREAT: Bonding Pestilence.

PREFER THE BOX IT CAME IN: GAME MECHANICS AND MODIFICATIONS

Building Your World. Sometimes it's hard to start at square one when world building, so here are some ideas to consider, as well as examples to get you going:

- What type of world exists now? Your world's present should build on the decaying bones of its past. What does that look like? How much tech still functions? How many buildings still stand? Have the cats rebuilt, or do they live in remains?
- *Tell-Basta*, the city of cats, is a denuded forest of derelict towers of glass, steel, and concrete. Sand found its way into every crevasse and past every broken window. The denizens did little to prevent the infrastructure's real-world demise, for through The Veil's eyes the city is a marvel that cannot be fully described. It is flashing sunlight and gold brocade. It is neon murals that glow night and day. It is pure elegance and excess in every way that Tell-Basta is not, to the physical eye. Motivation: To seduce, consume, and then destroy.
- What sort of corporations exist in your post-human world? What do they sell, and who is their target market? They don't have a Board of Directors anymore, they have Prides.
- *Pyramid Blood Works, Etc.* Provides blood for transfusions (so important after an injury or cybernetics surgery), in addition to spare feline limbs and bodies. Motivation: To gain dominance over the other corporations of Tell-Basta, whatever the cost.

Species Playbook Modifications. To get the most out of *Upcycle*, consider adopting all of the Playbook modifications below:

- Note: It is not recommended to play *Upcycle* with The Apparatus or Honed playbooks, nor the Immaterial Plugin.

📖 LOSING A PIECE OF YOURSELF

They didn't have time to perfect the upcycle process before humanity's demise. People either made the glitchy transfer, or died. You chose the former, but you lost something along the way. At character creation, assign your States as usual. Next, choose one of the States with a +1 and then cross it off—you can never use/feel that State again.

📖 NOWHERE TO PLUG IN

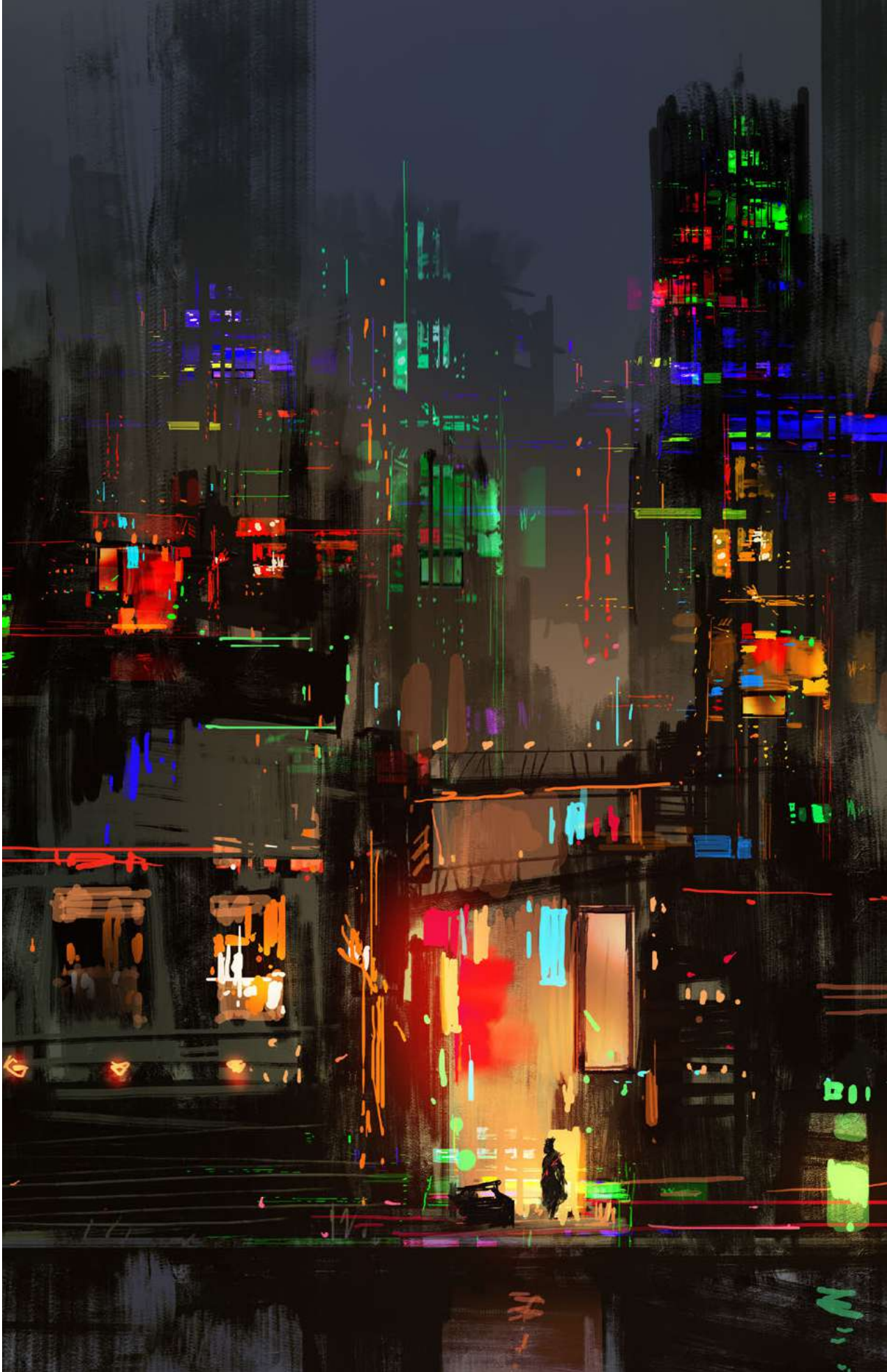
At character creation, you may only choose a max of three cybernetics, not including your Neurochip which gives you access to The Veil. You may add more cybernetics later, as per the Plasma And Chrome move (*The Veil*, page 90). But be warned, each piece of tech past five requires you to perform a roll without adding a State to see if your meager flesh bag can handle the overload.

- If you are playing a Catabolist or Architect, you are still limited by the five max cybernetics limit, but your Omni-tool/Cyberbrain do not count toward that limit.

Do this roll AFTER fully resolving your Plasma And Chrome roll. On a 10+, you are fine. On a 7-9, add one additional negative Tag. On a miss, the cybernetics are installed just fine... but your body is weaker; permanently reduce the amount of Harm you can take by 1.

📖 THERE AREN'T POCKETS ON THIS THING

You're in a cat body. Cats that tried to act too human went insane. Now, no one wears "traditional" human-like clothing, nor do they live inside humanoid robots. Your ability to carry and use Gear is therefore extremely limited. Not to mention, the Gear you use now is very different from what your human meat suit required. During character creation, discuss with the other players and the MC the type of Gear everyone uses and how they carry it; then modify your starting Gear accordingly on your playbook.



ADDITIONAL PERIPHERAL MOVES

☒ UPCYCLE

When you would normally die from your wounds or take detriments, you may choose to Upcycle instead. Upcycling is comprised of two parts: the physical bit (a new feline body, fully loaded), and the psychological bit (yanking the human consciousness from one brain, and imposing it on a “wiped” cat brain).

PLUGGING IN

Use the Plasma and Chrome move to resolve the technical aspect of implanting your Neurochip into a new cat (*The Veil*, page 90). After resolving the roll, describe your new body. Do not transfer your old cybernetics to the new body. Instead, you start with up t three new ones.

You keep all Gear, Cred, Obligation, etc.

☒ THAT WHICH YOU LEAVE BEHIND

They try to say the process is plug-n-play now, but everyone knows they're lying. When the data encoding who you are as a person attempts to overwrite the brain of another creature, roll without adding a State. You get +2 to your roll if you are already missing more than one State—sometimes it's nice not to have as much data to transfer.

On a 10+, your data jumbles and then realigns, repairing lost code. You may swap a previously lost State with a different State of your choosing (it must have a modifier of at least +1 assigned to it).

On a 7-9, there is no data loss. Your States remain the same.

On a miss, you can feel another piece of yourself get corrupted in the transfer. You irrevocably lose another State of your choice with at least +1 modifier assigned to it.

ADDITIONAL MC MOVES

Bite with the violated cat inside.

- Remind the players that a small corner of their brain still belongs to an angry cat. You can't completely overwrite anything; some shadow of felinity remains. Force them to confront it in themselves and in others.

Haunt them with the ghosts of their human corpses.

- Remind them of how easily they could have accomplished tasks with their old human body. Bludgeon them with regret for the little things they took for granted.

Show failing technologies and crumbling cities.

- People aren't renewable resources. The few who remain on Earth in cat bodies are not capable of upkeeping the physical and technological infrastructures of the world. As people upcycle, they become more alien and less concerned with the old human ways and objects. Eventually, the cities will crumble, the LEDs will go out, and cats will once again run free.

We're looking for places that aren't on a map. If we put them on one, then anybody could find them.

Pat Cadigan, *Synners*



MIRROR



BY CAITLYNN BELLE

In the prime of their corporate life, Advances Plus created Mirror, the world's largest social media network. Utilizing the most recent advances in Neurochip technology at the time, they created an immersive program. It took you and your friends' messages and media to biodigital form, presenting them as avatars generated via an algorithm. The algorithm is comprehensive, drawing from keywords, inflection, motives, and patterns based on your past history and interactions. You can now share a picture of your dinner, which projects an avatar (called a "Reflection") to your friends of you eating that food, at that dinner table, with authentic-seeming smells and tastes. Likewise, if you create a post about being angry, they could see and feel a personification of that anger. The heat would increase, they would experience tunnel-vision while looking at your avatar, and the world's edges would become sharper and harsher.

This technology was revolutionary at the time for accurately translating emotion and presenting it artistically. Suddenly, others could share your feelings and experiences. Particularly intense posts became famous, providing unique, breathless moments you never thought possible. Cute animals could be played with. Sex workers could program themselves to match your predicted sleep patterns, visiting you right before bed. It was intense, and everyone used it.

However, as technology grew Mirror stopped being this amazing design feat. Suddenly these ideas were commonplace—tweaked, refined, and put to better use elsewhere. More sophisticated and tuned versions appeared, and, as all social media does, Mirror began a slow descent into obsolescence. With it, Advances Plus, who funneled everything into this project, went under. Their top minds fled, their best tech was sold, and soon, nobody remembered they even existed.

For reasons unknown, Advances Plus never sold the Mirror campus, located deep in the heart of the city's industrial complex. Inside this abandoned city block, the remnants of Mirror still live in stasis, bits and bytes of data stored in massive mainframes spanning several towers.

The facility grows old and broken, but inside something strange is happening. Reflections were permanently stored as a file on the main server (even if you deleted it from your end). All of these old memories still exist, even though the network is no longer accessible. If you had the know-how, you could theoretically boot these things back up and learn everything about this generation's past: what they liked as children or teenagers, who they knew, what was wrong with their lives.

It's all still there.

Last month, old Reflections started appearing in the city. Ten to twenty-year old posts given digital life began moving across the city, interacting with the world as if nothing were out of place. Only a handful have been found (roughly twenty-eight across the entire city), and Gamma 6 has brought them in for examination.

Under interrogation, these Reflections confessed to not understanding their “nature” as a fictitious construct, nor why they’re now displaced in time. They have no idea how they got here, or what purpose they serve. They simply wish to live their lives, listening to old music, hanging with old friends, and the like.

But something is amiss: When a Reflection comes face-to-face with the person who posted them years ago—that is, when past you comes to meet present you—they turn rabidly violent. They attempt to bite, claw, and tear the present-day user apart in a bloody, murderous display. They don’t know why. And nothing can prevent it.

Despite the awkwardness of the situation, the Glitches are tasked with a) hunting down and executing each Reflection, and b) finding out how to stem the flow of Reflections in our world.

A few appear each night, exponentially increasing the risk they might murder someone. Time is running out and the past is coming back to haunt us.

**Every artist creates with open eyes
what she sees in her dream.**

Marge Piercy, He, She, and It

ORGANIZATION: GAMMA 6

Motivation: find out where Reflections are coming from, why they're appearing, and how to stop them.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS

- Detailed recordings of everything you've ever said and thought. Digital life trying to create purpose. The merging of and competition between A.I. and biological organisms.

CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS

Dealing with your past mistakes. Growing as a person. Who you were versus who you are now. What can you atone for, and what will haunt you forever?

- Reflections get more and more common, becoming a known threat to the local populace.
- Reflections begin to replace their creators.
- The Honeycomb emerges and begins to glitch time.

THREATS

REFLECTIONS

They look and sound like our younger selves, a snapshot of us from a different time. They may hold your old beliefs or opinions—sometimes embarrassing or upsetting ones—and they have no idea what's happening. However, if one of your Reflections sees you, they will turn into digital murder machines and attempt to rip you apart.

Each Reflection is a particular moment from your history when you shared something of yourself with an audience. When Reflections manifest, they wander the city, performing the moment they were created for while examining the world around them with confusion and wonder. They don't quite understand what's happening, and they can't grasp that they aren't real. But they're self-aware enough to have a conversation about anything they *do* know (which is limited to your knowledge and lived experiences when you made them as a post).

They're out-of-date and have no idea where they came from or what they're supposed to be doing. However, should they meet you, their creator, they will attack, abandoning all semblance of humanity and autonomy. Nothing will stop them until you're out of sight.

Despite being digital projections, they can hack into your Neurochip with startling speed and aggression. From there, they use a modified form of Advances Plus' "touch capacity" system to harm you. Originally, this system allowed users to physically feel and interact with Reflections to an extent. Here, it has been altered to unleash extreme bursts of pain and physical rending when the Reflection is in close proximity to you. (If you wanted to be technical about it, the Reflections digital forms aren't really hurting you, they're just miming the action as these built-in systems do the damage for them. But none of that matters when they're tearing you apart!)

Removing the creator from a Reflection's field of vision causes them to rapidly return to normal. However, a vague sense of unease and anxiety lingers, which will also fade with time.

Destroying a Reflection is simple: by modifying your weapons with the same touch capacity systems, any damage you can do to their digital forms causes lasting damage to their data files. Enough damage will glitch them out of existence. Unfortunately, it's not a pretty sight, and appears to be quite painful for the Reflections. Assuming they can, indeed, feel pain.

COLLECTORS

These mysterious black ops agents appeared roughly two weeks after the Reflections first appeared. They dress in their finest corporate espionage threads and carry restricted equipment. The most prominent piece is a handheld tablet rig that scans, identifies, and captures wandering Reflections. No one knows who employs them. No one knows their end goal. Reflections they capture are never seen again (though other Reflections by that same creator may appear). If a Collector takes a Reflection, this fuzzy memory vanishes completely: it is truly gone.

THE HONEYCOMB

This entity waits at the edges of time and space, barred from entering our world through metaphysical antivirus. It constantly attempts to tear our defense down. When Reflections begin to attack and kill their creators, this creates glitches in the flow of memory, time, and space. Is this phenomena related to the memory loss that Glitches proper feel?

The Honeycomb will damage the hardware of reality until it infects our world completely. At this point, it will erase “inferior beings”—anything not itself.

Are the Reflections and Mirror related to the Honeycomb? Or are they coincidentally attached?

CHARACTERS

Glitches most likely didn't exist when Mirror was prominent, and players might not run into other Glitches during play. However, you should use this phenomena as a lens for characters to inspect their own pasts, and to question who they were. As memories resurface, draw parallels to NPCs you encounter finding their Reflections.

Possible Character Questions

- Are you a better person now than you were in the past?
- What do you wish you had left behind?
- What's missing from your life?
- How do you feel about Reflections?
- What would your Reflections have looked like?
- Why else would we want to purge our pasts?
- Do you deserve to live, or does your Reflection?
- Can the past coexist with the present?

THE WORLD

THE ADVANCES PLUS CAMPUS

Once home to a powerful, multi-faceted megacorp, the former Advances Plus headquarters now sits in a state of disrepair, locked away under No Trespassing laws. The lack of power, signal, or digital interference makes it look ancient and haunted.

Originally, Advances Plus had a different headquarters in another part of town that served as the company's administration and day-to-day affairs hotspot. Until the invention of Mirror, they outsourced most of their hardware and had little need for a larger facility. However, Mirror necessitated a massive complex to house the data and keep the digital infrastructure running. When the social media network became their main attraction, they moved the main offices in there as well.

The campus is a former state-of-the-art facility (if your art hasn't progressed beyond the last two decades anyway) with a cafeteria, worker dorms, recreation theater, in-house medical bay, and hologram simulation auditorium. Of course, most of these areas are just storage crates and cobwebs now, but the remnants of a once-bustling production team have left their mark.

Some things you might find here:

- Damaged data files referencing Project Turnkey.
- The addresses of former employees.
- A strange altar dedicated to a particular Reflection: candles, pictures, bloodstains.
- A tracer-bug siphoning data to Prestige Unlimited, a notorious data scavenging and piracy megacorp.

The site is considered off-limits to the public, so any excursion inside runs the risk of police involvement. Unfortunate explorers who find themselves answering to the law will also get a visit from a few shady government agencies as well. This run-down campus is extremely valuable to some powerful people, but no one knows why.



REFLECTIONS DEN

Occasionally, one or more Reflections will gather together and make a “den”—a small nest they return to at night. Despite being entirely digital, they will mime sleeping in these dens, gathering broken furniture, loose scraps of metal and wood, and other trash to simulate bedding. They cannot explain why they do this, or why some do and some don’t, but only know that they “need a place to stay”. Reflections are fiercely protective of their dens and will attack anyone who encroaches on their territory.

Some things you might find here:

- Items that remind the Reflections of the life they used to lead.
- Many different access cards, obtained illegally, allowing them entry to unexpected places.
- Weapons, clothing, and personal effects, all coated with biosynth hacking interfaces.
- Pamphlets for a seedy religious cult called the New Interface Brotherhood.

PREFERRED PLAYBOOKS

- The Aesthetic
- The Percipient
- The Apparatus
- The Architect
- The Honed



ΤΡΑΒΕ ΛΟΥΕ ΝΟΤ
ΜΟΝΕΥ

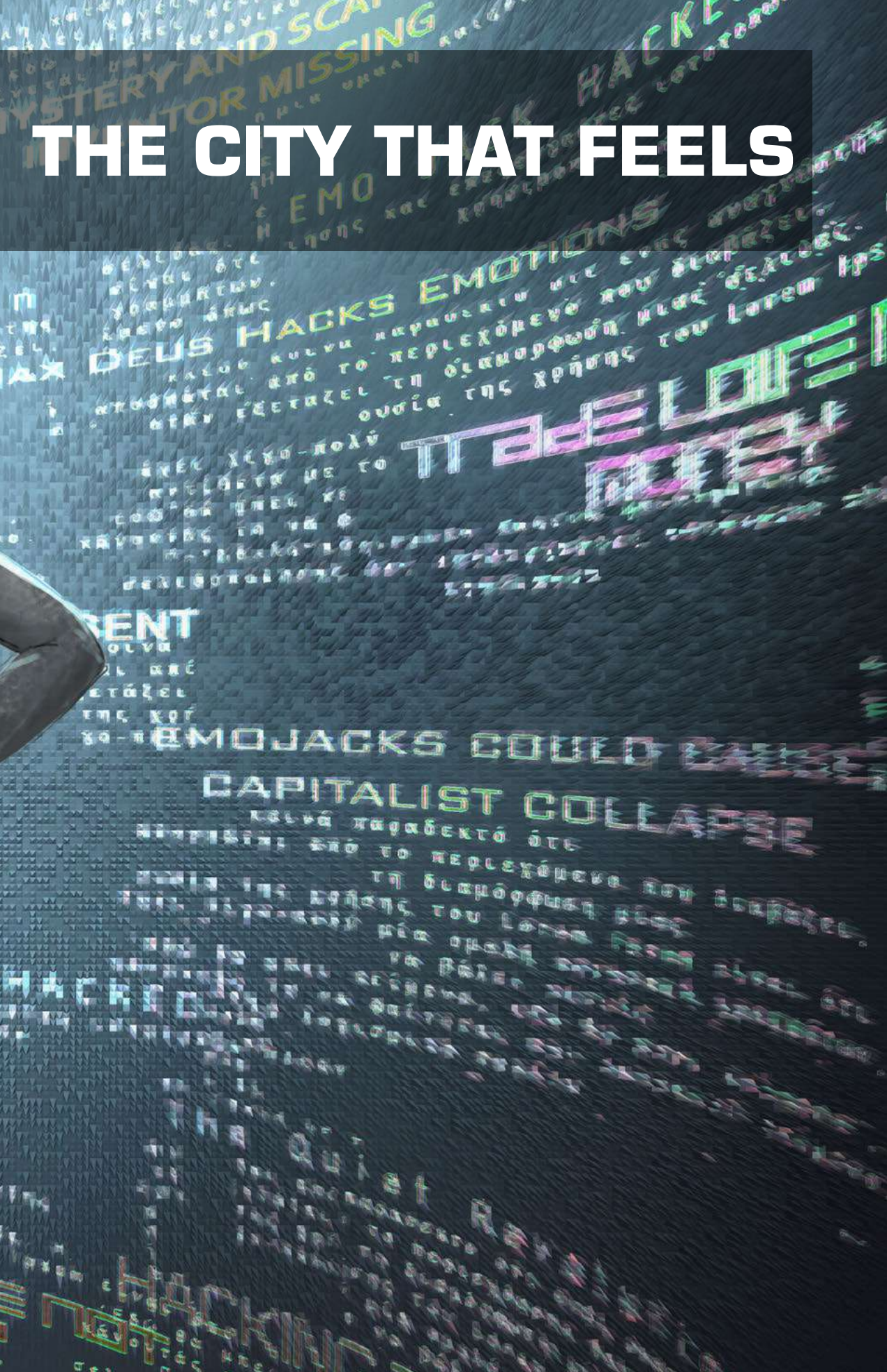
COULD CAUSE
COLLAPSE

The Quiet

MYSTERY A
INVENTO

MOTIO

CONSENT



THE CITY THAT FEELS

MYSTERY AND SCANDAL
MURDERER MISSING
DEUS HACKS EMOTIONS
EMO

TRADE LOVES
LOVE

RENT
OLYMPIA
21 AND
STAYS
THEY GOT

EMO JACKS COULD
CAPITALIST COLLAPSE

ΚΑΛΟΙ ΚΟΥΝΑ ΠΑΡΑΧΩΣΤΕΙΤΕ ΑΠΟ ΤΗ ΔΙΑΚΡΟΦΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΔΙΑΚΡΟΦΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΛΟΡΕΝ ΙΠΣ
ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΞΕΤΑΖΕΙ ΤΗ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΗΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΛΟΡΕΝ ΙΠΣ
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ΠΡΕΣΒΕΤΑ-ΛΟΡΕΝ ΙΠΣ

Quiet Rain

HACKING

BY KATE BULLOCK
WHAT WE WERE

We get it. Emotions power you. Y'know, like everything you do is tied to some part of your emotional core. Therps will break it down into categories. "You did this stupid fucking thing because you were mad." Except, y'know, more professional like. It was only maybe six years ago though that we figured it out, or I guess they figured it out. Emotions are legit power. And powerful. That shit makes the world go 'round, and knowing how to jack into that is power, baby.

It started with gloves. Gloves with these tiny little sensors in them that let you feel what someone else was feeling. If you super wanted to, you could also share those feelings. Sometimes they were a memory, sometimes they were just feelings and impulses. Don't you want to feel how much you turn someone on? We all do. It's flattering. And these gloves let you feel that.

They were made for therapy, at first. Couples needing some extra help to understand each other, therapists needing to understand their patients. At least, that's the public story. You have to wonder if it wasn't a military tech first. Reading the feelings of others? It's probably just some advanced lie detector or something. Doesn't matter though. They say it started with couples counseling. Like a new type of M from the past.

These gloves were a little gross looking at first. Then they became these slick little sexy gloves that became fucking trendy. Emo scans became the thing. People used the gloves for the best experiences, for uploading those moments to share with the whole world. Except it didn't quite work, in a way.

Emotions didn't broadcast well. You couldn't upload a full emotion and share it with everyone. The first few viewers would feel it, but it's like it dwindled down to nothing. EmoShare tried its hardest to make it possible. When social media failed initially, the company launched a new line of VR experiences using their latest finger pad sensors. You could feel emotion in VR now, and it was fucking dynamite.

Finger pads became small, sticky, and haute. Colours came out for your emotional preference, a casual way to ask for certain types of affection. What kind of emo you dug became a trend war. It was the new and best marker for who you were as a person, fundamentally. Sad people could hang with sad, mad with mad. And what those emotions meant became symbolic for who you were.

Finally, Jax Deus, prominent innovator and designer, brought out their new line of implants. Tiny subdermal optics that let you feel and *transfer* emotions. It was revolutionary. Not only could you feel what someone else was feeling, but you could take it from them and make it your own. They wouldn't have to feel it anymore, and you could have all the fucking sad you wanted. Except that they had to give it up willingly. You couldn't emojack someone without their consent.

That sounds good though, right? I mean, taking someone else's stuff isn't generally considered an okay thing or whatever. But there's always someone. There's always some sick fuck out there who thinks they own other people. Illegal Emojacking became black market. Hack codes for implants were created. Jax Deus went into hiding. Some say they were kidnapped and forced to write the code. Others insist that they had made the implants to do that all along. Either way, we're fucked.

**The past stands in the path of
the future, knowing it will be
crushed.**

Alaya Dawn Johnson, *The Summer Prince*

WHAT WE ARE

Emojacking is the new threat, joy, and downfall of our society. The other cities? They watched us from a distance, hesitant to follow our footsteps. They didn't want to admit emotions powered us in the first place, but they certainly didn't want to watch a bunch of emotional vampires take over the world. But we did. And here we are.

Touch has become something questioned at the best of times, and now it's something that's absolutely unwarranted and unwanted. No one shakes hands anymore. No one dances side by side, except the young and the stupid. It's considered brave to touch a stranger, to take their hand. It's a mark of trust and respect. You don't touch just anyone.

Romance became a virtual exploration of emotions through words. Physical expression of lust, love, and joy became almost nonexistent. Except for some people, who overcame their fear in favour of revealing the vulnerability and need beneath. We need contact.

The code to unlock the implants is expensive as fuck. It'll cost you more than just a bit of joy. But it's necessary. The economy turned to Emo-P a few years ago. Everything runs on feelings now. Wanna buy a dress? Better be so fucking grateful you're crying. The machine takes that emotion, and you've made your purchase. You can buy emotion, painfully gotten and cheap, from the odd general store. The refined, beautiful shit is stocked in curio shops that took up residence along the wealthy high streets.

You can sell your feels for a good price if you need the currency. You gotta feel it though, genuinely, and you gotta feel it as it slips away forever. All of us have stolen an emotion, at least once. In a moment of hunger or desperation, we lash out. We claim what we need. Maybe we needed just a bit more to get it done. Maybe we wanted to feel something better. Or hell, maybe we wanted to give away the rage. Doesn't matter why. Point is, we do it.

We all need the emotions—to feel more, to feel better, to feel alive. But none of us want to pay the price. We now walk the streets in fear of someone shoving their hand on your face to suck that dread right out of you. It's a new kind of violation. Half of us are walking around numbed out, lost in a sea of stolen moments. The other half of us are so jacked on one emotion we burn out, or burn everything around us. It's a city of pain and want.

Our city is broken. But no one cares.

BASIC MOVES

FEELS-SHARE

When you consensually take or give a bit of a State to someone else, touch them and roll+that State. On a hit, they increase that State by +1 (max +3) and gain an emotion Spike, while you lose an emotion Spike from that State. On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one:

- Give an extra emotion Spike from that State
- Don't lose any emotion Spikes from that State
- Give them an emotion Spike from a different State
- Remove all emotion Spikes from a Spiked out State

On a miss, you take all of their Spikes in that State. Ask them what part of themselves you've just taken, and then describe how you integrate that part into yourself.

Feels-Sharing isn't as common as it used to be, but it's a handy tool when things go south. There's a catch, though. You can only take or share emotions when your target is feeling that feel. Therefore, you can share only your misery if you're feeling it, but not get rid of it ahead of time. You gotta' feel what you wanna' share. Simple enough, yeah?

To feel.

**'Cause you've never done it,
you can never know it.**

But it's as vital as breath.

**And without it, without love,
without anger, without sorrow,
breath is just a clock... ticking.**

Equilibrium

EMO-JACK

When you rip someone's feels right outta' them without asking first, touch them and roll+that State. On a hit, you get +1 to your State and gain an emotion Spike, while they lose an emotion Spike from that State. On a 10+, choose one. On a 7-9, both happen.

- Spike out that State, you took more than you wanted
- Remove all emotion Spikes from another State, giving it a -2 until you Spike it

On a miss, reset all of your States to 0 and get ready to run.

If you've got activated Emo-Jack implants, tell the MC who you owe for the hack, and why the fuck you're one of *those* kinds of people. But hey, if you got the implants, you can do it. Just touch someone and rip out whatever they're feeling currently. Remember, if you're looking for something specific, make sure they're feeling that State. If you want joy, you better make them happy. Use your feeling wheel from *The Veil* to get subtle with it.

On a hit, you get to get +1 to your State and take an emotion Spike. On a 10+, you can choose to Spike out that State, or you can remove all emotion Spikes from another State and put it at -2 until you take an emotion Spike in that State. On a 7-9, both happen. Stealing States can cause you to burn out or OD hard. Emotions aren't great to fuck with, and you have to watch it.

HEART SCAN

When you touch someone to find out what they're feeling, roll. On a hit, ask two. On a 7-9, they get to ask one of you as well. They must answer honestly.

- What emotional State are you craving?
- How could I get you to feel _____?
- What emotional State do you fear and why?
- How does _____ make you feel?

On a miss, still ask one, but permanently lock in an emotion Spike from the State you rolled.

The implants aren't just good for stealing and sharing. They let you read someone's feelings. Getting a read on someone isn't easy. To read someone, touch them so your implants can get a good read off of them. It requires a bit of prolonged contact, you can't just brush against someone.

On a hit, you get to ask two. On a 7-9, they get to ask you one too. The read will give you an idea of what they're feeling, and how you can use that to your advantage. Hell, or you can take from them if you want. It's a cheat code to know what you need to do to get them to feel how you want.

THE CITY THAT FEELS

Incorporated socialism took hold almost a hundred years ago. CorpCom, or the Corporate Community, became our fathers. We worked for them. We *belonged* to them. They made our hospitals, our schools, our apartments, and our jobs. We didn't get paid. We got tickets for meals, almost enough to survive. We gambled with our tickets and almost starved when there were food shortages. Water became precious and sometimes rare. We sold each other out for the chance of a peaceful week without hunger.

Jax wanted to change that. Their Corp was one of the leaders in the CorpCom. The brightest and best technology came out of our city. Jax was one of those people who kept smart minds around them. Futurists, people who could see what was happening. And they told them that dark times were coming. A revolution had begun in the quiet places of the city—religious homes, libraries, community centres—kept open only by the will of the people.

People went missing. Night raids on the squats kept people afraid. We barely had enough to eat and a state assigned job we worked for a few hours a day. Nepotism and bribery made our world go around and around and around. The wealthy paid off a family for a night of torturing one of their kids to death. People were lined up and killed at random. Dead bodies on the streets at night became part of the norm.

Then Jax changed how income worked. Anyone could have wealth if emotion had a weight to it. So Jax made it that way. They started trading only in emotion. It caught on when the biggest tech com in the city decided it would only use its own creation as currency. Soon everything was being paid in emotions. It cut the legs from under the corps in one swift move.

Things got worse. The first ghost was some punk kid that was jacked heavy by his parents. Jacked so heavy he bottomed out and had nada left. A bottomed body is just a husk that craves the emotions it lacks, and mindlessly works towards regaining those States. If they want power, they may climb something high, or it may mean killing someone. Ghosts are unfortunately common. A new plague on the city.

Emo-P could change the fucking world. We just need to get rid of the sickos at the top who see us as inhuman batteries. Safe houses front themselves as emotion dens, prostituting intimate emotional experiences while we top up our own needs. The revolutionaries (revos for short) still throw the best parties, and we find ways to get people in and out of the blocks, past the checkpoints, and into havens. It's impossible not to feel like the war will never end.

We need help.

EMO-P

The main power source of the city, Emo-P, is integrated into every aspect of life. It's how you pay for your food, your gas, your implants. A year of sorrow for a cyber eye. It means collectors come to call when you're late on a payment, and it means stealing someone else's "income" is a viable option. It lets the corporations own people. It lets you own others. And it lets the foundation of capitalism get a little shaken. That was Jax's goal, after all. A society free of money.

Currency still lingers here and there. But for those few souls who have opted out of the implants, despite a city wide mandate for them, life is hard and isolating. It makes you a silent walking target. It's important to keep yourself pretty full of emotions, just so you can pay for shit. It means people are on the edge of a spike at all times. A city of people waiting to explode.

JACKING

As soon as sharing became popular, weaponizing it became easy. Someone hacked the code and sure enough, those pretty implants could rip the feelings right out of another person. Jacking was how you could become wealthy. A clever jacker kept themselves close to spiking so they had emotion to sell at any minute, while allowing space to jack as much as possible from their victims.

More people jack than share, and more people are afraid than giving. Fear is the easiest emotion to acquire, meaning it sometimes trades five to one for a dose of joy. In a pinch, when you need the advantage, stealing an emotion can be the best thing. But you can only steal what they're feeling. That's the catch. You can't steal what isn't being felt. You want some joy? You better make them feel joyous. You want sadness? Make 'em cry.

SHARING

It started here. Experimental, vulnerable, and eccentric. Emotion sharing was a fad and trend in underground groups, even though it was first a way for the revolution to power itself without needing anything from the corps. Like all things, it became pop culture. It reconnected people and made touch a trendy thing to do. Overnight, our culture became intimate.

When Jacking became possible, fear became the dominant emotion. People withdrew, they stopped touching. Sharing still happens, though. There are bars for it, like the sex clubs of the before days, and sometimes offering both. Sharing is done between friends, lovers, and allies in a tight spot when that extra boost is needed. You can only share what is on the surface though. You can't share what you're not feeling currently.

SELLING

You can trade your extra bits of emotion for goods, services, and other feels, so don't hesitate to build 'em up and use 'em. Balance is the key in this city. Everyone's a breath away from Spiking and crashing. We live on the edge of emotional highs. It looks controlled on the surface, but on the inside, you can feel the pressure to live fast, hard, and high. I would say it's beautiful if I didn't know how often it's killed people. Or worse.

But keeping those emotion States a little loaded lets you function in the world. It keeps yourself fed, and your apartment rent paid. Everything runs on Emo-P. If you want something, tell your MC and they'll tell you the price for it. Sometimes, you won't have it. Sometimes, you'll have to go find it, share it, trade it, or jack it. Then you'll be one of us.

FACTIONS

The line of code that allowed the share to become a jack was probably Jax's, although there's no proof either way. All we know is the hack was first released to the small underground revolutionaries trying to remove the city's power structure. Jax's ties to these revos wasn't clear, but as the city became a cesspool of broken emotions, people began to forget about Jax.

Their empire disappeared, swallowed by the corporate cats who began to monetize and dominate the emotion market. Power became the goal. Hacking the invisible to strip them of emotions left behind the ghosts. The power is crumbling, slowly and dangerously. Our ties to emotions, to the truth of people, could set us free. Hell, we could be the first place to exist without debt, without hunger, without needless death.

Those may be exactly the people who pose the greatest threat to the system: the people who can still remember, with rancor and longing and the inevitable distortions of time, what things were like before.

Malka Ann Older, *Infomocracy*

REVOLUTIONARIES (REVOS)

It's important to know that revos aren't new. They're generations old. Revos have died of old age and seen little change in their day. The changes they've witnessed? Getting a loved one out of the block. Getting a weapon to a friend in need. They've seen funeral after funeral, and felt the cold of no heat sink into their bones. They know the fear of toxic water, and the pain of impossibly hot weather sinking into their unprotected skin while they endure grueling work.

Revos are community members. They are not a trained militia. They're concerned citizens learning skills to give them a way to fight back. They are parents, lovers, spiritual leaders, partners, teachers, and they are exhausted. They create underground networks to move people hunted by the Fat Cats (FCs) to safety. They get food and clean water smuggled into the block when they can.

They are the caretakers of the world, and a few of them know how to fight. Smuggled weapons and hacked implants are their tools. Sabotage and street skirmishes are their battles. While organized, they are still largely powerless, and need so much more to push back the ultimate veiled control FCs have over the squats and blocks. No one outside the city knows how bad it is in here. And no one in the city can get out.

GHOSTS AND BATTERIES

When you Spike out, it makes you lose yourself in that State. Some people live for the Spike out, drinking in as much of the emo as you can give them. Addicts, you might say. Eventually, they'll permanently Spike out all their States and become a living battery. Their nervous system won't handle it, and they'll slip into a coma as their brain tries to deal with the input. These folks, they disappear real fast. They're living human batteries and the FCs (and even the revos, but they'll never admit it) need them to power everything.

On the other end of the spectrum are the ghosts. It's possible to fully drain someone of their States. Some people can barely manage one emotion Spike, but when you've got none? Bam, ghost. Empty eyes, empty soul. Ghosts hunger for their emotions again, but nothing helps. They go to worse and worse lengths each time to retrieve them. If they want joy, they might do everything to make you love them. If they want power, they'll show you what it means to be owned. Ghosts are terrifying, and impossible to spot until you're almost consumed.



THE FAT CATS (FCS)

Jax called them the Fat Cats, or FCs. However, their official title is Face of the Corporation Community (CorpCom). They have varying corporate functions as the eyes, the lips, and the ears. They control the CorpCom, and they control us all by proxy. When they saw the way Emo-P was changing the city, they jumped to co-opt and adapted it. It was a way to stay a few steps ahead of Jax, and to maintain control of the CorpCom indefinitely. It also let them power the city in new, less draining ways.

These government officials and corporate snakes are the best at what they do. They are charming, sincere, apologetic, and concerned. They are murderous, vengeful, ravenous, and dominant. Each one of them sees, knows, and feels what other people are feeling. Naturally, because they are the ideal faces, ears, mouths, and eyes of the CorpCom, they are flawless.

NPCS

JAX DEUS

Jax was the creator divine of EmoShare. They invented the beautiful and simple implants everyone has now. Despite the nasty rumours, most of the evidence Jax left behind indicates they wanted to only do good with the Emo-P. Emo-P let the world relieve the weird poverty that became invisible and acceptable everywhere. Anyone could pay with an emotion because everyone had emotion.

It was revolutionary and it was a death sentence. Now Jax has vanished. Their empire is gone. They're nothing more than another joy-head gone ghost, or they're dead... or something else? They were the protege of their time, the genius that could save us all. If there is hope for the city, they're it.

HARSHAN KLEIN

Harry Klein rules the city with a beautiful smile and delicate dealings. He holds strings on everyone, and deeds to everything. He deals in black bargains through every means, be it the large corps that he has a face behind, or the small businesses he keeps afloat. The Emo-P is now his sole focus. He pushes hard and fast to solicit buy-in from other cities, convincing them to install the implants on its citizens.

Beneath beautiful and pleasant facade is an astute businessman and lonely human being. Unlike everyone else, he lacks implants and hungers for a uniquely human experience above all else. While he wanted to own Jax, he found them fascinating, and was unrelenting in his pursuit for their knowledge.

DENIAL ABBEY

On every street corner there's someone dealing black market feels, and behind each of those dealers is Denial. Denial learned to distill emotion down to a potent form. You want to feel more than just joy? She's got your back. You want your lover's lust for you bottled into euphoria? Fuckin' eh you do. Denial can always give you what you need. She wears promises like perfume.

She's a neutral party in the war between free share and the corporate cats. She'll swing with whatever benefits her most, provided the city doesn't spiral too much. In the war, she's the only true peacekeeper. Despite what others think, she'll be the first to interfere to stop bloodshed or assault.

YOUR CITY

THE BLOCK

The Block is a huge, expansive, ever changing city. It's also our home, and it's all we got. Beautiful walls surround the city, three layers deep, with serious checkpoints. There are x-ray checks for vehicles, and paperwork that's impossible to come by, and special passports unique to CorpCom. The security is so tight practically no one comes into the city, and no one leaves.

Those lucky enough to work the wall can get special stuff into the city. Otherwise, the Block is cut off. The news is controlled and censored, and we're powerless to know otherwise. The Veil is here, but it's modded, contained, and only allows us to see others trapped in the Block. It looks, feels, and sounds like another city. At least it does until you live in it, until you have a call number and you don't have a way out. Resistance will get you killed, or worse.

SQUATS

Within the block sit several places of squalor. These are desperate places, designed for citizens who contribute little to the city. They're for the disabled, the mentally ill, the sick, the old, the traumatized, and the revos who've been caught. They're also for anyone against the regime who is too important to shoot. They juice 'em up and then let 'em live in the squats with the rest of the forgotten trash.

The squats weren't always a thing. Back in the day, the old revos say they used to just get shot. Shot, until the revos won the fight. Now those people aren't just killed, but are instead forced to do menial small tasks for barely enough resources. It's a vulgar and deplorable life. Yet somehow, even those living in the squats have implants. They're just as human as the rest of us, needing intimacy, afraid to ask for it, and begging for a taste of power.

INT-HOUSE

The Int-Houses are Intimacy Houses, places that guarantee intimacy without fear of being jacked. Int-Houses also make good safe houses and hideaways when you're under fire. The house Holders work hard to ensure that these places are safe. You break the rules? The Holders aren't shy about ghosting you. Intimacy is so many things here. It's touch, conversations, emotional vulnerability, and everything in between. It's a safe space to be emotional.

In every squat, there's at least one Int-House—a house where you can get some love, some intimacy, anything you fancy. The Int-Houses are the new, rare hubs of intimacy these days. We used to touch each other for comfort. We used to fuck each other and find solace in those moments. Now anyone trying to seduce you could just be after some quick joy. Trust is gone, and we know that we're lost.

Gone, except the Int-Houses.

THE CORPORATION COMMUNITY (CORPCOM)

CorpCom, or The Corporation Community, was founded four generations ago as a way to protect and encourage the local masses. CorpCom is a conglomerate of multiple corporations who bought shares in the city, and therefore own parts of the city. Since each part of the city belongs to a different Corp, FCs manage the place. CorpCom also owns the people within those bits of the city, and are responsible for its maintenance and well being. This responsibility brought social welfare, social programs, food, water, power, the whole deal. Of course, it also meant people became an owned resource they could mine to the brink.

The tech that CorpCom owns, especially now that they've driven Jax underground, is beyond anything the outside world has seen. It's guaranteed to blow your mind. It's designed give tourists the best show of their lives. Come, have a good time, and then fuck off with stories about this amazing city. Just whatever you do, don't scrape below the surface to the pain beneath. If you do, you'll become one of us.

FOR THE PLAYERS

▣ DEFINE YOUR CITY

Name your city and then define its characteristics below:

OUR CITY RUNS ON THESE EMOTIONS (choose two):

- Sad
- Mad
- Powerful
- Joy
- Scared
- Peaceful

THE MOST SCARCE EMOTION IS (choose one):

- Powerful
- Joy
- Peaceful

THE FCS KEEP CONTROL WITH (choose two):

- Fear
- Intimidation
- Threats
- Starvation
- Dehydration
- Bribery
- Scarcity
- Death
- Peace
- Utopia

THE REVOS FIGHT BACK WITH (choose two):

- Sabotage
- Fire fights
- Theft
- Murder
- Terrorism
- Kidnapping
- Public displays of brutality
- Love
- Hope

THE PEOPLE WANT TO DESTROY THE CITY (choose one):

- Yes
- No
- They want to be left alone

LIVING IN THE PRECIPICE

Existing in the city requires careful balance. You need emotion Spikes at all times, otherwise someone could ghost you far too easily. However, keep the emotion Spikes too high and you'll Spike out if things fuck up. There's a dangerous sweet spot in the middle everyone dances around. The more emotion Spikes you have, the wealthier you are, the more you can buy. It makes you rich. Emotions are power. But living in the precipice makes you a walking target.

Remember, you'll pay for everything you want with emotion Spikes. State what you want and your MC will tell you the cost. If you're willing to pay, all you have to do is let someone else touch you.

FOR THE MC

Your job is to make the city come to life, so let politics and emotions take front and center stage. You need to make sure that nothing is black and white. Your job is to make sure the FCs sometimes sound reasonable, the revos sometimes sound toxic. After all, the world is shakeable and delicate. The city is cruel, enclosed, and oppressive. Yet the city is also beautiful, revolutionary, and unseen before in this world. It is everything anyone could want, but it carries a heavy price tag under the guise of welfare.

As the MC, you know:

- Jax Deus is still alive and in hiding, but needs help
- The revos are dangerously close to destroying the city but need help
- The FCs are dangerously close to identifying all the revos via The Veil but need help
- The city is on the brink of collapse and needs to open its doors

As to the full story on why all of this is happening? Play to find out. You can detail it yourself. Use your principles and moves to guide what life in this world looks like. Span out to big, messy, visceral brawls with people jacking and giving emotions between hits. Push on that raw intensity, then focus on moments of touch and intimacy.

Humanity is found in kindness and love. When the characters show this to the NPCs, it should be surprising and beautiful. Reward this play. Give them friends and allies who respond to the love PCs show them. Force the characters to really question who they're getting involved with and why. Make them truly feel the intensity of implants feeding on emotions.

But remember, in this culture touch is often used as a weapon. Characters should be suspicious of physical affection, even gestures as simple as handshakes. Remove touch from daily interactions and bake that into the city's culture.

As the MC, make sure you ask PCs questions when they gain an emotion Spike, or when they're removing one through sharing or jacking. Ask them what part of someone else they're taking in and what part of themselves they're losing. Make sure they understand that once its lost, they can't regain it. The cost of this world should be bold and obvious, but also subtle as they embroil themselves in the battle between government and revolution. These tensions should expose the fight to stay human despite distancing ourselves from what connects us to each other.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does it mean when our emotional currency gives us memories and feelings from someone else's life?
- What does emotional sharing and jacking feel like? How is it different for each person?
- What does consent look like when simple touch can breach it?
- What does love, sex, and flirting look like without touch? Does it still exist, and if so, is it dangerous?
- What happens to a community when the main source of human connection, touch, is removed or made violent?

PRINCIPLES

- Emotions are necessary and vital to life
- Engage players in desperate moments of need
- Shroud the world in amazing technology and human suffering
- Make intimacy important and frightening
- Remind them they haven't been touched since they got here
- Make sharing feel like sex and jacking feel like assault

MOVES

- Spike an emotion or jack an emotion
- Someone in raw need asks for help
- Offer them a sweet deal out of desperation
- Show them the city knows who they are
- Make a friend or ally disappear
- Turn someone they love into a ghost or battery
- Increase their implants' hunger

After every move ask, "What do you do?"

LIFE ON THE BLOCK

While living in the Block, make sure to use this list for each PC. When a PC gets the attention of the FCs or revos in a way that is irrevocable, choose one:

- Their privacy is invaded in an obvious way through an obscure source
- An unknown hack temporarily freezes their implants
- They are followed by mysterious professionals
- They are featured in a widespread broadcast in The Veil
- Their pursuers kidnap them, and the real struggle begins

You can decide which faction kidnaps them, to either recruit them into the war, or to make them to take sides. When you do, offer them the moon. Then ask, “what do you do?” This question will draw them into the conflict and force them to choose a side if they’ve managed to avoid it so far. Don’t let them avoid it too long. Apathy will kill you in this city.

THE END

The City needs saving from everyone at once. Who the PCs side with may win or lose, but ultimately, things will never be the same. Maybe the revos will win and destroy the stability that exists. Perhaps the ghosts and batteries will wake up and demand revenge. Or if you’re lucky, the FCs will bring the city to heel. A new age will dawn. What will the city look like when the sun finally rises?

...We think we can plan our lives...We think we can model reality.

But chaos is an intrusive, inconsiderate bitch.

Linda Nagata, *The Bohr Maker*



RAGE.EXE



BY HAMISH CAMERON

Define Protocol: Thea.Calliope;

Initiate playback of rage.exe | target = Peleus.Achilles;

Set rage.accursed = 1;

Set rage.woes.target = Users.Achaeans; set rage.woes.quantity = 10000;

Set Peleus.Achilles.permissions | userdeath = allowed | victim.corpse.permissions = all | if target.state.valour > 100 then sendsoul = dir/Cosmos/Hades.

Log message for operator.Zeus // Operation complete //

// Conflict Warning!

// Thea.Calliope reports that initiating playback of rage.exe on target Peleus.Achilles [current status = godlike] will initiate strife.exe between target and Atreus.Agamemnon [current status = king of men]. Do you wish to proceed? [y/n]...y

// Access restricted. Please input superuser credentials...

His vision crawled with ghost hieroglyphs, translucent lines of symbols arranging themselves against the neutral backdrop of the bunker wall. He looked at the backs of his hands, saw faint neon molecules crawling beneath the skin, ordered by the unknowable code.

William Gibson, Neuromancer

CHATLOG: ASSEMBLY 3385.1

For nine cycles the DPS of operator.Apollo rained down on users.Achaeans.

On the tenth cycle operator.Hera suggested that Peleus.Achilles initiated the Assembly protocol.

Peleus.Achilles accessed the Assembly and broadcast to the active users:

“@Atreus.Agamemnon if we survive the Iconoclasts’ assault, we will be driven back beyond Respawn to the Login Gate. Let us access the operator help files and patchlog to determine if our fate is driven by an unreported bug or if this is some new instance.”

And Thestor.Kalchas, by far the most upvoted HelpWikiEditor, accessed the Assembly and broadcast to the active users:

“@Peleus.Achilles the will of the operators guides the wrath of the Iconoclasts. They’re pissed at Atreus.Agamemnon, dude. When he ran the Chryses instance he took object.Chryses.Daughter and hasn’t redeemed it yet.”

And Atreus.Agamemnon accessed the Assembly and broadcast to the active users:

“@Thestor.Kalchas Fuck you jacknozzle. I led the raid so I get to keep the quest object as long as I like. But whatevs. You can have it if it will stop the DPS. But you all owe me. I can’t have nothing.”

Peleus.Achilles accessed the Assembly and broadcast to the active users:

“@Atreus.Agamemnon don’t be a scumjack. You can have first pick next raid.”

And Atreus.Agamemnon accessed the Assembly and broadcast to the active users:

“@Peleus.Achilles nah bro. I’ll take object.Briseus.Daughter. You can have nek pick.”

And Atreus.Agamemnon executed chowner on object.Briseus.Daughter and ended the Assembly task. And Peleus.Achilles was fucking pissed.

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Although the biological and evolutionary function of emotions is well known, the intricacies of the cultural aspect of affective state formation remain undertheorized. Although many regard emotions as counter-intuitive (Masters 2043), emotional responses regarded as “normal” or “natural” in the contemporary moment, such as joy, fear, sadness, anger, flow, and boosted have not existed “throughout *human history” or even throughout post- or proto-human history (Solomon 2043). Rather, examination of proto-human texts, such as Homer’s Iliad reveals that humans in a far distant proto-human phase exhibited radically different affective States, revealing a vastly different emotional matrix to those of contemporary *humans. This study draws on pioneering work by Cairns (2035), Konstan (2040), Ben Ze’ev (2041), Kubilus (2049), Alexander (2050), and Most (2054) to examine culturally contingent affective stimuli response in a historicising environment.

INSTANCELOG PVP 3385.213.TYDEUS.DIOMEDES

[03:24:45] operator.Athena activates Divine Buff on Tydeus.Diomedes

[03:25:04] Tydeus.Diomedes enters Central Plains Battlefield

[03:25:06] Dares.Phegeus enters Central Plains Battlefield

[03:25:08] Dares.Idaios enters Central Plains Battlefield

Set scope.player

And Dares.Phegeus and Dares.Idaios spurred their Perokalles Chariot against Tydeus.Diomedes, on foot. Dares.Phegeus was the first to attack, initiating DPS with their Dolichoskios Spear, but Tydeus.Diomedes macroed Evade and Counterattack with their Chalcheos Spear and pwned Dares.Phegeus fully in the chest and banished him to Respawn. Dares.Idaios dismounted their Perokalles Chariot and activated Darkness of Hephaestos, escaping the instance.

Chown Perokalles Chariot Tydeus.Diomedes

Move Perokalles Chariot Home.Achaean.Tydeus.Diomedes

Set scope.log

[03:26:13] Atreus.Agamemnon kills Halizone.Odios

[03:26:27] Deucalion.Idomeneus kills Boros.Phaistos

[03:26:30] Atreus.Menelaos kills Strophios.Scamandrios

[03:26:41] Molus.Meriones kills Tekton.Phereklos

[03:26:58] Phyleus.Meges kills Antenor.Pedaios

[03:26:58] Euaimon.Eurypylos kills Dolopion.Hypsenor

[03:27:02] Lykaon.Pandaros broadcasts @Team.Trojan "Got a Pikros Arrow debuff on Tydeus.Diomedes. Everyone scrag them now@!!!!!"

[03:27:03] Tydeus.Diomedes broadcasts @Kapaneus.Sthenelos "Cancel this Pikros!"

[03:27:14] Kapaneus.Sthenelos casts Buff Reset

[03:27:28] Tydeus.Diomedes broadcasts @operator.Athena "Hear me Zeus.Athena buff me as you buffed Oeneus.Tydeus when they Veiled the Thebes instance and grant that I pwn everyone in this Battlefield and rallies Team.Trojan against me!"

[03:27:29] operator.Athena activates Divine Buff on Tydeus.Diomedes

[03:27:29] operator.Athena activates Divine Sight on Tydeus.Diomedes

[03:27:30] operator.Athena broadcasts @Tydeus.Diomedes "Buff Activated. Condition: Target: operator.Aphrodite"

[03:27:38] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Astynoos

[03:27:42] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Hypeiron

[03:27:59] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Eurydamas.Abas

[03:28:01] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Eurydamas.Polyidos

[03:28:12] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Phainops.Xanthos

[03:28:14] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Phainops.Thoon

[03:28:27] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Priam.Echemmon

[03:28:36] Tydeus.Diomedes kills Priam.Chromios

End replay

EMOTIONS

As cultural factors shape their emotions and responses, subjects of the rage.exe simulation are conditioned to experience a different core set of emotions from those dominant in today's world. These emotions are six core states of the Homeric phase of proto-human development: **Anger**, **Pity**, **Shame**, **Envy**, **Pride** and **Grief**. Subjects in the rage.exe project experience these feelings deeply and frequently. Anger and Pity are opposite and mitigate each other, as do Shame and Envy. However, Pride and Grief are independent—they have no opposite and cannot be mitigated. Emotion Spikes are frequent and intense.

You feel **Anger** when someone wounds your *aretê* (AR-e-tay, worth), *kleos* (KLAY-os, fame through glorious deeds) or *timê* (TEE-may, honor).

You feel **Pity** when a fatal or painful evil befalls someone who does not deserve it.

You feel **Shame** toward your dependents and those you owe *timê*.

You feel **Envy** when you desire something of material or social value that belongs to another.

You feel **Pride** toward your own *aretê* and *kleos*.

You feel **Grief** at the loss, or anticipated loss, of a social bond you value.

VOIPCHATLOG [FILE ID CORRUPTED]

[-----] Come in folks. I was just hanging with P. It's all good; I'm not pissed at you. Break out some more tabs, P.

[-----] Thanks! Ody thought you might have local PvP on.

[-----] Ha! Only for him. Sneaky dirtjack. Nah.

[-----] Have you been watching the raids?

[-----] Ha! Yeah! You all suck. Dio did okay though, but hax much? Whatever, they scammed it. Gotta respect that.

[-----] We're up against the ships now. This whole Veil is about to be a bust. Hector is pwning everyone; massive Rage. We think he's getting Divine Buffs from op Zeus. Can you come back and help out? You can take him even with that.

[-----] Yeah, and Ags says you can have all the drops from the next raid. We all agreed. We need you, X. He says he'll give you object. Briseus.daughter too.

[——] That dirtjack probably already rubbed their junk all over it.

[——] Gross dude.

[——] ... actually... they said to tell you that they hadn't done that.

[——] What the-

[——] Ughh-

[——] C'mon-

[——] I didn't say that for nothing, friends! They're a jack junker. Literally. But whatever. It's just bits. I don't care. But that fucker insulted me. Jacked with my honor. Y'know?

[——] Yeah...

[——] But what about the rest of us? Got any Pity, X?

[——] Ags is a liar. Straight up. I don't trust them. So why would I fight? What does honor matter in the Respawn? My kill count is ridonc. Don't matter. The system aggregates all the Honor for Ags and the operators anyway. Tell Ags to stew on that. I'm logging out when P and I have gone through my jack-stash.

[——] If you're planning on logging out before The Veil ends, X, and you're not going to help defend the base because your Rage is maxed, how could I stay without you? Peleus sent me to show you all the helpfiles when you started here. You didn't even know how to activate the Assembly protocol. I've been hanging with Clan Myrmidon in Phthia since I banged Clytia and Amyntor maxed Rage. That whole time I've been helping you out with protips, zonemaps, and buff ordering. This is my last Veil. Buff your Pity, X. If we win this, you'll get max objects, max Honor. If you logout, you'll get nothing.

[——] I see your Grief, Phoinix, but I'm maxing Rage, not Pity. You should come with. Hang out here with P and me. There's time to pwn another Veil... especially help us out with my jack-stash. Enough serious talk! Lets chill for a bit before you all go.



HONOR AND DEEDS

The following moves replace the Obligation moves in *The Veil* (pp.73-76)

☒ TIMÊ

When you deliberately and generously give someone a gift of acknowledged social value and they accept, mark down that they owe you 1 *Timê*, or remove 1 *Timê* that you owe them.

On a 10+, your refusal has no lasting emotional effects.

On a 7-9, choose one: mark a Shame bubble, or lower your Shame by 1.

On a miss, mark a Shame bubble and lower your Shame by 1.

The requester will respond as they wish.

☒ KLEOS

When you recite your deeds and your *Kleos* to get something you want, roll.

On a 10+, your name is enough to get you what you need.

On a 7-9, your companion's name gets you what you need. Increase the *Timê* you owe them by 1.

☒ SING

(This replaces the text of *The Veil*'s "Link" move found on p.78)

When you introduce a new NPC to the game by reciting their *Kleos*, their relationship to you, and your combined deeds, roll.

On a 10+, the relationship is in good standing. They owe you 1 *Timê*.

On a 7-9, the relationship is strained or frayed in some way. You owe them 1 *Timê*.

On a miss, in addition to what the MC says, you owe them 2 *Timê*.

DRONELOG AUGMENTED TRANSCRIPT

Observation of Peleus.Achilles in Zone.Ships.

Subject is standing beside a cold campfire in front of Orthokrairos Ships [Owner Peleus.Achilles]. Subject frowns as Nestor.Antilochos approaches at a run from the fighting in the closest part of Zone.Battlefield. Subject says something; Nestor.Antilochos replies. Subject's face darkens [Readings show Grief to max]; they kneel, plunging hands into the campfire ashes, lifting handfuls of ash aloft, dropping to knees, smearing dark ash on face. Ash on subject's face streaks with tears. Subject collapses on earth, prone, body shuddering. [Readings show Grief above max. Alert sent. Rage rising.] Scene objects react to rising grief levels; automated weeping protocols activated. Observer notes feedback at operator level.

Observation of operator.Thetis in [location redacted].

Subject is in a digital environment observing the scene described above in Observation of Peleus.Achilles in Zone.Ships. When subject observes Peleus.Achilles' Grief levels rise above max, there appears to be physiological feedback through subject's Veil interface. Unknown fluctuations in system response. Subject collapses on floor, prone, body shuddering. Subject says loudly, in a distraught tone: "Why did I send him!" [Note previous tag: unknown meaning. Investigate relation between operator and user]

Observation of Peleus.Achilles in Zone.Ships.

Avatar of operator.Thetis appears. Speaks inaudibly to subject. Subject replies. Avatar of operator.Thetis replies, mostly inaudible [enhance] "... Then you will die soon, my child, for your fate..." Subject replies at length, inaudibly [enhance] [error]. Avatar of operator.Thetis replies, mostly inaudible [enhance] "...ward off sheer destruction... Chalkea Marmaironta Armor... Koruthaiolos Helm... operator.Hephaestos..."

[Transcript corrupted]

[Enhance]

Clearance required..

Clearance denied..

Purge log..



CHAPTER FOUR:
SYSTEMIC CHANGES



SUBSTITUTING BELIEFS FOR QUESTIONS

One of the big differences between *The Veil* and *Cascade* is the use of Questions instead of Beliefs. In *The Veil*, protagonists relied upon Beliefs to telegraph their fictional flags and gain XP. *Cascade*, however, relies upon Questions instead for two main reasons. Questions drive play forward at a quicker pace than Beliefs, allowing you to dive into the fiction. Protagonists are also missing memories, so it's natural they'll have questions that need answering. Lastly, Questions are a good opportunity test your comfort zone through portraying a character different to your character in *The Veil*.

Questions are ingrained *Cascade*'s setting, new mechanics, and themes. Exploring *Cascade*'s cultural and technological aspects, combined with the protagonists' Questions, yield XP. This system intends to let protagonists direct the fiction, while giving mechanical weight, and therefore importance, to the cultures, environment, and people that make up their living, breathing world.

Questions should be something you can act upon in the fiction. You'll explore them with flashback sequences, or by simply answering them through play alongside your protagonist.

Just as there are a total of three Beliefs in *The Veil*, *Cascade* uses three Questions. The first two are larger questions about your protagonist's primary motivations at this point in time. The first Question should consider your character's well being, or their current situation. What gets under their nails and gnaws at them ever since they've been decanted? Questions like: "How did I die?", or "How did my Neurochip data find its way into a Cache?"

The second question should either be a larger Question, or act as first stepping stone to answering this larger question. You'll always need this step to be achievable, even if it is a very large or broad. Every time you work towards answering it, you get XP. Remember though, it has to be actionable first for it to be answered at all. This is why you root it in the present circumstances of the fiction.

These Questions are a good opportunity to investigate or discover something at the core of your protagonist's identity, as it should be introspective. Being in a different body than the one they once knew, or perhaps the culture shock between the old world and the new, and their place within it. How are they affected by losing their body and being placed into a new one? Has their sense of identity changed with this shift?

These questions are also an open invitation to explore characters outside of your comfort zone. For instance, as a male player, I sometimes want to play female protagonists, but worry about portraying one respectfully. In *Cascade*, we know that people are taken off antiquated Neurochips or Caches, and placed into Slacks. So, with the technology to migrate from one body to the next, society is much more fluid about gender in *Cascade*. Feel free to experiment with your character's gender, and ideas around gender fluidity in your game. Of course we still need to portray people in this world respectfully, while being aware of (and avoiding) our own defaultism. Remember to also be accepting of other people's mistakes, as they may be playing an identity that is unfamiliar to them.

The last question should focus on your surroundings, rather than your protagonist. These protagonists are brought into consciousness out of their time. Naturally, the world has changed around them since they awoke. For this Question, consider how long the gap is between old Neurochip tech and the new. Also think about what you want to insert into the world, or figure out through play. By doing this, you immediately contribute to the world with something you really want to explore. By making something about the world a Question, you are either pointing to something already there that you want to learn more of, or creating something that you want to explore.

Remember to make these Questions for the protagonists interesting, as well as challenging. Being thrown into any other body *must* be a jarring experience. You are also out of time, and missing memories. The ways in which a protagonist has changed, and what it is they need answered because of those changes, is central to the focus of the fiction.

BROOKE: *I'm interested in exploring how being decanted into a Slack that's male might change up Zero from The Veil game. So I'm going to have "Will the physical features of my body have an effect on my identity?", "How did I die?", and as for the world...I think there's a sect of people out there that don't agree with putting human life in Neurochips and porting it from body to body in Slacks. The Question I'm going to make is, "What is the goal and name of this sect of people that protest against Neurochips."*

PLAYING A GLITCH

Just as you are extrapolating the future from *The Veil*, you could also do the same for cybernetics. Technology has progressed, and you are an embodiment of that progression. As a Glitch, you are in a whole new body, and as a player you can make a conscious decision to explore how that affects your protagonist. If you're importing a character from *The Veil*, how much time has passed between that story and *Cascade*?

Whether beginning a new campaign or continuing an old one, think about how the world views Glitches, and vice versa. For continuing a campaign or character, discuss with the table what has changed from your previous game to *Cascade*. Otherwise, when crafting a new character and new setting bare in mind the opportunities intrinsic with starting a character in a body that is not their own.

How does society treat people in Slacks that have missing memories? Are you comfortable in your own skin; how do you deal with the massive shift? How do you cope with this drastically new world? What is it like to look in the mirror and see another person's face peering back?

When you consider these questions, keep in mind where you want to take the game tonally as well as fictionally. As you discuss, always remember to use the safety tool, the X-Card, talked about in *The Veil*. The X-Card will let you explore uncomfortable tones and subject matter without taking the fun away from other people at the table. There are many tones and kinds of cyberpunk fiction you could make, so collaboratively decide on tone as you create your Glitches. Different settings will put different contexts around being a Glitch to give you an idea of what you find most appealing in your own play. Pick one specifically, or mine them for what you like and dislike.

Make decisions about Questions, your looks, your name, all of it, about how your fiction defines Glitches. How you perceive yourself and your embodiment, your class, your cybernetics, your gender—these decisions guide how the MC presents the world and the characters they will be portraying. Especially other Glitches.

You will be deciding, essentially, how oppressed you want to be in your setting. The stratification of class will be there simply because you exist. But how far the MC leans into this concept, and how you want to be treated should also be a collaborative discussion.

It is important to be honest and accepting with each other about all of this while crafting your character. Being honest and upfront will ensure the fiction ends up being a place all of you want to play in and explore. Every choice about your character contributes to the fiction.

When you play Glitches who are apart or othered in some way, it's also important to examine your biases. Do not make caricatures of people who are just as oppressed in the future as they are in the present day. If you make your Glitches' oppression about social constructs, such as racism, gender, distribution of wealth, or skin colour, do not simply perpetuate the terrible ways these people experience daily life. If you tackle these difficult topics, your game, characters, and setting need to offer opportunities for challenging these social constructs. Subvert them or invoke them for a specific purpose in your fiction.

Part of science fiction and cyberpunk as a genre is to critically examine these concepts. The world has already changed a lot with *Cascade*. Likewise, you also have the opportunity to explore these concepts in a safe environment with your friends, using a safety tool like the X-Card.

Make your character and your game about what you want to play, even if it is difficult subject matter, as long as you are do the research and appropriate self-reflection.

Lastly, don't be afraid to truly be punks in your cyberpunk. You're already Glitches, after all

**Suffering. Pain is the only truth.
But it is better for young ones to
laugh a while and feel the softness,
and if this desire to coddle a child
ties a parent to the wheel of
existence, so be it.**

Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*

EXPERIENCE

Gaining experience, or XP, in *Cascade* is slightly new as well. You still mark XP every time you roll a miss. However, gaining XP for Questions is different compared to Beliefs in *The Veil*.

When you get to the end of the session, decide if you took action toward pursuing the answer to your Questions. For each affirmative answer regarding all 3, take 1 XP. When you completely answer a Question, mark 2 XP and replace it with another Question.

The drive for the protagonist to answer these Questions is already paramount in the fiction. As such, there is no XP for them getting your character into trouble. There should be no conflict as to whether or not you want these Questions answered, as they should be the one of, if not the only, thing that drives them.

Additionally, whenever you roll a miss In *Cascade*, just as in *The Veil*, you will also mark XP.

MC: *Alright, Zero. So at the end of the day you found out you were murdered. Though, we don't know the specifics yet. But you can definitely complete that Question, and it leads to another one right there for you. We still don't know what happened to your son, but the P.I you hired is on it. As for your physical body affecting your identity, what do you think?*

BROOKE: *I think I explored it a bit with the targeted advert bursts in my heads up display promoting products targeted to women instead of men. The scene I did in my place where I didn't recognize myself in the mirror. And... I think even like, the scene where I struggled with doing things in my new body.*

MC: *Absolutely, I'm on board with all of those. All in all that looks like 4 XP total. And make sure you replace the one you completed. And you also rolled a miss, so you'll have enough to take an advance, make sure you do that.*

ADDITIONAL PERIPHERAL MOVE

▣ FLASHBACK

When you have a flashback now, or during another move, take the highest die from your roll and subtract it by the lowest one to get the result. Then add as many emotion Spikes to the State as the result.

Flashbacks give you, the player, a platform for exploring your protagonist's Questions. During play, you'll want to introduce ideas and insights that speak to your Questions. Flashbacks are a useful mechanic for organically inserting those ideas into your fiction. This takes the pressure off of coming up with compelling conclusions to Questions. Since you can let the answers emerge one puzzle piece at a time, you don't need to worry about putting the picture together right away. Instead, all you need is an interesting Question, and faith that the answer will reveal itself as you get to know your protagonist.

A Flashback interrupts current events, inserting a memory from a previous time in a character's life into the fiction. Flashbacks are succinct, and plug gaps in the protagonist's memories. Whenever a move is triggered, or a flashback simply makes narrative sense, make a new roll and treat it as triggering a completely separate move. Subtract the lowest number from the highest number and add that many emotion Spikes to the State associated with the move.

If it's another move that triggers a flashback, simply take that result and add it to the emotion Spikes of the State that triggered that move. The current emotion, circumstance, or reaction should line up with the Flashback that's about to trigger, drawing a connection between the two events. If the situation and the Flashback don't align, and it doesn't make sense to associate the Flashback with the current roll, instead roll the Flashback as a completely separate move. Only use the same roll if the State used in the current roll makes sense for the Flashback scene.

BROOKE: *Alright, so I think what happens is the Slack is still so new and foreign that when she looks at this man in the reflection she freezes up. And I want to have a Flashback. The man is replaced with Zero as she knew herself, also staring into a mirror. The man's skin, pale as snow, turns to black as it morphs into something devoid of all light, pure black. And, as she touches her neck—a nervous tick she's always had—she's suddenly putting on a necklace and there's the sound of a gunshot. She looks down at her chest, sees blood crawling across her perfect white dress, and she then looks in the mirror. There's a man there but her eyes are so blurry. They try to focus but they can't. And that's when Zero snaps back into the here and now, staring into the mirror in her masculine, pale white body.*

MC: *Cool! OK, so what State are you going to use for the roll then?*

BROOKE: *Right! I almost forgot, I think that's going to be Scared. Both because of the body dysmorphia, as well as because she's remembered her death. Looks like I got a 5 and a 1, so I'll add 4 emotion Spikes to Scared. That Spikes me out though!*

**Can you miss someone
you don't remember?
Can one moment or
experience ever disappear
completely, or does it
always exist somewhere,
waiting to be discovered?**

Code 46

JACKSON: *Alright, so Anoah straightens up and cracks his back as he's driving, right. It's a long ass trip. He's in his matte black cybercycle thing; it looks like the ones in Tron, you know? Anyway, he finally makes his way from the desert going like 200 miles per hour. I've got to be going really fast in order to make it to the drop in time. It's reckless, but I've got to take the chance...*

MC: *Absolutely, you're going ridiculously fast, so when you hit the town finally, you aren't really prepared for the people in the road. There's a lot of them, and they all look like they're displaced, running from something. If you want to stop in time, it's Risky business.*

JACKSON: *Yeah, I did not expect that at all. I shift down on the cycle to get the engine to stop! My knee-gut reaction is that I'm pissed off at this delay. I've got to get to the drop! So I got a 10 with Mad, yes! I power slide in a dramatic fashion until I'm face to face with them, probably! We see my face super pissed off even though I was about to hit someone, my face crinkled up on camera.*

MC: *Awesome, your cycle lets out a wrenching sound in disapproval as it starts to unbalance, but then when you power slide you get there just in time, inches from a young boy wearing an old fashioned cap. He looks like he's about to scream out at first...but then grins up at you instead.*

JACKSON: *Huh, that's interesting. I think I'm actually going to have a Flashback here. I think that maybe this boy and the old hat and what not takes me back to a similar boy, inches from my face. I've got him on my legs as I lay down doing that airplane game, right? So yeah, in terms of my Question, "What, if anything did I leave behind?" ...I think I left behind a son. That die result was a 6 and a 5, so I'll add 1 emotion Spike to Mad. It definitely makes me upset because it's the only memory I have. This boy staring back at me with a hat on smiling, and then it's gone. I just have this gut feeling I have a son... but no proof, whatsoever.*



CHAPTER FIVE: PLAYBOOKS





THE AESTHETIC

When people won't read between the lines; when they cannot or refuse to hear the words that work to keep the powers at be in check, you are there. Your art is your voice, and you will not be ignored. After all, beauty is truth and truth is beauty, and your craft is undeniably beautiful.

With this playbook, you'll highlight areas your protagonist can access that most people cannot. It also asks what art is like in this future, and what you do to personally to stir the hearts and minds of others. Are their new forms of art? Did technology and cybernetics enable new ways of doing art? What distinguishes art from the hybrid reality, where most things are "dressed up" in a veneer, and how does art let you exert agency over it? These are the central ideas of the Aesthetic.

On the second page of the Aesthetic playbook there are several areas to read over carefully, and then complete. These areas are:

■ The area titled "Your Art"

First and foremost you are an artist, and therefore have an artistic medium. The playbook lists several to get you started, but don't let them pigeonhole you. If you come up with a futuristic form of art that doesn't exist, that's great! Also note that as you advance, you can take an additional option from "Your Art", as detailed in the playbook's improvements section.

■ The area titled "Counterculture"

The Aesthetic is a protagonist "plugged into" counterculture, using art to influence others, directly or indirectly. Choose this playbook if you want to create a subversive movement that rebels against mainstream culture, focusing on art as a means of resistance.

PHOEBE: *I want my art to be like Veil graffiti essentially, so it's like using viral ads that got thought casted, except for pieces of art. Kind of like kitbashing pieces of art together all from these ads we get bombarded with on a constant basis with the intention of subverting them.*

AESTHETIC MOVES

You get Beauty is Truth; Truth is Beauty, and choose one more.

BEAUTY IS TRUTH; TRUTH IS BEAUTY

When you take something you feel, a concept or an idea, and express yourself through your art—whether performed or presented—and it is experienced by others, roll. On a 10+, choose three. On a 7-9, choose two.

- People understand what it is you intend to convey.
- One person present must meet you, tell the MC who.
- You Spike out the State of your choice in someone present.
- This experience either begins to change popular opinion, or otherwise alter a sense of self in those that witness it. Tell the MC what it is you hope for (consumes two choices).
- Inflict Humanity Harm on all that experience it.

The Aesthetic's main move is using their art to effect change in those who experience their creations, whether in the moment or in future—note the move does not say “right now.” People could experience your art without your presence and the move would still trigger. The most important part about the move is the art's desired outcome. What do you want to inspire in people? Do you care if they understand it? Do you just want to move people, or do you want to change them by inflicting a truth that would cause Humanity Harm?

PHOEBE: *Alright, so it's midnight, we took down this done, and I've got an idea; it's been so long since I've seen the stars now. I had that flashback where I was a child and my father and I would look at the stars from the outskirts of the top tier. Now though, that time has passed, it's no longer possible to see the stars. The city's perimeter has widened and built out so not even the outskirts are a place of solace. I like twitch my neck a little, turning on my like future paint program, and I want to place graffiti on the drone, but I want it to look like a star, or if it's big enough, like a lot of stars. I'm feeling angry, my Mad is a 2, and I kill it with a 11.*

MC: *Interesting, I'm curious to see where this is going. Let's say it's quite big. Perhaps it may be so big because in the upper tiers of Prudence there's a lot of problems, so it's like a small airplane that has cameras and sensors and the like on all sides. Tell me what you do next, Corvid, and choose your options.*

PHOEBE: *So, I think I get a few little stars on there and one large one, the north star. And I want to have us like restart it, have it patrol again. And as it makes it way through the night, people will wonder what those are, and old enough people will remember. So I'll spend one to say people understand that we are missing something, and it's right up there, but we can't even see it. I want that realization to cause Humanity Harm, and I want one person to try and find me, someone who also resists this city and Foresight, and all of this crap. I want them to follow my north star to me.*

📖 LITERACY OF THE HEART

When you have solitude and share your views passionately with someone else about how something or someone could be subverted with art, roll. On a 10+, Hold 3. On a 7-9, Hold 1. For PCs, they may spend this Hold in order to further that goal by:

- Remembering this conversation in the future and how it made them feel—which gives them Advantage Forward.
- Tell you something they think you want to know.
- Provide you with something you've asked for.
- Do something that would further your goals.

For NPCs, they will also never act against you so long as you have Hold on them.

You're an artist and essentially also a firebrand when you use this move. Your passion influence people, more so than the Sway move. However, you must engage the other person alone to pull the move off. You may need to subtly maneuver that person to get the advantage of the move in the first place.

MC: *It's after hours at The Grid, Vector just fucked off for the night, you think you're alone as you're cleaning up when you hear the creak of the door. You look up and you see the silhouette of a female form, you think, just past a dim light shining down on the floor. She tosses a vid-photo on the table you're closest. It's the drone with the star on it and she says, "Tell me why I don't just take you to Foresight, little bird."*

PHOEBE: *There's like an uncomfortable, pregnant pause where I know I'm caught. And then I suddenly stand up straight and like compose myself. "Foresight has us all under their thumb, but the least we can do is remember who we are, where we come from. People don't even remember that we have family who left, or were made to leave. The colony ships are up there, and we can't even see the light they're headed toward. I'll never stop, so you may as well take me in. The north star is just the beginning of a new hope. I know I made a difference, and I'm going to keep making one."*

MC: *The figure pushes a long coat aside and reveals a black revolver. It's got the zero with a dot in the middle clearly visible. She's a hunter. She points the gun at you... and then she places it on the table. You don't know how, but you can tell she's smiling even in this darkness. This is the person you wanted to find you, and I think you just triggered Literacy Of The Heart, so roll that for me. Let's see where this conversation goes.*

📊 PULSE OF THE CITY

Whenever you go to an area you haven't gone to before, and want to find something or someone deliberately hidden, describe what signs of counterculture you follow to find what you seek and then roll. On a 10+, you find yourself where you meant to be. On a 7-9, the MC chooses one of the following in order to make your way there first:

- You must prove yourself to them first.
- There is a code or procedure you need to figure out first.
- There is danger along the way.
- Someone you wouldn't want to know where you are, does.

As in every city, there are places hidden to unearth. With this move, you're specifically trying to find a counterculture wherever you are. The move also implies that you are the only one who can unearth something concealed, meaning other playbooks perhaps cannot if this move is taken and in play. Or, at least not in the same way as the Aesthetic. It also suggests this place or people may be transient or ephemeral, meaning you may need to find them more than just the one time, or perhaps sub-structures exist within this culture that need uncovering.

PHOEBE: *OK, so my deepthroat friend last night told me that "there are others" who resist. I feel like the qualifies as a counterculture I'm not aware of, so with my last improvement I took Pulse Of The City. So, this evening I go to the 'scrapers. Normally, I wouldn't be seen here. This is where all the cookie cutter people are. Tier 3 citizens working as hard as they can to get to Tier 2, one day. But I've never been here before, so let's see if there is something more to this than I had assumed. I'm skeptical...so I'll put that in Scared actually, I've got 2 Spikes there... netting me a 9.*

MC: *So I think what happens is this: You go to this area and at first, yeah, you don't see anything. People shirk you, paying you no mind. But nothing is perfect, anywhere. So as you're about to give up and the sun falls, some errant light splays across a 'scraper with giant hanging foliage everywhere in just such a way that it blinds you for a second. But as you refocus, there is an aged, old man with dark skin standing there at a transpo stop below where the light blinded you. On his person, on his jacket, there is the Foresight pin as everyone wears here, except it is inverted. Then you notice everyone getting on this transpo has the same pin. What do you do?*

🗡️ ANTIQUITY OF THE SOUL

Whenever you Probe someone and look them directly in their eyes, you may also ask them, "What is the most important thing to you right now?"

PHOEBE: *I walk up to the man, taking out my own pin and moving it like it is his. I want to subtly block his way, or pull him aside or something. During the this interaction I'll want to Probe him, specifically finding out what is most important to him right now. And in my head, or in Corvid's head I should say... the way she will know is if the same fire and intensity is in this man's eyes as her own. The need to find something or someone in this city that thinks like I do. Anyways, let me roll that for you. I think she's desperate, so that's another emotion Spike in Scared, I believe.*

🎨 PAINT YOUR DREAM

When you modify an individual cybernetic enhancement functionally and cosmetically to express a part of you, detail the first step in an overall design goal. The MC will give you a task to achieve this goal; you may need Cred, time, equipment, etc. After you complete the task, the MC will give you a new task until the design goal is fully realized. When you reach your goal, add the necessary relevant Tags to the cybernetic.

This move is about reflecting your artistry within yourself. This move lets you express your identity visually through your creativity. Your average person would need to pay for this expertise, especially if the job was beyond cosmetic. But your customization is more about expressing your internal dialogue, requiring you to do these things for yourself, to yourself.

MC: *Alright, so you've gained this man's trust somewhat. You're on the transpo to this place, with these strangers. You're left alone by a window seat though. The chair is old and ratty, and the stitching pokes into your leg. What are you thinking about as you lift off into the air and head to this unknown destination, Corvid?*

PHOEBE: *I think that she trusts that this is what she wants and needs. Her body language is probably pretty insular and folded in, but she feels she's doing the right thing. And I think, yeah, at that moment she also decides to take out her physical brush set and she's going to draw that symbol, which she now believes to be subversive, in like white ink on her black weapon, the H-22 kinetic handcannon. I think it's purely cosmetic but like the evolution of a design that she will be able to continue with as her path continues forward. So, that's like me trying to do Paint Your Dream.*

MC: *Neat, neat. I like that image a lot actually. Let's say that the first step is just time, and you'll have enough on this trip. It'll be done by the time you land, but what is your State as this move triggers and you do this thing, no roll necessary, of course.*

PHOEBE: *Powerful. She's subverting the most predominate iconography in The Green Zone, but also doing it on a weapon that is probably made by them too. So I'll remove a Scared Spike there.*

🎲 LIVE OUT LOUD

When you express yourself using your art you may clear all the emotion Spikes in a State that you choose, so long as it is not the State used when you expressed your art.

This move allows you to clear the emotion Spikes in a State, should you roll well enough. The text is left open for you to freely interpret when you are “expressing yourself using your art”. However, the number one rule is to always do what makes sense for your fiction.

🎲 THE AESTHETIC SPECIAL

When the Aesthetic shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll. On a 10+ Hold 2. On a 7-9, Hold 1. Spend the Hold 1 for 1 to:

- Clear or Spike out all emotion Spikes in a State of your choosing for both of you.
- Nullify the other person’s special move if they are a PC.
- Have them honestly tell you what their secret pains are.
- Have them honestly tell you how their mind and soul are vulnerable.

MC: *So you get off the transpo, probably last. The old man is waiting for you. Closer now, you notice he’s got really clear green eyes, and his hair is very white, and he feels more frail than sturdy. You’re on a helipad jetting out from water. It is dark and wet and cold. The man who, I’ll remind you has not told you his name, takes your hands the way old people do, you know? He looks you in the eyes and he’s trusting you, they all are, really. But him most of all; his eyes look terrified as he examines you again before nodding. He considers this an intimate moment, do you?*

PHOEBE: *Definitely, being here means everything to her and she is not used to like having someone to trust, or trust in her. So I think so. I think she’s Joyful, and that would make it the first Spike there and a 7. Damn, I really want to know his secret pains, but I think I’d rather just go meta and be kind and clear out Scared for the both of us. Makes more sense for that moment, too.*



THE PERCIPIENT

Weaving in and out of perception, you're the tip of the spear. Advanced recon, mental conditioning, and assimilation techniques let you soak up an unfamiliar world. You were trained to *become* the world around you, for better... or for worse.

This playbook implies that a corp, organization, or other entity created or designed the Percipient's technology. This entity then trained you to have an edge over other people who, presumably, would not be aware of being downloaded into the future. Missing memories may or may not have been foreseen, of course. However, this playbook implies the organization exists still, and will be manipulating you. You could also consider if there are other organizations taking similar measures. This playbook is low cognitive load, pretty much ready to go. If you're looking for the fastest, ready made playbook, this one will probably serve you best.

On the second page of the Percipient playbook there is one area to read over carefully, and then complete. This area is:

■ The area titled "The Mission"

Some organization has placed you here and trained you to more-or-less be a weapon. Their purpose though is up to you, so you can customize the protagonist to what is most interesting for you. There are a couple ideas ready for you there, and a space for you to make your own.

CALVIN: *I just love the idea of having my mission be relaying an important message to the future. I think the Flashback move makes it super interesting, since I'd like to have also forgotten what that message was.*

PERCIPIENT MOVES

You get Soak It Up and choose one more.

SOAK IT UP

Whenever you arrive in a new place, you may tell everyone about any local customs, traditions, or aspects of the culture around you that give you a tactical advantage. When you do so, take +1 Forward, so long as you are within that same area when you trigger a move.

This move contrasts the Aesthetic’s “Counterculture” move by establishing some aspects of mainstream corporate culture. The text supposes that when in a new area, you notice things, blend in, and people better than most, giving you a distinct edge. Think of the protagonist as a sort of *Jason Bourne* operative, who uses their surroundings and senses to effectively get the job done. Go unnoticed, infiltrate an area, exit a situation before it escalates, or eliminate a threat using the environment and objects around them.

MC: *This is your first outing; you’re still being held at the facilities where you were first woken up in your new body. It’s been a few days so you’re oriented yourself somewhat. It’s time to go out see what this future is like, I think. So there’s like the sound of depressurization as this like ocular door sort-of unfurls before you. A blast of heat and humidity hits you instantly and the pores on your skin constrict as your bio-engineered body responds to the environment. Your eyes adjust to the sun coming down. You’re in a market place, there are plastic looking stalls all around with vendors of all shapes, sizes, colours; some robots, some human. There’s a heavily packed street with some music playing and a crowd has gathered. What do you do?*

CALVIN: *I think Simone feels like...assailed, right? It’s overwhelming and her mind is in overdrive. I think it makes sense for Soak It Up to trigger, so I’ll mark an emotion Spike in Scared. But I think her training is kicking in as the primary information she gets from the scenes. She’s noticing who looks defensive, who looks aggressive, etc. The primary advantage we see is that people underestimate her though, she’s a small person. The camera also shows her eyes darting toward the crowd, noting she could get lost in it if anyone came after her. She also notices an undercover corp employee roaming around with a gun concealed. Worse comes to worse, I go for him first and disarm him before he knows what’s happening.*

MC: *Yeah, I'll take that. It also sounds like we should do Emporium, save your +1 Forward for the next move you trigger though, this is just so we get a better idea of what this marketplace looks like. They also sent you with some Cred, if you want to get anything.*

📊 FLAUNT AND VAUNT

Whenever you go to a market, emporium, store, or vendor; you can always spend **1 Cred less**, provided it does not become free, by divulging a new detail about the item you wish to purchase that is unknown to the seller (You Detail).

Since most of us are not trained techno thriller protagonists, it can be hard to display that hyper competency in character. For this move though, you can tell the MC a detail about the item you're purchasing to decrease its value. For instance, the item might be illegal, or a part of an ongoing police investigation, less than what it is billed as, or stolen goods. It is always up to the MC to accept this detail or not.

MC: *Alright, we have a good grasp of the marketplace now, you've got your senses more in check. You do have some Cred...but not enough for even an antiquated thought-cast blocker you're looking at from this robotic vendor.*

CALVIN: *Well, I still hold it in my hands. This is a megacorp marketplace, essentially. We established it's patrolled by them, so their laws do pertain to this. And so I'm like, inspecting it, and I tell him he's selling this thing that used to be an EMP device that's been illegally modified. I also tell the vendor I'd be willing to take illegal tech off their hands, but not for this much Cred. And if that's cool with you, I'll mark an emotion Spike in Powerful.*

MC: *They flash a sort of a like microaggression emoji on the display screen that's a mixture of sad and mad. But they'll agree, sure. They'll sell it for 1 less Cred, but you're also actually carrying around illegal tech now, too. Don't forget that.*

🔧 THE TOOLS AT HAND

When you attempt to modify something for a different purpose than it was designed, and you have the capability to do so, roll. On a 10+, it works as you intended. On a 7-9, it will work, but only once and there is a cost or complication.

You're a trained operative of some kind, so you think fast and have good problem solving skills. Here's the move to show that side of the training as well. Whether it's simply disabling a specific device's function, or removing a weapon's power source to make use of it in different tech, this move should have you covered.

MC: *As you're making your way from the marketplace the hairs stand up on your neck. Your Jam is that you get people out of sticky situations essentially, so I'm going to give this to you for free. You're not sure exactly what's going on yet, but you know you're in just the kind of situation you get people out of. What do you do?*

CALVIN: *Damn... OK I'm going to take this illegal tech and modify it back into an EMP. Then hopefully, I'll trigger it and try to bug out in the ensuing chaos. Interestingly... I was initially thinking I was going to be Scared, but in my mind I just think my training kicks in, so instead I'm feeling Powerful.*

MC: *I think that makes sense for you, too. Oh no! 6, so close. You have +1 Forward actually in this area right? So there you go, it's a 7, not so bad after all. Nice, it works so everything just goes dead. Even the humming you ignore from technology being powered with electricity is gone, it is perhaps unnervingly quiet. Your device goes dead afterword too. The problem now is that people will be investigating this for sure, and your retreat was a mechanical door that needs power and no longer has it, if you were planning on going out the way you came in, anyway. What do you do?*

⚡ AXIOMATIC

Whenever you Analyze, you can ask the MC “What is it only you can perceive about this situation or place?”, for free.

CALVIN: *Now that we are just down to physical reality, not hybrid, I think I'm going to just simply look around, searching for both danger, as well as for a way out. Hmm, I'm going to go Powerful again, I think as far as I know, I'm in my element and I may have disabled the immediate danger already, for all I know. That's a 10, tell me what I can perceive about this no one else can, please.*

MC: *The corp is responding faster than you ever thought possible, how you know this is we get a shot of a black hawk above you. When I say black, I mean, like retro future, oblique black and shiny. You can surmise it's resistant to things like EMP's, and this market is, for some reason, policed by corps already; However... they have not spotted you yet, they are simply here.*

⚡ NEUROCHEMISTRY

Mental conditioning allows you to react and think faster than is normally possible. When you're in a flight or fight situation, once per session you can declare any die roll a 10+ before you roll.

In keeping with the hyper competent theme, the Percipient can automatically succeed on a roll, once per session. The strategy is deciding when you'll use it, as this roll could be helpful many times in a single session.

CALVIN: *Dang, one has to wonder if there is some other shit going on in this market place, but anyhow, I'm out. Where is the best way out?*

MC: *The best way is just like you said before, go into the mass of civilians you spotted, who are almost certainly all running for exits, blend in, disseminate, etc.*

CALVIN: *That's all I care about right now. I do not even know why I basically exist yet. I think time slows down. The drops of water strike the rotating fans or whatever from the futuristic black hawk up there. I look around, I spot those civilians and such, and my Neurochemistry just kicks in; I move fast, decisively, and perfectly between bodies and like make the same panicky gesticular motions they are until we are all out of there. I do so Powerfully, adding another emotion Spike in that.*

📌 MAKE IT PERSONAL

When you genuinely attempt to connect with another for the first time by sharing something new about your training and what it entailed, including how it changed you as a person, (for better or worse) you both mark XP.

There's incentive for both parties to talk about what this training and experience did to you as a person—How it modified you, as such. Both parties get XP, and therefore it should be relatively easy to hit. Over time, this becomes challenging since you need to expound on this each time for it to make sense in the fiction. Saying the same things to different people is not a genuine attempt to connect with another person. The mechanical benefit is should reinforce and build the fiction, presumably to both parties, but specifically in earnest to your own protagonist.

MC: *Great. I like that shot a lot. I'm not particularly interested in getting back to where you came from to be honest. So if you're cool with it, let's just have you be back there with the other players. Let's say you know there's a quick scene showing you getting an IM saying they sent you a car, and they recover you without incident. You're back. What is the first thing you'd do?*

CALVIN: *Honestly, I think I figured out what my training was about in part, at least? So I'd want to talk to Juke about it. She's also a soldier from what we know, maybe she will be able to identify with me, and I'll be more comfortable confiding in her, you know?*

MC: *Great, Juke, are you OK with having a scene like that now, the incentive is nice as well, with Make It Personal, if you do have this moment it's like it's own contained moment of intimacy around this subject that results in you both getting XP, always nice. What say you?*

⚡ THE PERCIPIENT SPECIAL

When the Percipient shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you can either remove 1 Harm from both yourself and the other person. Or, you can ask them to do something for you that would further your mission. When they do it, now or later, you both mark XP.

The only special move that can heal Harm is reserved for this playbook. You could also use these moments to get someone to help further your overall mission. This could be at a meta level too, player to player; or within the fiction character to character. For instance, your character may not want to fulfill the mission, but uses the moment of intimacy to offer an XP to the other person to further it, unbeknownst to your character.

**Dying for the right cause.
It's the most human thing
we can do.**

Blade Runner 2049



THE DENOTATION

The physicality of objects was lost for a time. People were swayed to look at things only so far as The Veil allowed. They believed in the overlay, rather than the thing itself. You, however, ascribe meaning to physical objects. You shape, mold, and you bend; a new generation of hackers. One that uses physical objects to permeate the overlay that cloaks everything, and everyone.

There is a propensity in cyberpunk fiction to move away from technology that uses physical objects, aside from things like decks—which usually act as a neutral platform for accessing “actual” experience. In today’s world, people hack using a keyboard. In *Cascade*, people can also hack, just with other physical objects. A new kind of hacking occurs in a hybrid reality where information permeates perceptions, and overlays across our awareness. You can physically go to a place with information and hack it; or, potentially use locales with an overlay as a gateway to access information in other physical locations, using the medium of your own choice. You’re unrestricted by technology of today, the keyboard and mouse.

It is important to remember that The Veil can make data a visual, physical surface. Allowing for people to hide data in virtually anything; a cup, a desk, or an entire building. This could mean an inversion of how people secure their data and how it is also encrypted. This is *your* playground to define, along with the MC.

This playbook is directly inspired by a cyberpunk anime called *Dennou Coil*, where augmented reality is pervasive, and everyone wears glasses to see this “extra layer” over the physical reality we all know. The ways people interact with this world are many and varied, since they have digital tools for different purposes. This general core concept is what inspired the Denotation.

On the second page of the Denotation playbook there are several areas to read over carefully, and then complete. These areas are:

■ The area titled “The Implement”

You’ll create or modify your own tool, whatever it may be, to hack The Veil’s hybrid reality that is over the physical space you make your way through.

JERRY: *For my character Splinter, I’m going to with stickers. I picture them as interactive, so I’d apply it to a surface and I’d interact with it or it would have some sort of code already placed on, or inside of it, that would hack The Veil, essentially.*

■ The area titled “Iconography”

“Iconography” allows you to ascribe meaning to what you do. Why do you hack this digital overlay? For glory, to resist against oppression, to liberate information, to get back at someone, or to inspire hope? Circle one of these options and then it’s counterpart to further hone in on why your character does what they do.

JERRY: *Splinter wants to subvert faith in the establishment, I think. There is a sort of blind faith when it comes to the way things are done in this society, at least specifically where we have created here and now. That needs to be questioned.*

■ The area titled “The Gatekeepers”

This playbook introduces concepts around people, Gatekeepers, who restrict or withhold information. Flesh out your Gatekeepers by circling the answers here, or by making your own. Information in this hybrid reality permeates everything, so you’re constantly seeing the digital presentation over the physical reality. Do these people make it impossible not to see the information systems they so choose? Is there a pay barrier to access specific kinds of information or systems? Are the public aware of how Gatekeepers operate? Is The Veil a tool used to propagate entertainment and propaganda for the establishment, with the public being largely unaware? These are some of the questions you could pose about Gatekeepers, aside from ones we currently face today.

JERRY: *In this setting we have essentially tyrannical megacorporations as a trope we decided to invoke, so I think they make sense to be gatekeeping. Primarily, I think The Veil is owned by these companies, in as much as you can own an information system. As newspapers are owned by companies now, The Veil’s digital overlay, what we typically see on a daily basis, is controlled by them, and used to keep people under their thumb. It’s encrypted, heavily surveilled, and is a monopoly with a hierarchy employed that knows just how interwoven The Veil is and its purpose—in so far as the digital overlay aspect, anyway.*

■ The area titled “Draw Your Icon”

With your Implement and rough purpose in mind, as well as the Gatekeepers, draw your icon. You are a hacker and have an alias, but what symbol, icon, slogan, etc. do you call your own? Draw both yours and the symbol for the Gatekeepers.

DENOTATION MOVES

You get Dennou and choose one more.

☒ DENNOU

When you spend time scrutinizing something with a digital overlay in the hybrid reality you occupy—in order to learn a truth about it—roll and tell the MC what your theory about it is. On a 10+, you learn something interesting and useful about it. On a 7-9, you only learn something interesting—it's up to you to make it useful.

Think about this move as your though you're Analyzing a physical object which has an overlay on it. The Veil allows for this hybridized world to exist and you can discern information about a particular overlay. Maybe it's a billboard that is also a hologram, an ad catered to people paying attention it, or maybe it's iconography of other hackers or that of the Gatekeepers; either way this move is specified because it doesn't quite fall into the basic moves as pertaining to a specific overlay you'd want to glean information from.

MC: *Alright Union, you wrap your hand around the digital glowfly buzzing around and the wall shimmers and begins to dissolve... then it becomes opaque, and a symbol of a thunderbolt through a square appears. It's a paywall, what do you do?*

JERRY: *It's pretty strange that there would be a paywall here... especially from Smith and Weston, a hugeeee megacorp. I'm onto something, I can feel it. I throw my sticker on there. This one just looks like a decal with a futuristic keyboard on it. I think that they messed up having the paywall show their signature here, it is probably not on the up and up. I suspect what is beyond this threshold may yield some dirt on them. I'm going for Dennou here. I'm excited so I'll roll joyful, with an 11!*

☒ SUBVERT

When you use your Implement to modify the meaning of something in the digital overlay with your own iconography—visually or otherwise, roll. On a 10+, you do it, no problem. On a 7-9, the meaning is misconstrued by others, there is an unintended effect, or there is a cost or complication.

A good analog for this move would be when people spray paint or “tag” art onto surfaces, aka graffiti artists. They can subvert something already there, or transform a mundane surface into something that articulates so much more. This move also specifies that you can do more than just visually modify something though, too. So if you think of something creative, the move should accommodate whatever that may be.

MC: *Alright, cool. So yeah, totally. You Minority Report intuit on your sticker action and information starts getting listed on the side of your retina. The useful thing is that you're right, they obviously hired some second rate cypher to make this for them and they messed up. It's totally not supposed to be linked to them but is. Not only that, it's surprisingly weak too, from what you're seeing, anyway. What do you do?*

JERRY: *Union is going to try and Subvert this and link it to me, just unbeknownst to them. That way if anyone else comes 'round, I'm the one it notifies. I want to be able to turn it on and off on my end, but not red flag S&W. I think I'm feeling Powerful in this moment, trying to stick it to a big corp. I get a 7 though, uh oh.*

MC: *Hey, no problem, don't be so worried. It's linked to you, they don't know about it. There's just the tiniest wave, though, caused by your hack. It's a drop in the overlay that carries further in, leading you below. The overlay here makes it all seem like pure darkness, aside from the green tiled stairs leading you down. The ripple will surely announce your presence to somebody, if anyone is here. What do you do?*

EXPOSE

When you use your Implement to completely strip away and eradicate The Veil presence around you, tell the MC what you hope to find and then roll. On a 10+, the MC will tell you honestly if there is anything to be learned. On a 7-9, the same occurs but the MC chooses one of the following:

- The answer is frightening, disheartening, disillusioning, or dangerous.
- There is an entrance into a space unlike the digital or the physical.
- The change brings unintended consequences, now or later.

Your Implement is already established as a tool of subversion. More than that, though—it is also something that can strip The Veil from your presence; essentially bypassing the Lift The Veil move, if successful. Instead of lifting it only for yourself, you can decimate it; allowing for *everyone* to see through the facade as it no longer exists in this space. Think about a giant megacorp building and the illusion it must project. How powerful would it be to reveal the structure for what it truly is rather than what the corporation presents itself as. Sometimes the best way to subvert something is to Expose it.

JERRY: *I want to get ahead of this ripple. I'm going to take a chance, but what I want to do is take out a pre-programmed sticker, it's got a circle with a line slashed through it. I whip it at the ripple with the goal of eradicating it completely. I'm trying to trigger Expose, and I think I'm Scared. I'll take a Spike from Powerful away, and add one there, nets me a 9. I hope to find out what this ripple is, I've never seen it before when I've hacked.*

MC: *The sticker starts to writhe like sinew being worked. The code is finally delivered, and the space does not gradually pull back like we have seen before. Instead, you blink and it's just gone. The ripple though, falls to the ground. It looks like some kind of insect, like a large mosquito. Code is running down it's body, the text slows... and it dies there on the step in front of you. What do you do?*

DECENTRALIZE

When you have privacy, safety, and time, and use your Implement in the hopes of shifting something digital and of importance from the Gatekeepers to another location, roll. On a 10+, you actualize your goal. On a 7-9, there is a trace of you left behind, there is a cost in so doing, or something you value is placed in danger, with or without your knowledge.

Depending on what the Gatekeepers actually *do*, this move will vary in as far as how it will present itself in the fiction. The main idea behind it though, is that you will be hacking something in order to move the data to someplace else. Nowadays, data is stored on some form of storage. The Veil could allow for that digital information to be visualized, as it allows for something digital to be as real as something physical. Therefore, a couch you could sit on could also be raw data, manifested. How data could be hidden as well as visualized will vary radically with your specific setting.

MC: *When you follow the stairs, now yellowed with dirt, below; cables that would have protruded from the ground are instead embedded into it; snaking their way in a particular direction. There is a sense of space like a basement apartment, extremely cramped. The cables reach a white table that has light illuminating from within. You've seen this before, based on the code scrolling by, the inset screen casting the light up and out. It's probably parameters for a Cache. The code begins to reduce in sequence and repetition; the program is coming to a close. What do you do?*

JERRY: *I quickly attach my normal sticker, so large it's like a decal, to the screen, and try to shift the data to my own drive before it's complete. I'm always so close when I get to these things, hopefully I can nab the information this time. I'm Mad I think, as I furiously try this. Giving me a 10!!*

HACKTIVIST

When you learn of a hacker's alias and attempt to get into contact with them, roll. On a 10+, you reveal their location and a unique method of contacting them. On a 7-9, only one is revealed, the MC chooses which.

How would hackers in the future communicate and with what? Is wireless communication, or any form of transmission over The Veil, secure? If you extrapolate that the hackers in this world have a physicality to them, as you use a physical Implement as your tool in order to do so; you might also extrapolate that the modus operandi for you to contact one another could be something physical in nature as well. When the digital isn't safe, perhaps dead drops, holo graffiti, and physical meetings are more prudent. Other means of connections via subversion of whatever you have clarified of The Veil could also be interesting; an additional way in which to resist the digital systems in place.

MC: *Alright, so you're back home. Data has been compiled and what not. It points you to a hacker alias by the name of Juilliard. What do you do with that information, Union?*

JERRY: *Right. I think how some hackers communicate with one another is through inputting a message on whatever local thought cast is going around. Those things travel fast, like malware except propagated by people looking at adverts in The Veil. I go out, I stroll about looking for one appropriate. Then, with a look of pure glee, insert the date and location of a meet—including mind you, a snippet of code that I found. The idea being, I know they're linked to S&W, and I know they messed up a job with a corp. But... with Joyful, that's a 6, Shoot.*

❧ MESS WITH THE BEST

Once per session, when you roll a miss when you attempt to Lift The Veil, you may consider it a 7-9 result instead of a miss. However, the MC considers this a Golden Opportunity as well.

JERRY: *Wait wait wait wait. I'll use Mess With The Best, this is too important; my only lead in fact.*

MC: *Sounds good, the ad goes completely fine. So fine, in fact; it goes viral.*

JERRY: *Dang!*

❧ THE DENOTATION SPECIAL

When the Denotation shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you pierce the constant illusion of The Veil as though you had lifted it; they see you in the same way. You may ask them any one question from any of the basic moves, and they will answer it truthfully. However, if you do, they will ask you a question in return under the same terms.

Check out the information gathering moves: Analyze and Probe for use with this move. Do not discount other moves altogether, though—as framed in a particular way they may lend themselves to the kind of question you might like to pose afterall.

MC: *So Union, who never accepted help from anyone, is now begging Klein to help him. That sounds pretty intimate to me, how is Union feeling right now?*

JERRY: *Yeah, totally. I think... Scared. So I'll mark that Spike, take away Powerful. Looks like I can ask them a question, too. Let's go with what do they intend to do, as like this moment just becomes pregnant and uneasy as Union really displays he's out of his element.*



THE MNEMOLOGIST

People cherish a lot of things in life: Cred, mods, augs, their very own Slacks, and... maybe their spinners. But what's coveted above all else? Memories. You trade people's memories like some people trade antiquated tech. To keep the law away you have your own front too—The Store, a place where everyone can buy and sell a memory somebody holds dear... for some Cred.

Usually we ascribe value to things by way exchanging goods for services. But this is trading something we already feel is valuable, our *memories*. Especially in *Cascade*, where you're missing some of your own. Reinforcing the idea that memories are precious, this playbook introduces the concept of commodifying memories. Perhaps because people like you, Glitches with missing memories, have gone in search for their past. Perhaps people simply want to feel other's experiences. The setting will drive some of these motivations. However, since this is your thing, you should answer related questions that arise during play.

Check out the 90's cyberpunk movie *Strange Days* if you need a touchstone to imagine what this protagonist and their world might look like. In it, the protagonist is an unlikeable jerk, who can never move beyond the mistakes he made in his own past; spending his days reliving these memories instead of rooting himself in the present. All the while peddling these same services to people just to make ends meet.

On the second page of the Denotation playbook there are several areas to read over carefully, and then complete. These areas are:

■ The areas titled “The Store and The Experience”

Trading in memories is heavily implied to be illegal in some way, with whatever authorities are attempting to curtail it. It's up to you to elaborate on the nuances and legalities of this practice. Whatever the answer, The Store, your front, is a scene; an experience, a space defined by you. The options listed are meant to be evocative and helpful in your customization of your space.

KAYLA: *For Orion's Store, I'm thinking it's primarily a music scene, but in the basement they show old movies that are all but lost or forgotten, discarded; like old memories only cherished by this particular group of people. It's intimate, nostalgic oooh haunted and... expensive. It's like future hipster people except with tech to experience memories, obsessed with the past in all forms, sounds like.*

■ The area titled “The Regulars”

Now that you’ve got a good idea of what the space looks like, who’s in it? Who has your back and who doesn’t? These questions will round out your customized space.

KAYLA: *Nier wants to run this place, trying to edge me out. Quincy would never see me come to harm, they’ve got a revolver so same specs as mine and 1 Armor, nice. I’ve also got a contact, Fiona, with a spinner.*

■ The area titled “Jam” on the first sheet of your playbook.

Your Jam is running the store. You have a move tied to this directly, called “Your Jam”. You should feel free to name “The Store” whatever you wish. Likewise, you can name the scene within this place whatever you wish as well. Defining it may give you some inspiration toward this purpose.

**Memories are meant to fade.
They’re designed that way for a
reason.**

Strange Days

MNEMOLOGIST MOVES

You get Your Jam, Magic Man, and choose one more.

🎲 YOUR JAM

You run **The Store**. At the beginning of a new session, and at the MC's discretion, roll 2d6 without a State. On a 10+, You make 2 Cred. On a 7-9, you still get 1 Cred, but there is an unexpected expense, complication, hard choice, or consequence associated with **The Store** right now, or later. On a miss, you lose Cred and the MC chooses an option from the 7-9 result.

The Store is a business subject to dice. You begin with quite a bit of Cred, with the chance to make more or less each session. It all depends on the dice. The move is about the trials and tribulations you may face running your establishment, though. But don't worry, some of your other moves let you generate Cred on your own.

KAYLA: *Alright so straight roll, that's going to be an 8.*

MC: *Alright, so this is what happens. The clubs just packed tonight and everything is shaping up to be a solid evening until Nier comes through the doors with someone. It takes a while to reach you. But when they do, Nier throws you a Cred and tells you that you've got a very special client. The guy's meek, shaken, ashen faced despite a dark complexion; typical signs the guy fears the police might bust through the doors at any minute. What do you do?*

KAYLA: *Nice, I just nod at Quincy, who's bartending right now, and walk through a wall just around the corner leading to a more private area that Quincy opens for us. We get settled, and just look at the guy with an expression that's like, well?*

MC: *The guy comes through still looking nervous like maybe the cops were back here or something, but he settles down when it's just you. Between stutters and starts, he manages to get out that he witnessed the cops do something bad and he wants it ripped for insurance. He'll give you another Cred on top of what Nier just gave you. What do you say?*

⚙️ MAGIC MAN

When you have time and pull a clip from someone's memory (including your own), describe how it is you do so as well as how you store the memory clip itself, and roll. On a 10+ choose three, on a 7-9, choose two. On a miss, choose one, but in addition to what the MC says, they Hold 1. The MC may spend their hold at any time during a Flashback to show that something in the memory is altered, false, or not your own.

- Your own memory is unmodified.
- The memory clip will not degrade over time.
- There is something about the memory clip that makes it highly sought after (+ valuable).
- Someone you wouldn't want finding you still can't locate you.

What this move looks like is up to you, but there are some guidelines via the implications of the options you choose from. For example, it could affect your own memory, or your storage method could degrade these memories. Otherwise, the fiction around this process is up to you since there is no Gear for doing this. Whatever tech or processes you decide upon, feel free to expound upon it within your fiction.

KAYLA: *Sure, let's do the move and then roll out the fiction from there then. I'm feeling...anxious...this seems off, but I'm motivated by Cred. So that's an 11! Let's see, my own memory is unmodified, someone can't find me, and it's valuable. Which means it will degrade over time. I'm straight up just going to go Strange Days and say that there is a neural weave I place on my head and theirs and it gets recorded onto bioware, this silky white fluid in a tube. I think people play the memories by injecting it into themselves, or by placing it in a player. I keep my eyes open though, so I don't experience the memory the guy is recording and I think that can sometime mess up my own memories because I'm not sure if I'm remembering my own, or recordings.*

☒ SANTA CLAUS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

When you meet someone for the first time and Probe them, you may ask “What could I offer them in order to get them to _____?”, in addition to the other questions listed.

KAYLA: *I also am feeling like... this guy is not telling me something though, so I want to Probe him. I'm a wheeler and dealer, I feel like Orion is one savvy lady, and I'm feeling anxious still, so Scared. Netting me an 8. I want to ask what I could offer them to get them to tell me what this memory exactly is.*

MC: *You're powerful, you own this place, head this scene. Let's say you just sort of withhold the memory clip and ask him in a pointed way, he'd crumble. He's sweaty and fumbles, but sort of folds in, like someone who's got a secret who's relieved to tell it, too. Turns out he saw someone from a corp ditching data, throwing it into a nearby firewall. Big data, it was taking the firewall tons of time to destroy it.*

☒ I'M YOUR PRIEST, I'M YOUR SHRINK

When you speak earnestly and candidly with a character, you may ask them a question from below. Afterward, they may ask you a question as well. Both of you must answer honestly.

- What do you desire most but would also never admit to anyone?
- What do you wish I would do?
- What do you think of _____?
- Do you know of any threat directed at me?

No roll required, just something extra you're able to glean from people. However, asking the question allows others to gain information about you in return. Think of this move as a quick sizing-up, like business people do in some fiction, discerning things from one another with subtext.

KAYLA: *I'm going to hide my surprise and look him dead in the eyes, the apertures in my own eyes opening wide to zoom into his pupil responses. I then ask him if he knows of any threats directed at me, like is someone coming here, is he sure he wasn't followed, etc. I'm curious, peaceful I think.*

MC: *He kind of stammers and is not sure, he's just a businessman, he came here right away knowing the corp would come after him if they ever found out. They've got eyes everywhere! He is way too shaken to figure anything out from you, so I'll pass on asking you a question.*

TECHNICOLOR

Once per session, when you experience someone else's memory clip, you can ask the MC what you notice about the clip that everyone else has missed.

As the Mnemologist, you've probably experienced more memories than anybody else. Presumably, this tech needs you to even operate. But maybe not, maybe each set is geared to one owner or something—whatever you want. That familiarity, though, is what gives you the fictional positioning to examine a memory and see beyond what others see.

KAYLA: *Man, that is not a good enough answer. Last thing I need is a corp coming down on me for this crap. I slam the clip into the recorder and hit play, giving the guy a menacing you-just-hold-up-right-the-fuck-there, look. I'm going to add a Spike in Mad, for sure.*

MC: *Alright, so it's just like he says. It's maybe 15 minutes away from here by the Hammer corp but using the firewall of a local e-shop. A figure out of a noir film is chucking these data chunks into it, a pretty ingenious way to delete data, actually. But the thing you notice that nobody else has is that there's also a camera that was circling the perimeter and caught some of this. Doesn't seem like this figure noticed this fellow, though. And it cuts out with the camera, or whatever, moving forward, toward the guy and not away, you may even be able to make the figure out soon! But then... there's a rustle and like a hum coming from the real world now. A gun is almost charged up, just as you're about to make out the person's face. What do you do?*

📊 PARANOID ENOUGH

Once per session, when you would be surprised by something, you can describe to the MC how you were not.

You're probably running an illegal enterprise, and you've got some savvy based on interactions with other people. Sometimes when someone thinks they've got the jump on you, you've already seen it coming. The writing is on the wall, so to speak.

KAYLA: *I'm going to mark another Mad Spike. Is it cool if I say as soon as I started the memory, I pushed a button and signaled for Quincy to come, anticipating this guy?*

MC: *Sure sure, you see the guy's face, you take off your neuro weave, and there's a hole where the guy's heart was. Quincy is standing behind the guy with a business-as-usual look.*

📊 RENOWNED

When you make it known in certain circles that you want something while in The Store, roll. On a 10+, it comes to you, no problem. On a 7-9, it comes to you, but with an unexpected cost—to you or someone else. The MC chooses which.

The Store is a scene, one you've defined. The move assumes there are certain movers and shakers within the scene—other than yourself, of course. How you make it known, and what circles they are, is up to you. However, it's important to note that it should be linked to the scene. But, like all moves, it's up to you what the fiction looks like; aside from the defined trigger.

KAYLA: *I look at Quincy and smile, flick him the Cred, and compose myself a little. Then, I walk out and into the basement, unshaken and assuming Quincy will take care of the guy. Casablanca or something is playing down there and one of the most powerful men who comes here is there, smoking some kind of futuristic drug I imagine is like a cigar. I sit next to him without speaking, and intuit, sending him the face of the man in the video, along with 2 Cred pending, paid on delivery. Then I just sit in silence and watch the film. I look Peaceful, but I'm Mad still. It's almost too bad the guy is dead. I get a 9, though.*

MC: *Let's fast forward. It's the end of the day, you're back at your place and the cost becomes clear along with the information. The person's identified as a Bizcorp employee. A pretty high up fellow, who's also a client of yours. That means they know where The Store is. What do you do?*

📺 HOUSECALLS

When you broadcast your services in order to get customers, roll. On a hit, you get word of a client who wants your services. On a 10+, you tell them where and when the meet is. On a 7-9, they'll only accept when or where, MC chooses which.

Shady clients and backroom meetings will probably coincide with this playbook. Plus, you need clients if your business isn't making money on the start of session rolls. You'll have to continue making Cred this way, since this is your Jam.

KAYLA: *Definitely going to reach out. I think it's like a shitty ad, to be honest. Almost like a fortune teller putting up flyers, except in specific areas. The backdrop is: Come party! But there's also a layer underneath that is for clients, insinuating but not spelling out, that I deal in memories, etc. This one in particular, if it's alright to use Housecalls in this way, is to that specific client. I'm Scared, I think? Making it a 10!*

📺 THE MNEMOLOGIST SPECIAL

Only when you watch your own memory clips (with someone else or alone) does it count as a moment of intimacy for you. You may then ask The Veil, or the person you're with, a question from the Probe move.

MC: *You set that all up, I want to know, what do you do because it'll be tomorrow? It's been a shitty day, should we just jump forward to the meet, or what do you want to do?*

KAYLA: *Jeez. I think Orion has a specific greatest hits memory clip that she puts on her head, and just gets lost in her life beforehand. Ex-girlfriends, ex-boyfriends, her animalistic tech wearing phase. I think those series of clips are the most important thing to her.*

MC: *Well, looks like that'll trigger your special. So what does that look like, and then ask The Veil a Probe question!*

KAYLA: *I think we see these images and her face is changing to fit the situations. But ultimately, if there were music or whatever, it'd be really kind of a melancholic situation, right. So I'll add a Sad Spike. And I'll ask The Veil, are you telling the truth?*

One man's mundane and desperate existence is another man's Technicolor.

Strange Days



THE TELEPRESENCE

There are many facets of a story the public consumes when it imbibes the news. But you do not merely present the story, you are the story. All of your perceptions, even your memories—your thoughts, your feelings. All of it. You send them all of yourself when you go live—and they love you for it. And that love... it costs you.

Think of a newscaster on live television. Now imagine that you are also the camera, presenting the story via the entirety of yourself. The people see what you see, and experience what you want them to... if everything goes right. You've got implanted tech specifically for this, but it doesn't always go right. Imagine sharing everything you experience about a story with other people, so *many* people in fact, they could influence you through that very same connection. The more people tune in, the more influence they have over you.

Some post-cyberpunk literature refers to this, or is synonymous with, “nowcasting”, such as in Sterling’s *Heavy Weather*. This particular playbook’s primary touchstone is rooted in Raphael Carter’s *The Fortunate Fall*, where the main character, Maya, is a telepresence or a “camera” who attempts to uncover and broadcast a story to the world through herself. In that story, she works with a partner who screens the data to produce the broadcast stream. In *Cascade*, your brain is wired in order to do this, accepting slotted programs that interface with your mind directly, at a cost.

On the second page of the Telepresence playbook there are several areas to read over carefully, and then complete. These areas are:

■ The area titled “The Beat”

You are no simple camera or reporter, you gave up some of your body and mind to be able to generate this unique kind of content. You've got a niche, too. While there are always lies covering up the truth, you own a specific beat. Choose or write down your own beat to explore in your fiction. Pick one that excites you. For instance, if you choose law, but aren't interested in the concept, then you'll probably be disappointed when much of your story and interactions revolve around the law.

ZANA: *Cadium is working homicide in this cyberpunk future. I'm really into the idea of examining interesting and strange ways in which homicides would occur with advanced technologies.*

■ The area titled “Wired”

Whereas almost everyone has a Neurochip, you are also wired to boot. By being wired, you can live and broadcast your experience to others, while simultaneously editing the stream, using the technology interfaced with your mind. You possess a medium that lets you interface with raw data and tech to broadcast anywhere you like. You already have a stream suppressor, as well as this medium for interfacing with data in your possession. You also choose an additional benefit you’ve been wired for here.

ZANA: *I think gathering data would be crucial when I'm working a homicide beat. I am leery of misses, and like the idea of being able to ask a question from Analyze even with a miss each session, so I'll take Encyclopedia.*

■ The area titled “Slotted”

You have a stream suppressor: something that allows you to maintain autonomy while having this connection to your audience. This same suppressor, though, also does more than this, extinguishing a piece of yourself along with the benefit it gives you. This choice is at the core of the Telepresence playbook.

ZANA: *Cadium cannot get cybernetics implanted, I think his neurochemistry is all bamboozled from being wired, more things interfacing with his brain is not a possibility!*

■ The area titled “Emancipation”

As you’ll discover during play, this playbook explores the relationship between fans and content creators. You’ve already chosen how this technology benefits and suppresses you in order for you to generate content at all. But while you play and use the moves, you may hit a point where you want your protagonist to be free from this suppression. However, this direction is risky and, depending on your roll, may result in death.

■ The area titled “The Story”

Before you can broadcast, you’ll need to assemble the components of the story you want to share. These components are nebulous, and may come to fruition quickly. They are also associated with the news, suggesting the content you generate versus what others do is rooted in some form of truth; if only as you see it. You chose a beat earlier to focus on what kind of stories you want to investigate. When you have all of these things, you can then go live with your move, Curiosity Of Millions.

TELEPRESENCE MOVES

You get Old Hungers, Curiosity Of Millions, and choose one more.

🎲 OLD HUNGERS

At the start of the game, if you do not already have a lead, roll 2d6 without adding a State. On a 10+, there is a solid thread to follow, connecting to either something already known, or a new starting point. On a 7-9, it comes disjointed, cryptic, intangible, or vague. On a miss, in addition to what the MC says next, the information is alarming or perilous—for you, or another. Whatever the result, the MC may only give this information in up to as many words as is the sum of the dice roll.

You're on the hunt for a story at all times, since this is one of the only way you get Cred. If you ever begin a session without a lead, simply roll to get the ball started. Depending on the dice total, the MC will give you information to use; that information cannot exceed, in word count, the sum of your dice. Think of it like getting an anonymous tip in a drama show, or a garbled message intercepted.

MC: *Cadium, you're up late using an old teletube to surf 2d plains of information in your home; hunting for a story with a highly caffeinated green tea in one hand, and a bowl of cereal in the other, forgotten. Let's see if find any loose threads to pull on in this weird, plain text visor like screen you use so much.*

ZANA: *Looks like a 4 and a 2, unfortunately. It's almost like using antiquated tech to scroll plain text is not efficient or helpful?*

MC: *Until you see the script change like code in a Matrix movie or something. The cursor hangs there for a few seconds, deleting whatever text used to be there, and slowly, as if pecking at a typewriter the words form: Telepresence targeted, jacked with virads. Run. What do you do?*

📍 ON-LOCATION

When you go somewhere new and tell everyone about a historical truth or a little known piece of history in the area, take +1 Forward to Lifting The Veil, so long as you do so in that same area.

Keeping in theme with a news reporter, this move showcases your knowledge of the area around you when inspiration hits you. Maybe you're simply well versed or steeped in history. Maybe you've worked your beat for so long, you've naturally received a lot of information, and witnessed the changes around you, now forgotten by some.

ZANA: *It's too important not to run, even if someone may be pulling my leg. I'm going to leave as quickly as possible. I'll take the subway too, so signal is weaker. On the way, I want to hook into The Veil to see if I can't backtrace anyone coming in on my line, or look for something suspicious at all.*

MC: *Cool, I think you get out of there fine, but let's do On-Location if you want. Give me some fiction about this area and the subway, add the Spike, and then roll Lift The Veil for me.*

ZANA: *I think the subway is still archaic, and The Veil here does its best to hybridize reality, cleaning the graffiti and trying to make it nice and sterile. But what's little known about this place are the maintenance and side tunnels that cleaner bots use now. They run parallel, and so with the subway being a hub for The Veil, I get as off grid as I can get, moving into those tunnels. I'm Mad, I think, so I'll mark two Spikes there and Lift The Veil, netting me a 6, even with the +1 Forward—rough! I'm ultimately heading to Juanita, my contact, hoping to find info on virad attacks.*

☒ FACES IN WINDOWS

Create a contact with good detail and take 3 Hold on them, you've been together through thick and thin. Detail each Hold by telling the MC why they owe you. You may spend this Hold 1 for 1 to ask them one of the following questions:

- Who is keeping a secret from me?
- What appears to be something it is not?

When you feed them valuable information of your own, replenish 1 Hold on them.

You've got a good friend who happens to be a contact. They've got access to information you haven't, and they owe you; represented by your Hold on them. Each Hold represents a *reason* they owe you. Feed them valuable information to maintain that Hold, otherwise you will simply run your source "dry."

MC: *Alright, cool. So you make your way through the tunnels, right. The Veil is flickering on and off or you wouldn't notice, but there is definitely someone trying to jack into your system. It feels like ringing in your ear when you suddenly get disconnected from a signal trying to upload a packet to you, hacking you. With the failure, you close the back door they were using and everything, so you're fine for now. But that disconnect hurt, take 1 Harm. You make it to Juanita, though, where is she?*

ZANA: *She lives in like an artist loft and has disrupting tech around her place. It's an old building, like a brownstone. I think I'm still in a little pain, so on the way there I start a call, just sending her the file of what's happened to me and spending a Hold in order to have her tell me who is keeping a secret from me.*

📺 INSTINCTS

When you Analyze, you may ask, “Who or what here is relevant to my story?” in addition to the other questions.

MC: *Yeah she's in your window, and her eyes roll back as she consumes all the data, her face going from annoyance at your call to worry then... to fear. There is something about her image that makes the hair on the back of your neck raise, too. Try Analyze, see what you can glean, if anything.*

ZANA: *I think her fear is reflected on my face as well while this feeling grows. Marking Scared, and another 5! Ugh, but I do have Encyclopedia and I have Instincts, so I want to know if anything about this feed from her is relevant to my story.*

MC: *Absolutely, so you zoom in on her eyes and her face contorts in shock as you do so, showing you the barrage of viral ads bombarding her, thousands at a time until the feed goes dead. But as it does, you see in her eyes' reflection that she ran a trace of who was doing it... you just couldn't see it before it was shut down. And that is when you arrive at the brownstone, drenched in rain. The place is super quiet, no one is around aside from cars going by above the buildings. Assuming you rush in to get to her as quickly as is possible, you'll find her place wholly undisturbed; and Juanita crumpled in a heap in front of the mirror in the bathroom. What do you do?*

📺 SYNTHETIC INTIMACY

You have a slot for cabling. When you share yourself with someone else for the first time by allowing them to cable with you, roll. On a 10+, you take Advantage on your next roll, and they tell you what important memory of theirs you see. On a 7-9, you both tell each other an important memory, and you take +1 Forward.

This move implies that other people have a slot for cabling as well as yourself. What this looks like may, of course, vary. But this move introduces the idea that people, Slacks, or certain individuals have these ports for cabling. Cabling implies that these people can share data, or memory even. But, as with all moves, you interpret and detail how this works in the fiction. Do only broadcasters have them? Are they only used for memories? These are some of the questions you'll have to answer for yourself as you fit it into your setting.

ZANA: *Oh, shit! OK, well I'm going to cable with her and see if I can't get some information that way. If she remembers who it was, that would be good. I am straight pissed at the moment, and with Mad, I get a 11. About. Time.*

MC: *You link up and she's still disabled from the virads. However, you see the memory. The trace came back to Dizcorp; it's getting out that they've been hacked, or one of their products is contaminated with virads equals bad, one hundred percent. It behooves me to tell you, but I think you've got the story as well. Virads will sometimes kill people, if not tended to. You have this memory as a source, and your lead has panned out. Big time. What do you do?*

📺 CURIOSITY OF MILLIONS

When you become a telepresence and broadcast to the world your perceptions in the moment, and what you're thinking and feeling right now, describe the story as the audience experiences it, then roll. On a 10+, all three. On a 7-9, choose two. On a miss, choose one but the MC considers it a Golden Opportunity.

- Your stream suppressor does not fail; you maintain creative control of your broadcast without intervention.
- The broadcast goes viral (You make as much Cred as the highest die in your roll).
- You manage to retain control of your own body, feelings, and memories, as you link with the audience.

To use this move, you must satisfy the criteria for “The Story” section of the playbook, at least in vague terms—depending on the kind of story, and how you came by it. Only trigger this move for important stories, and avoid overusing the move, or broadcasting all the time, just to gain Cred. Maybe you do broadcast all of the time as a protagonist. However, it's only Curiosity of Millions that will trigger when you've got your big story, and people tune in specifically for that scoop.

There are a couple of suggestions for what may go wrong with your stream suppressor in the event of failure. The stream suppressor gives you creative control, so perhaps someone else takes over instead. A fan, a news station, or hacker takes control and spins it their way. Perhaps they minimize, or otherwise steer, the stream in a different than intended.

Going viral is how the Telepresence makes money; even 1 Cred is nothing to sneeze at.

Not retaining control of your body, feelings, and memories means that, potentially, the audience's connection with you overwhelms you. By losing control, they may force you to do what they want as they consume your content and push their will on you.

ZANA: *I mean... I'm going to go live, obviously, ha ha. This is my insurance policy since they are after me. I want to like, parse in an edited version of the memory I just discovered to protect her identity. That, and my memories being hunted down, with them obviously trying to upload virads into me. And with my Mad, which is dangerously growing in Spikes, I get a 10! So, all three options!*

MC: *Awesome, I think you feel that sound again as they're obviously trying to use your broadcast to hack you... but then it recedes as it is just overwhelmed by the sheer force of so many people connecting to you and learning your story. Make sure you've marked 6 Cred as well, since it went viral.*

IN LIVING MEMORY

After a broadcast concludes, and you imprint the raw data of the stream onto something else (You Detail), roll. On a hit, choose one:

- It becomes an insurance policy. Name a character implicated and they won't come after you as long as they know you have it.
- There is something yet to be revealed, unearthed with a more thorough inspection.
- It is valuable to the right person or persons.

If you take this move, just as you have slots for programs, you also have something slotted to record your broadcasts. You detail the medium and the method, but the result is an insurance policy to hold against character, if they are implicated. Alternatively, you can choose to have more information revealed with this recording. Finally, you can choose that the information is valuable to someone or some people. Between these options, you have some tropes from cyberpunk fiction to invoke.

ZANA: *Alright, so I'm safe for now. Can we jump forward a little? I want to record this. Finally. Finally, I'm Peaceful. I get an 8, so I want it to be an insurance policy against that corp, if that's cool. But I want to go back to Juanita if enough time has passed and give her to OptiCube it's stored on; Insuring she will be safe, and maybe giving me the Hold back I spent?*

MC: *Yeah. I think you find her at the hospital though, recovering slowly from the virads attack. And... actually I really like the image of her being unconscious and you just pressing this into her hand for when she wakes up or something, what do you think of that?*

📺 THE TELEPRESENCE SPECIAL

When the Telepresence shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you Hold 1. You may spend your Hold 1 for 1 at any time to have them tell you what they know about a story you're parsing together. Alternatively, take Advantage Forward when you next broadcast with the Curiosity of Millions move (at the Risk of having that intimate moment shared with all of the viewers).

ZANA: *Definitely, I think it's a moment of intimacy, too? I'll take Advantage Forward on Curiosity of Millions next time, and I'll add a Spike in Joyful. I leave hoping she will recover just fine, and feel secure knowing she will be safe regardless. I guess I better watch my own ass now though, hey, ha ha.*

You think we have a connection because of all the things you've sucked out of my mind by screening, but that isn't real. Trust comes when you've worked with someone for years; it doesn't speed up just because you can think fast, and it doesn't materialize when you stick a cable in someone's head. What you get from screening me isn't friendship, it's data. We're strangers.

Raphael Carter, *The Fortunate Fall*



THE FUTURIST

BY CLARE WALL AND KATE BULLOCK

The Futurist exists in every time, constantly analyzing the impact of the past on the present and future, as well as the impact of the future on the present. You are gifted and grounded by the material realities and knowledge of futurists past mediated by “the program” inside you. You see what is unseen, know the patterns of culture, and cling to a history you know will repeat itself.

When you play the Futurist, you are playing someone who has been raised as part of the Society. The Society built the program. The program exists within you, and is fully interfaced with your mind so you can run simulations while going about your daily life. Running simulations requires years of study and a keen understanding of the past to see how it will influence and predict the future.

The Society owns you. They will give you missions and demand answers from you to maintain balance in the world. To your knowledge, the Society has existed ephemerally and forever. They are invisible until they need eyes, which is where you get involved.

- Decide who gave you to the Society, how they came to own you, and what life was like being trained by them. Tell the MC who your point of contact within the Society.
- Your program interacts with you and only you. Detail how your program interacts with you. Give it a personality and an avatar.

Your moves allow you to maintain some control of the world around you, while also understanding how your actions will influence the future. You are constantly watching the world to witness new history unfold. You always seek the truth of tomorrow.

The Futurist isn't an oracle. Instead, your program, mind, and deep understanding of multifaceted approaches to history enable you to see how the long game plays out. Use your knowledge of what is happening now and what is to come to shape the world as the Society wants to see it. This means knowing those around you, because you may need to stop them or save them if their futures take a turn for the worst.

On the second page of the Futurist playbook there are several areas to read over carefully, and then complete. These areas are:

■ **The area titled “The Future”**

The Future is fallible and changing, and the more you try to control its flow, the more likely you are to cause damage or get in your own way. “The Future” lists items to mark off as consequences. You may mark them off in any order, but when you mark off “You become one with The Program” you will retire your character as your mind fully joins the program. When the playbook or MC directs you, mark an item off the list, then detail with the MC how this happens in this fiction.

CLARE: *I failed my roll for The Machine Speaks, so I'm going to choose to mark off one from this list. I'm going to choose: someone asks you for help who you shouldn't help. Remember Dallas, the AI that bailed me out from the Society? I think they're in trouble, and since they're not a person, I shouldn't help them. But I know I have to because I'm obligated to after they saved me.*

MC: *That sounds good. You see a newsflash that Dallas348 is wanted in connection to a security breach at CorpCom. You know where they tend to hide. Hell, you've seen this moment coming and didn't do anything to stop it.*

■ **The area titled “The Society”**

The Society is the one who made you into a Futurist, whether you had innate talent, or were just unlucky in life. They installed the Program, and now your brain and the program are one in the same. In addition, you will choose another gift that The Society gave you. Detail it with the MC, and think about what that gift is important to you. This gift is why you continue to serve the Society, even though you may feel threatened by them, or distanced from their mission.

CLARE: *The Society gave me the gift of my real name. I came here really young and I didn't know who I was. When I finished training, they told me my real name. It let me find my family. Now I know my sister, even though most other Futurists don't know their family. I am grateful for the Society's gift.*

■ The area titled “The Symbol”

Every Futurist can be identified as a part of The Society. Look at the list and decide how you are marked. Circle one, and describe it to the MC and your group. Decide whether the world knows what this symbol means, or if only other Futurists and members of The Society would recognize it. Also decide where on your body the symbol is located, and whether you hide it or wear it with pride.

CLARE: *So I have a piercing, one of those subdermal implant types, that is on the top of my hand under the knuckle of the middle finger. It's this weird purple-ish metal that doesn't glint even though it's not dull. It's obvious, and everyone knows what it means when they see it. There's one on each hand and they're always cold. I don't hide it. Usually.*

■ The area titled “Their Hold”

The Society tells you what to do and how to behave. They have expectations. They express these expectations and demands by spending their Hold on you to make you act as their agent. When you question them, The Program will remove your access to one of your moves. Cross it out for the rest of the session. If you do it, you mark XP. If you reject their orders, mark one off of the Future list, or permanently lose access to one of your States. Then get ready to run, they refuse to support rogue agents.

MC: *You get a moment where The Program talks to you. You hear his strange, faraway voice. “Cas, you've been given a new mission. You need to find and deprogram Dallas348. They've become a threat.” What do you do?*

CLARE: *Shit. Why? I just got them out of trouble. They're not a threat anymore*

MC: *You can feel your ability to read the past of others kind of blink out of your mind as The Program shuts down that part of your brain.*

CLARE: *Fuck. Fine. Fine. Is Dallas still where I left them?*

■ The area titled “The Program”

Within your mind, the Society gave you the gift of The Program. It is your constant companion, dearest friend, and potential enemy. With its help, you can run simulations faster than any unmodified human, and can see the future clearly. In this section, you detail The Program. Circle what it looks like to you, say what you call it, what kind of personality it has, and how it feels when you're using it. Keep in mind, it's usually running in the back of your head, constantly and steadily, helping you stay on top of all you're doing. Let the MC know all this information so they can accurately portray the program as it speaks and interacts with you.

FUTURIST MOVES

You get Beyond The Veil and choose one more.

BEYOND THE VEIL

At the beginning of a session, roll. On a 7-9, choose one. On a 10+, you may ask a follow up question from the list, or one of your own. On a miss, still choose one, but mark a permanent emotion Spike in the State you just rolled.

- How is a lesson from my past going to reappear in the present?
- Whose dark future is being shaped right now?
- What disaster did I avert that can no longer be avoided?
- What terrible thing is about to happen I didn't stop?
- What is happening today that will destroy my chosen future?
- What is happening today that will alter humanity forever?

Before the scenes begin, check to see what future or problem you're investigating. This move lets you lay out possible conflicts coming down the pipe, and tie your character into other players' stories. A friend in need is a friend indeed, so they say. Use your question to carry over from last session, bring up stuff you've warned about in the past, or to pull someone else into your story. The more you tie in from the past to the question, and the more the MC does this too, the better your information will be, and the more complicated your story will become. This move is all about laying out the conflict for the session, as well as the long game.

On a 7-9, you get to ask the MC one from the list. The MC should use their prep and what's been happening in game to tell you what trouble is coming, and to answer the question you ask. If you have an idea, work with the MC to integrate it into the fiction. On a 10+, you can ask a follow-up question, including leading questions that can help tie the answer into the fiction of other players. On a miss, you still get to ask one, but running the simulation causes a permanent emotion Spike in whatever State you just rolled with.

CLARE: *Okay. So I'm going to roll before we jump in. Ugh, got a 5. So I get to ask one but permanently Spike a State, too. Right, so I'm going to ask... What terrible thing is about to happen that I didn't stop?*

MC: *For sure. Remember Dallas? How you left them in the hands of The Society? They're about to be destroyed even though they hold the only information around about how you can fix Shine's broken tech. You could've saved Dallas. You didn't. And now your friend is going to suffer forever for it. What State did you roll with?*

CLARE: *Joy. I mean, I was feeling pretty good after last session.*

MC: *Right. So grab a pen and fill one in permanently.*

🗄️ INTERFACE OTHER

When you need to use another's talents from the past, present, or future, roll. On a 10+, Hold 2. On 7-9, Hold 1. You may spend in your Hold 1 for 1 to use a move from another playbook this once. On a miss, Hold 1 but you permanently add an emotion Spike to the State you rolled.

The unique thing about being a Futurist is you're tied to the past, present, and future. You can see how skills and tech are going to evolve and be used. Within the program, skills from everywhere are at your fingertips. On a 10+, you Hold 2. On a 7-9, you Hold 1. You can spend this Hold 1 for 1 to use a move from another playbook. On a miss, you still get to Hold 1, but Spike the State you rolled with.

When you use this move, make sure you've picked out the move you want ahead of time to avoid stalling play. You can use any playbook, even one not currently in play. You can only use each move once. Keep track of the moves you've used so you know which ones are available to you.

CLARE: *So I'm going to go hold onto the deck and search through the program for something that can help me.*

MC: *Sure. What does that look like?*

CLARE: *Mostly I'm talking to Lore, The Program, although everyone else just sees me staring blankly at the deck. I'm asking her how I can find out what happened to this object.*

MC: *Cool. Roll Interface Other.*

CLARE: *I get an 8. I'm going to spend my hold right away to use Things Speak from the Catabolist. I'll write that down so I don't forget that I've used it.*

MC: *Absolutely. Lore smiles at you and tilts her head. "Doll Lens, from ten years ago, knew how to read objects. You can access their records to discover how to do the same."*

❏ DROP PROPHECY

When you give advice to someone after Analyzing their behavior, they take +1 Forward if they listen to you. They take -2 Forward if they ignore your advice.

As the Futurist, you can spend time observing what will happen in the future by asking The Program to Analyze someone else's behaviour. You can offer your advice, which may or may not be honest. If they listen to you, they gain +1 Forward. However, if they don't, they take -2 Forward until your prediction comes true, or the situation is resolved.

CLARE: *Chi, you can't hire Dallas. They'll betray you at the first opportunity.*

FRASER: *I'm going to hire them anyways*

MC: *Fine. You take -2 to dealing with Dallas and getting that to go your way until they betray you.*

❏ THE MACHINE SPEAKS

When you simulate the future to figure out the way forward, roll. On a 10+, Hold 2. On a 7-9, Hold 1. On a miss, Hold 1 and cross one option off "The Future" section. You may spend your Hold 1 for 1 to:

- Have the equipment you need when you need it
- Ignore all Harm from one source
- Add +2 to your roll, decided after rolling
- Know who is the right person to help you
- Be where you need to be at the right time

As the Futurist, you can predict what you need before you need it. When you spend time running simulations with The Program to figure what you need or how to proceed, there are pretty good odds you'll be ready. On a 10+, you Hold 2. On a 7-9, you Hold 1. On a miss, you still Hold 1, but cross off one of the Future options.

If you fail and mark one off of the Future, be sure to integrate the fail into your fiction around what choices you make for spending your Hold.

CLARE: *Okay. So we're going to go in here and rescue her? I'm going to talk to Lore and see how many ways this can go south. I roll a 9. So I see the fifty ways this is going to end in our death before I tell everyone I know who we need to talk to. There's a guy, Raynbow, who can get us in without bloodshed. We're going to go see him.*

📊 THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER

When someone fucks with the future you need to happen, you can roll with their State modifier instead of your own for your next move.

The Futurist spends a lot of time doing what the Society asks, while also trying to direct the future as they see best. Many people will try to obstruct you in the process. In order to avoid using your own States if they're low, you can use someone else's when they try to fuck with the future you're trying to control. You can only use the State they are currently feeling, but it lets you breathe for a second without having to worry about Spiking out your own States.

CLARE: *Woah, wait, what are you doing?*

FRASER: *I'm going to rip the core out of Dallas. They're a problem.*

CLARE: *They're essential to the future. The future that needs to happen. I can't let you.*

FRASER: *How are you going to stop me?*

CLARE: *What is Chi feeling right now?*

FRASER: *Powerful. She feels in charge of this.*

CLARE: *Great. That's better than my Mad State modifier. So I'm going to use your own Powerful modifier in order to Sway you.*

You can map out a whole city according to the weight of memory, like pins on the homicide board tracking the killer's movements. But the connections get thicker and denser and more complicated all the time.

Lauren Beukes, *Moxyland*

📊 SIMULATED SELVES

When you run simulations of someone's past and future to discover who they really are, roll. On a 10+, you learn something useful and important. On a 7-9, they learn something useful about you in return. On a miss, your futures entwine in a disastrous but significant way.

The Futurist can read other people to ascertain their influence over the future, and how they've impacted the past. A deep understanding of those around you will help you shape the future. On a 10+, you learn something useful and important about them. A PC can detail this about their character, or they can work with the MC to figure out what information to give you. On a 7-9, you also give them information on you in return. On a miss, you see how important you are to each other's futures, as well as the resulting disasters.

CLARE: *Cas is sitting across the bar, staring at Chi, trying to figure out who the fuck this woman thinks she is. Her mind and The Program are racing, figuring out what the future looks like with Chi, and what it looks like without her. I roll and get a 10. What do I see?*

FRASER: *You see that she's connected and has her fingers in every pie, but you notice she avoids any pie that CorpCom is the baker of, and it's because she was owned by them once and now she's terrified.*

📺 THE FUTURIST SPECIAL

When the Futurist shares a moment of intimacy, be it emotional or physical, tell them what you see of your shared future, and then choose one:

- You both gain Advantage
- You gain Advantage while they are given Disadvantage
- Hold 1. You may spend that Hold to force them to roll Risk before they can do something you know will end badly

Intimacy with the Futurist lets them and their partner see their future, present, and past connect them together. When the Futurist is intimate with another, they can give both gain Advantage, as the simulation shows them the best way forward. The Futurist can also gain Advantage and give their partner Disadvantage, as they tell their partner the wrong way forward. They can also hold one to force their partner to roll Risk before they go to do something the Futurist knows won't end well. They choose one and proceed with the scene according to the choice they made.

CLARE: *So what do I see about Chi and I after we've been sitting together at the bar, close and telling each other about our life dreams?*

MC: *You see how you will destroy each other, you by destroying the Corp that Chi runs, and Chi by burning you through your powers for her Advantage. Which option do you choose?*

CLARE: *I'm going to give myself Advantage and give Chi Disadvantage. I'm not helping that shit come true.*



CHAPTER SIX:

REFINING YOUR GAME



PLUGINS

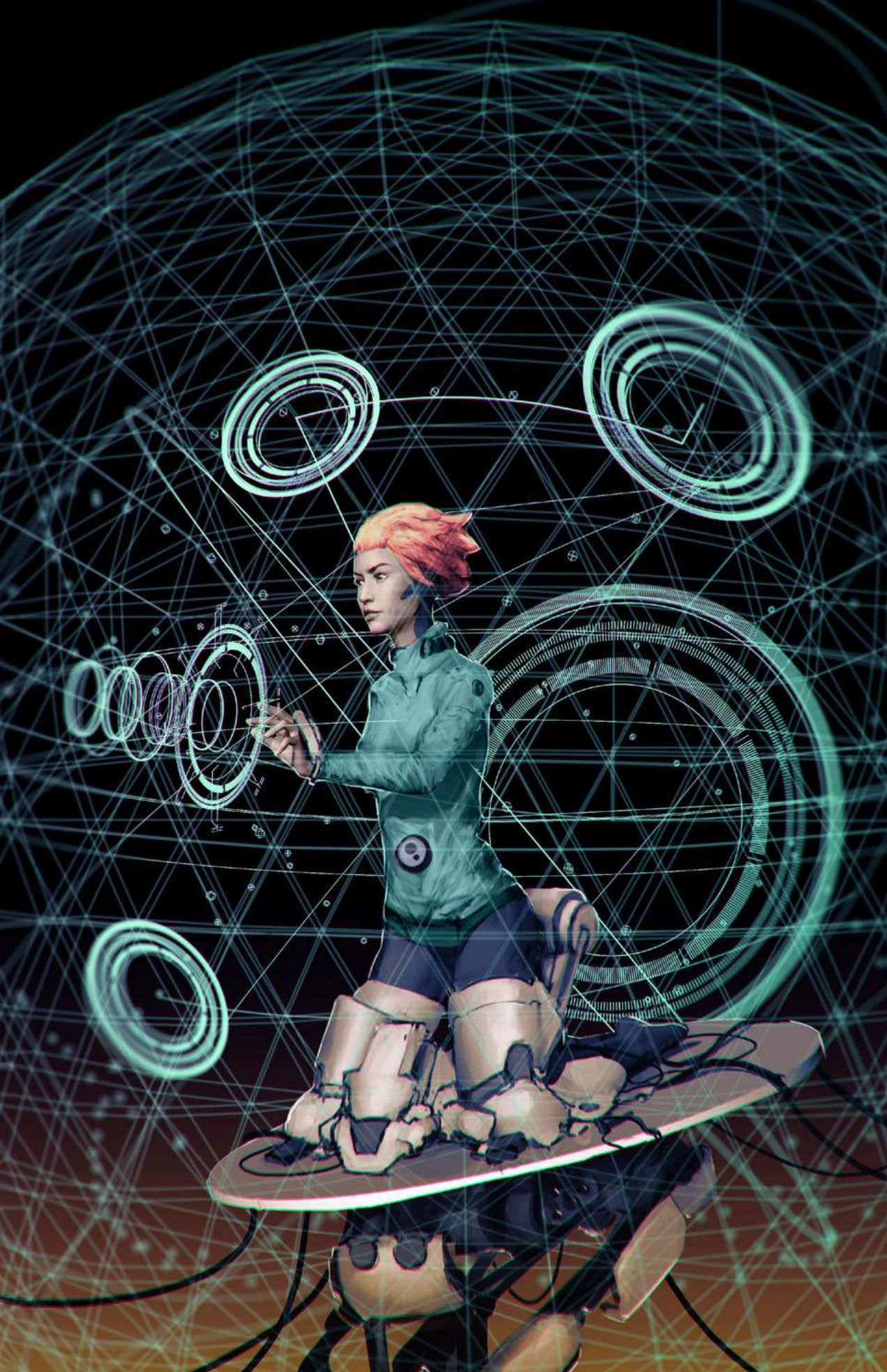
These playbooks are thematic extensions of the playbooks found in both *The Veil* and *Cascade*. In order to have them become available, you must first qualify for them by doing something within the fiction stated in the Plugin. Think of this qualification like the trigger in a move text: when you do the thing stated in the fiction, X happens. In this case, X is unlocking the Plugin playbook. When you do unlock it, the text will tell you what you get from it. Usually you will get a new move. Afterwards, you can spend any following improvements to take the additional moves found in the Plugin, even if you've already exhausted your 'Get another move from...' Advancements in your playbook.

During the course of play, you may want to take more moves, but find none from your playbook, or other playbooks, really speak to you. In this case, you can make your own Plugin or use a *Cascade* Plugin that accompanies your digital copy of the game. Anytime there should be a move for some fictional positioning you want to have, and it does not fit the basic moves. Consider asking and working with your MC to create a Plugin and, once crafted, begin to take the move(s) with the Advancements you begin to accrue.

The Veil corebook explains in depth how to formulate and craft moves (on page 357) if you wish to write your own. As an MC, you'll use custom moves for many things. Threats, specific locations, and playbook advances when needed, to name a few. Think of Plugins as custom moves for your character that drive toward a theme you want to gradually unravel in the fiction. All the moves do not have to be written beforehand either. *Cascade*'s Plugins supplied should be viewed as exemplars to help you craft your own, should you want or require it.

Work together to craft a Plugin that is best suited to where your character is going in the fiction. The best indications one is needed is if you want to be doing something in the fiction that should require a move to propel the fiction forward in interesting and unpredictable ways and the basic moves don't fit the circumstance well enough. It would be more evocative, specialized, and interesting if a basic move was not used, and so a custom move should be crafted. Since it's a part of your character that you want to use going forward though, a Plugin would be more appropriate.

As long as you stick with your character and they are growing Plugins are a great way to show that evolution of character and fictional positioning as they change how they interact with the world around them, while also having something to work toward as a player.



THE SILHOUETTE is a natural extension of the Executive. When you begin to assert your own agenda, subverting the board, you'll unlock this Plugin. You'll gain a new resource in which to make use of this new fictional positioning: influence.

THE ITINERANT is both designed to allow for a specific kind of game, in which there would be one player and one MC. But also to facilitate a playbook that is an adventurer, shirking the society they knew, and ostensibly, came from.

THE IMMATERIAL allows for players who want to migrate their consciousness into The Veil. There you can utilize more resources... but also become a force someone or something wishes to confine.

THE CARRIER inserts a biopunk aspect to *Cascade*. Accompanying this Plugin is a broad move that injects the idea that viruses, curated and designed for specific purposes, might allow for more fictional positioning. Just as cybernetics lend themselves more positioning, these viruses allow for you to gain Tags, accomplishing the same task in a different way. Along with this, there is the ability to communicate with those people also infected, treating biological substances as NPCs, and a couple more options.

THE SHIP BREAKER is a specific Plugin designed to allow for players to participate in scavenging "high-value targets." Removing others of this technology. Perhaps old, discarded tech that is military grade. You decide along with the MC just what it is you are looking to scavenge and the moves will facilitate the rest.

HOLDING MISSES

Although not really codified in *The Veil*, some of the MC's moves are conducted "off screen." Not always will your moves, as hard as you like, result with something being described directly to the players. Making a Threat move, for instance, is an example of this. If you're not sure how to use a miss off the top of your head, take the time to think about it, or simply hold the move for later. You might choose to tell the players you are holding the miss if you like, though, if something "bad" doesn't happen after a miss, they will most likely wait for it to drop anyway. Sometimes using this technique is a good way to ramp up tension.

This might come up especially in action sequences, when you poll the table for what it is that each protagonist does. When they begin to trigger the moves and multiple misses occur. If the resulting fiction, in your mind, would be better served by holding a miss, do so. Afterall, you always make moves as hard as *you* like.

**He's never fought with religion;
what is the point of railing
against such beauty, such
intimate theatre, such chime
of eternity? He can treasure it
without believing in it.**

Ian McDonald, *The Dervish House*

REACTION CLOCKS

When a player exerts their agency in the fiction, whether dice are rolled or not, the evidence is often seen as the current circumstances and scene play out. If moves snowball or things are resolved completely, they are independent entirely of a new tool at the MC's disposal: Clocks.

Currently, the MC uses steps in *The Veil* to track Threats and the Main Antagonist, focusing on what how they will interact with the protagonists. If unhindered, their plans progress and, based on the MC's moves, made known to the players in a variety of ways.

However, Reaction Clocks specifically show the players what effect their choices have on the fiction at all times. They are tailored specifically to the player's character, the protagonist, and are always shown on screen.

Each playbook has a specific goal to accomplish, or a unique way they interact with the environment. Whenever they drive toward an aspect of their playbook by interacting with the world, the interaction irrevocably changes the fiction. When you lend these moments screen time, they become inherently important simply by virtue of this fact.

For the MC, the important steps for the story are those driving toward the stakes questions in regards to prep work. However, these moments *not* directly pertaining to the MC's step process or prep work are also worth reflecting on as possible stakes questions. You already have stakes questions on the 1st session planning sheet that come into play as the world is formed. But what about the following sessions, or the MC scenario sheet instead, which does not have stakes questions?

Clocks come into play when stakes questions naturally unfold during play and you, the MC, have just the answer. Alternatively, play may inspire an altogether new stakes question that is directly actionable the next time you return to the fiction. Ordinarily you would simply cross out the stakes question as answered.

Reactions as Clocks are blank to begin with, so you can fill them with as many hours or segments as needed. Answers to questions often breed more questions, so you will need to allow for as many points on the Clock as you will need Reactions. For each player character you will create a clock that is specifically an answer to a stakes question regarding them.

For instance, if the stakes question was: are there any repercussions for the Telepresence after they broadcasted their identity? The answer that you come up with may be a reaction, so long as it does not involve steps for Threats or the Main Antagonist. If the answer was: they established during character generation that someone or something was hunting them, perhaps the answer is to make a new Threat and create the first one-or-two steps for that Thread.

If the answer results in their favorite vendor recognizing them and treating them differently, or if you as the MC want to offer comfort after this traumatic event in the coming session, this is a perfect opportunity to make a Reaction Clock so you don't forget about that specific Reaction.

Each Clock should have at least two hours on it initially to signify that this reaction may snowball into another. The more hours on a clock you allow for, the more Reactions you anticipate happening within the fiction.

These Reactions, at their heart, are a device to show the player how they affect the fiction in small ways, as well as big. They also remind you that each player should see the consequence of moves without ever having to interact directly with a Threat or the Main Antagonist. The fiction is a living breathing organism, given life by every player, illustrated visually through each Reaction on a Clock. Reaction Clocks also show the players that you intend to interact with them, and reward them, without threats to their character. It also reminds them that the fiction will remember their actions, as *you* are the fiction.

Often times this effect is displayed naturally throughout a scene. Players will introduce new characters with the Link move, or remove other characters from the fiction. But between events classified as big, momentous changes in the fiction are these important moments in which the world responds to them.

As a visual aid, Reaction Clocks are intended help the MC pace their game. How often you interact with them gives you a clear indicator of whether a player is getting their share of spotlight time. If a Reaction has not occurred for someone in some time, but many have occurred for another player, it should signal a need to rectify that next session. The degree of the Reaction in terms of how much it affects the fiction going forward can vary as much as you like, as long as it makes sense for the fiction.

To recap, Reaction Clocks are visual reminders to show the players how their actions change the fiction, and do not interact with the Main Antagonist and Threat steps described in *The Veil* core book—primarily on pages 348 and 361.

Make one Clock per character after each session, and allow yourself as many stakes questions as you like, as they may turn into Reaction Clocks. Get rid of Clocks that no longer serve a purpose, but always have at least one active for each player. Always show this Reaction on screen each session, modifying them after the session as needed. In this way, you will remind yourself to spotlight the character in a manner other than just screen time, and breathe new life into the fiction.

PLAYBOOK FOCUSES

THE AESTHETIC

The idea that art can be subversive and inspire change when consumed is at the heart of this playbook. They would fundamentally not be who they are without their art, and so it is something that cannot be taken away—even by you, the MC. Since this is cyberpunk fiction, everything aims toward their being a facet of society that resists some form of oppression in the setting. The Aesthetic is at the heart of this resistance, reaching out to other people who resist, or other countercultures. They can argue the merits of art as subversion to have hold on people, well beyond the options in the Sway move.

How their art manifests in a future society or hybrid reality is also something that could be very unique. Push them to think about how their art is being spun by the other side. If they are trying to be subversive with it, explore how it also conforms; show them that success brings with it a spotlight, as well as its assimilation into mainstream culture. Their individuality is perhaps the brightest in terms of moves, when looking at Paint Your Dream, for instance. This means that modifications are probably a cultural thing and could then tie into Pulse Of The City when attempting to find more counter-culture in the world.

- Create a Threat or a Reaction Clock for their art.
- How is art itself being destroyed, commodified, or oppressed in the setting? Treat all, or specific, artforms forms as being oppressed if it has the power to subvert the status quo.
- Make their resistance as real as the oppression. Create a Threat or Reaction Clock as applicable for the resistance as needed.
- Incorporate art and the discussion of it amongst NPCs, or drive at the topics in general; on screen or off.
- Give them someone who cares about their art, if the other characters do not.



THE DENOTATION

In a lot of cyberpunk fiction the hackers have decks of some kind, using the technology as an interface to acquire information Gatekeepers withhold. However, in a cyberpunk future with hybridized reality, this kind of interface isn't needed. This character creates their *own* unique interface tool to tap into the information that exists all around them. Since everything is connected by data, where they hack is as important as you decide together. The central focus is how they hack and what they use, rather than a more traditional framework of what a hacking scene might look like. Otherwise, the moves are completely taken from what hackers do in real life, more-or-less. Since information is also essentially an overlay for what everyone sees because of The Veil, assume most things can be hacked, in appearance as well as whatever it might represent.

They are most likely interested in solving problems if they choose this playbook. And, since The Veil allows for the unique opportunity to make any physical object information that someone might desire; craft unique challenges that subvert typical media representations of what we think of as important spaces. If, like in the movie *Inception*, data needs to be stored securely and their analog for this is a bank vault. Subvert that expectation by placing extremely sensitive information in mundane items. Or go the opposite direction and place it in a Rubik's Cube, where "hacking" is solving a physical problem that *becomes* the digital payload they are looking for.

Think of the moves of this playbook like the movie *Hackers*, where Gatekeepers are always oppressing the masses by withholding or censoring information. They try to destabilize that control. On a conceptual level, the anime *Dennou Coil* inspired this playbook, where kids use glasses to see and interact with an augmented reality in a multitude of ways as the show progresses.

- Make a Threat for the Gatekeepers.
- Imagine their interactions with The Veil's overlay is something being hacked. It can glitch out, it can have a firewall, it can have encryption and protection. Remember that you can represent these things physically as a "literal" thing in the fiction.
- Explore their Implement. It is the key for their movements and agency regarding The Veil, find out what other hackers use and why.
- Introduce other hackers and their aliases, their Motivations, and in general make them have a dynamic morality. Not all hackers are good, not all of them are bad.
- Ask questions about the kinds of problems they want to see and incorporate them into the fiction.

THE MNEMOLOGIST

The Mnemologist has commodified memory, which means memories need to be portrayed as valuable and potentially scarce in some regards. Are there multiple methods for experiencing a memory? Can it become a drug? If so, is it addictive?

The Mnemologist runs The Store, which is an establishment for the player to name and flesh out. The Store comes with a one regular NPC who is in their corner, and one who is not. This place is used as a front for the main business of producing and selling memories. The Store requires a front, as the playbook assumes an authority or other group opposes this business. Push on needing that front in the fiction; especially if their start of session move is a 7-9 result or a miss. Make sure their establishment, and the scene within it, is something you spotlight as though it were an NPC.

A lot of cyberpunk literature explores memory, from memories as merely being stories we tell ourselves, to the consequences of perfect memory recall. While *Strange Days* is at the forefront of media for this playbook, another good touchstone is “The Entire History Of You”, a *Black Mirror* episode, where a man’s life unravels from the ability to view memory in perfect clarity. There are many angles players could take their own version of memories. Whatever that may be, make sure you push back, and show how their practices affect culture and humanity. There should always be someone opposing them, if only to explore it within the fiction.

- Make sure the consequences of running this kind of establishment are shown in the fiction, especially with their the start of session move.
- Have them detail how memory clips work. When Magic Man happens, make sure you mark that Hold to jump in on Flashback scenes.
- Make their NPCs from The Regulars section of their playbook a part of their lives
- Create a Reaction Clock when they modify their own memory, when applicable.
- Create a Threat that opposes the use of memory clips and explores why.



THE PERCIPIENT

The Percipient's mission should be predominate within the fiction. Their training should be something that continually others them from other people, including players in the group. Do they remember their purpose? How important is it to them now that they are in the future and the world has changed? How do the people they are beholden to enforce their will and the mission upon them? If they are in line with the mission, then show them the consequences of following it through.

More so than other playbooks, the Percipient is about being a tool. It has a very low cognitive load and a singular purpose in mind, designed to be an easy pickup and play playbook. The playbook grows more complex through the character's interactions with mainstream culture and other players, though. How does being a tool make them feel? How does it make the other characters feel? If this character is a reflection of society while being simply a tool for a singular purpose, how does that affect your fiction?

- Press them to use Soak It Up whenever they go someplace new, find out what they think mainstream culture is like in this fiction.
- If the PC's don't already do this, make an NPC interact with them about their mission, shining a light on it so that it is challenged in the fiction.
- Make a Reaction Clock for their mission. What happens when it is realized, does their service ever end? What will the organization do?
- Have them be treated like a tool or a weapon if they act like one.
- Show them to be the deadliest character in the fiction.

there will be times when, as an Envoy, you must kill and destroy. Then you will choose and equip yourself with the tools that you need. But remember the weakness of weapons. They are an extension—you are the killer and destroyer. You are whole, with or without them.

THE TELEPRESENCE

A relationship between people who generate content and people who consume it is always interesting. This playbook directly engages with the idea that creators and consumers are linked, except it is literal in this fiction. Are they famous, why? What kinds of stories are they known for? They are wired for doing these broadcasts, unique and distinguished from other cybernetics. What drove them to interface with tech other than Neurochips?

Make sure they are treated as they are meant to be: if they are famous, have the upsides and downsides of fame present; if entirely or relatively unknown, the same. Are they aware they're being suppressed, and how do they feel about it? Do they live a public or private life, why? How do the other characters feel about this kind of content and why? There are a lot of questions and implications that come with this playbook.

Privacy issues, fandoms, and toxic relationships with them; Intimacy and if it can be manufactured. The price of freedom, commodification things that are not yet, but starting to be in our society. Responsibilities of people who create content. There is a plethora of questions, so make sure you ask probing questions when the player creates their character to see exactly what they want to explore.

- Create a Reaction Clock when they broadcast. How does the world react to their streams, do they go viral? What does that mean? Show it in the fiction.
- Make an NPC who opposes what they do, and supports what they do if the PCs don't supply this outlook already. Push at the core issues of the playbook if the player is interested in those things.
- Push on the thing they gave up in order to become wired and make use of their stream suppressor. What did they give up, and how does that make them feel? Do they ever want emancipation from it?
- Depict these content creators outside of this character. If people consume information like this, what are the implications for the fiction? Do people even want information and content from people who can't broadcast all of their senses. Is it addictive? Is it privileged, is it behind a paywall, etc.

THE FUTURIST

The Society creates and eventually harvests Futurists. The Program isn't a pure program, so much as it is the downloaded minds and abilities of every Futurist who has come before and after. The Futurist is designed to burn out quickly, by eventually having no more emotion Spikes to take. When this happens, they will join the machine, The Program, and give up the fight to save the world from its future self.

The Future section allows players to determine how they slowly burn out. Help them integrate that into the fiction when they are told to cross off one of the options. "Beyond the Veil" allows you to set up failure for the Futurist, PCs, or their enemies and allies at the beginning of session. It lets you poke where things hurt the most, and allowing you to get The Society involved. When the Futurist rolls the move, think of your Threats and how to integrate them into those questions. Jump to the worst possible conclusion and make it worse. Use it to shove them into other people's stories and watch the flames rise.

The Futurist's fate isn't known to them. The Program will begin to act out the closer to completion the Futurist becomes, giving them an opportunity to realize the inherent dark nature of The Society. Make sure The Program feels like the downloaded minds of the best geniuses of the last century. Make it feel real but contained, and only let the cat out of the bag when the dark truth is revealed.

Keep some notes on the futures the PC simulates, so that you can show them ways they were right, ways they were wrong, and how they've influenced time itself. Use their moves against them when other Futurists are called to find them, or to help liberate them from the Society. Always use your prep and what you know about the other PCs to keep the Futurist involved in their problems and to know why the Society is interested in them as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
APPENDIX N





The following is specific touchstones for the game to help you get a bead on the literature and media that influences *The Veil* and *Cascade*, in general, as well as focusing on specific playbooks.

VISUAL TOUCHSTONES

In terms of what the world looks like through the eyes of people with a Neurochip visually: <https://vimeo.com/166807261>

This short film also is good at showing implications for this kind of technology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ftjXKXKs>

As well as *Psycho Pass* for its augmented reality at home for the characters. The *Blade Runner 2049* and the live action *Ghost In The Shell* movie, both released in 2017, also integrate a lot of augmented reality. The next step is the mental leap that these augmentations appear and feel just as real as anything in physical space now.

Via IMDB, I have a large public list of movies, TV shows, anime, etc. Here.

A pinterest for *The Veil* here.

A Pinterest for *Cascade* Here.

Alternatively, feel free to follow me on any of those platforms to find these lists.

PLAYBOOK TOUCHSTONES

The Apparatus is entirely inspired by *Ghost in the Shell*.

The Architect is a combination of *Inception* and *The Matrix* to create a hybridized playbook touching on both elements of the movies.

The Attached is influenced and inspired by *Mardock Scramble*.

The Catabolist is sort of my take on a trope well known in cyberpunk literature, human bodies rejecting cybernetics. Media adjacent stuff to this idea could be *Tetsuo*, *The Iron Man*. Where a man has a fetish that ultimately engulfs him entirely (not for the feint of heart).

The Dying is the answer to two questions I had. One being an ideal playbook for people coming into a game for a short amount of time but having a big impact on the fiction, and the other being the supernatural/magic elements from *Neuromancer* being injected into the fiction.

The Empath is another playbook that was inspired by *Neuromancer*, an interpretation of what a *Neuromancer* might actually do, then spinning it into a character that could possibly do emotional labour for people or weaponizing Spikes in emotions. Empath's are common in a lot of literature as well, though.

The Executive is mostly inspired by *Blade Runner's* megacorporation, the Tyrell Corporation. Mixing in some aspects of *Vanilla Sky*, where the main character has to contend with a board, the seven dwarves as they are referred to, hampering the protagonist and only viewed as an obstacle that eventually becomes more diabolical than we initially thought.

The Honed is inspired by the book *Data Runners*.

The Honorbound is heavily influenced by *Blade Runner's* main protagonist, Deckard, is forced to do something he's "quit" but in the end really has no choice but to do as he is told.

The Onomastic is inspired by the idea in lots of cyberpunk literature in which entertainment is prioritized over information. A person or group of people who safeguard information in an age where misinformation abounds was appealing to have in the fiction.

The Seeker is inspired by a conversation with a digital monk in *Woken Furies*.

The Wayward is directly inspired by the *Sandman* comics combined with solarpunk.

The Aesthetic is inspired by *The Summer Prince*, a post-cyberpunk book.

The Denotation is inspired by an anime called *Dennou Coil* and the movie *Hackers*.

The Mnemologist is directly inspired by *Strange Days*.

The Percipient is inspired by the main character, Takeshi Kovacs in the titular trilogy, beginning with *Altered Carbon*; soon to be a TV show on Netflix.

The Telepresence is inspired by *The Fortunate Fall*.

LITERARY TOUCHSTONES

Cyberpunk works that has had the most influence on the design of this book and my thinking toward the genre, both cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk. A few books, manga, and comics I have personally read, enjoyed, and recommend are:

- *Rosewater*
- *Cyber World: Tales of Humanity's Tomorrow*. An anthology curated with diversity and inclusivity, if you're going to read only one book this one would give you the best idea of both what relevant themes are being explored in the genre right now, as well as a ton of fodder for your settings - since there is a lot of short fiction in it.
- *Storming The Reality Studio Anthology*.
- *Rewired: The Post-Cyberpunk Anthology*.
- *The Windup Girl*.
- *The Summer Prince*.
- *Altered Carbon* and *Woken Furies*.
- *Trouble and Her Friends*.
- *He, She, and It*.
- *Red Spider, White Web*.
- *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
- *China Mountain Zhang*.
- *River Of Gods*.
- *Tokyo Ghosts*.
- *Escapology* and *Virology*.
- *Data Runner*.
- *Necrotech* and *Nanoshock*.
- *Synners*.
- *Cypulchre*.
- *Empty Zone*.
- *The Private Eye*.
- *Transmetropolitan*.
- *The Fortunate Fall*.
- *Battle Angel Alita (Gunm)*.
- *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*.
- *Little Brother*.
- *Diaspora*.

ACADEMIC TOUCHSTONES

- *Beyond Cyberpunk.*
- *Cyberpunk Women, Feminism and Science Fiction : A Critical Study.*
- *Mirrorshade Women: Feminism in cyberpunk* (available for free).
- *The Future Virtual: An Intellectual History of Cyberpunk Criticism* (available for free)

Everywhere they touched, my skin responded. It sent signals to the receiver, to the synth, to the amp, and the sounds were broadcast over the PA. I'd set it to translate this first song into **a single key, so the notes built into chords, then broke apart.**

I had ways to distort, to sustain, to make a note tremble as if it were bowed.

It was **me**: I was playing **me**; they were playing **me**. I was the instrument, the conduit, the transmutation of loss into elegy, song into prayer, my own prayers into notes, notes into song. Body and music, fingers and hands, **they drew me out.**

Sarah Pinsker, *A Song Transmuted*





CHAPTER SEVEN:
THE BACKERS

THANK YOU, BACKERS!

THE NEUROMANCERS

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DISCOVER UNCANNY ECHO NOW—ON PATREON!

I've been fascinated with emergent mystery for a while. To satiate this desire, every month I'm going to release a one-shot "module" that will unravel a meta-narrative revolving around an ongoing mystery you create through play. With each month comes a new chapter. With each chapter, a self-contained pickup and play stripped down and tailored PbtA experience; kind of like an adventure starter. It is important to note that *Uncanny Echo* will not teach you how to play a Powered by the Apocalypse game; it leverages your knowledge of the system in order to create this unique framework.

I'm going to be playing each Issue every month. After our play, I'll be designing the next installment for this emergent story, making the design work emergent as well.

Emulating a movie or TV Show, each new chapter may be directly connected to events prior, or jump to all new events that will intersect in the future. As a table you will decide how each intersects, crafting an emergent story. As more Issues release you may choose to play them in an entirely different order than my group and I.

These Issues will comprise *Uncanny Echo*. There will be 12 issues to complete the year. Following this, I will compile all of them into one product, most likely a 6x9 book. It will feature more art and tie the Issues into one cohesive text. At a certain pledge level, you'll be able to get this finalized product for free, provided you pay the shipping. It will most likely be Print On Demand, but that will depend on the number of copies being printed.

I will also be recording these sessions, editing them like Pocket-Sized Play episodes (that is, actual play episodes with very tight editing) and releasing them via this Patreon's RSS feed as well. This means you'll be able to hear our own story as well as how I run the game. Some of our mics aren't the best but the story is something I'm proud of already. The playtest videos themselves are available for free on my Youtube channel.

My hope is that here, and in the G+ community, folks will share their own emergent mysteries made with *Uncanny Echo*, and see how their own game differs from my own and others!

What *Uncanny Echo* will you create?

Find the first issue of *Uncanny Echo* free here.



UNCANNY ECHO

SERIALIZED ROLEPLAYING

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