

MAGIC ♦ TECHNOLOGY ♦ REBELLION

# SUBVERSION



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# Chapter 1: Prologue

“The world has always been troubled, but now new technology mixes with old magic to make a society run amok. The powerful use them to create empires of wealth and dominance, bleeding the rest of the world dry. Troubled has given way to afflicted. Though it may be difficult and dangerous, resistance is the only sensible response to such a world.”

— Sander Greystar, street-prophet

Neo Babylon: the year 450 by Neo Babylonian Reckoning.

It's a city of dreams and darkness, hope and despair. A city of endless potential—a city where the newest breakthroughs of technology rest among the greatest wonders of magic—a city where everything is possible.

Most everyone comes to Neo Babylon with hope—hope for a new job, to learn new things, or to change the world. Few hold on to that hope. Most in Neo Babylon find themselves overworked at jobs that pay just enough to break even and avoid the debts that would send them to toil in the Purgatorium or banish them to the Undercity. Knowledge is gated by those with power, doled out only to those who agree to serve their ends.

For as much as the world is changing, and indeed it is, as radical advances in cybertechnology threaten to end the millenia old hegemony of Neo Babylon's mages, it's unclear whether it's changing for the better. Promises of a more equal world have rung hollow though, as corporations vie for economic control, leaving a precarious world where the only semblance of economic security comes from agreeing to fuel their all consuming growth.

Still, not everyone has lost hope. The more some communities are torn down, the tighter others cling together. Communities, ranging from gangs to political groups to tight-knit neighborhoods looking to better their lives, all look to each other and inside themselves to figure out a better path forward. For all that seems dark, there's a real hope that maybe things could be better, as long as they're willing to fight for it.

From the bottom to the top, folk are finding new ways to subvert old values, new language to tell old stories, and taking back control of their lives.

Will you take up the call of your community to try and make things better? Will you sell out your principles if it means saving your friends? Sell out your friends to change the world?

## I BABYLON: FROM OLD TO NEW

### THE PAST

2,650 years ago, Sharru<sup>1</sup> Nebuchadnezzar II ruled the Babylonian Empire and unlocked the secrets of arcane magic. Trained battlemages flew above the battlefield, batting aside arrows and unleashing fire and lightning on onto his rivals, conquering everything in the fertile crescent and beyond, taking everything: their own forms of magic, culture, and technologies, for himself and for Babylon.

The Babylonian Empire was a uniquely powerful and influential empire that held sway over the world for over a thousand years in ways no civilization has since. It's magical wonders were the envy of the rest of the world, and its imperial ambitions checked only by its size and desire to tightly control its domain.

Suddenly, 1,200 years after it began, Babylon's supremacy came to an unexpected end. A world-shaking, catastrophic event, known as the Shattering, sank the entire fertile crescent into the ocean, scattering Babylonians (with their culture and knowledge) all over the world.

Despite Neo-Babylon sinking beneath the waves (with many of its secrets), its legend lived on. A thousand years after the Shattering, a diverse group of Babylonian descendents and likeminded individuals entranced by the tales of Babylon of old and a desire to recreate its arcane might came together to create the city of Neo Babylon on the newly discovered continent of Azore, in the Atlantic Ocean. Ruled by a council of 60 mages known as the Ukkim, Neo Babylon slowly but surely set out restore the Influence of old Babylon.

<sup>1</sup> The word for Babylonian kings is Sharru.



## THE PRESENT

The vast city sprawl of Neo Babylon stands alone as the largest, wealthiest, and most influential city there has ever been, and its power seems to only grow every day. Fueled originally by rediscovered arcane power, Neo Babylon existed as a society stratified between those with magical talent (and thus wealth and power), and those without.

New advances in technology threaten to overturn that order. Corporations tout new "cybertech" to provide abilities to rival or surpass even the most impressive arcane feats—at a cost. These upstarts fight with the ossified arcane elite for resources, money, and power—discarding those with none into Neo Babylon's flooding undercity.

Even as society remakes itself at a seemingly ever increasing pace, it's hard for many to see how the world is changing for the better. Powerful mages use their power to preserve their privileged position over the masses, while corporations exploit their labor, each one hoping to seize more and more economic power. Roiling beneath their fight, an uncaring system promises a bare sliver of economic security to those who meet its expectations while seeming to erode any ties or institutions that provide stability without it. The cybernet floods every waking moment with distractions and balms, aiming to blunt the ills of modern society while urging the viewer to work ever harder to power that very same society.

## THE FUTURE

For some though, the fact that the world is changing at all is proof that a better world is possible: a world where community matters more than control, and personhood matters more than power. These visionaries seek to convince others of a better world worth fighting for, with protectors defending the weak against corrupt systems and neighbors making a better society one block at a time.

Not so long ago, those fighting for a better world won their most visible victory: The Great Strike. The workers of Neo Babylon stood up to the powers that be in a way that threatened to grind it all to a halt, demanding a greater voice and greater share of the wealth they produced. The Ukkim sought to diffuse their demands with a token concession, enabling communities to designate Envoys to voice their grievances. These Envoys were meant to be figureheads, a go-between from the workers to the government, to reduce tension and blow off steam while they found a way to stall with charm, promises, and half-measures.

Disillusioned, the Envoys began taking matters into their own hands. Rather than ask for help that never came, Envoys began solving community problems themselves. When one group of Envoys couldn't solve their problems, they asked others for help, and the call was quickly answered. Envoys quickly morphed from petitioners to problem solvers, uniting communities in solidarity, mutual aid, and direct action.

Most in power consider the Envoy's turn towards mutual aid and direct action to be a flash in the pan, something that will dissolve in the face of the economic realities of corporate power and the world they offer. For others though, a better world seems to be riding on their continued success...

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is divided into four parts, each covering different material that may be of different use to different players:

✧ [Part I: Core Rules \(pg 11\)](#) covers the basic mechanics of the game. We encourage everyone to read through this part of the rules to understand how the game works.

✧ [Part II: Extended Rules \(pg 38\)](#) covers in depth rules for specific types of scenes, including social interactions, combat, breaching, and magic. We encourage players to read through the parts of this section relevant to their characters role in the party, and as related to any specific rules

✧ [Part III: Character Creation \(pg 68\)](#) covers the process of creating a Community and Character

✧ [Part IV: GM Guide \(pg 183\)](#) provides additional rules, details, and advice for the GM.



## LEARNING TO PLAY

If you are the GM, or are introducing Subversion to a group of friends, we encourage you to read the book once through. You won't remember everything, and that's fine. The book in your hands serves as a reference document. In fact, it serves three purposes: rules, inspiration, and reference. Your first time reading, focus on being inspired and let the rules wash over you, remembering what you can. The next time you read them, the rules will make much more sense. Each time you play, and each time you look something up, you'll get that much more familiar with the rules.



# PART I: CORE RULES



# Chapter 2: The Basics

## WHAT IS SUBVERSION?

In Subversion, you tell a story about a group of Envoys, talented individuals promoting, protecting, and achieving the goals of their community while they pursue their own values, desires, and aspirations. Arrayed against the Envoys are a multitude of forces in the cyberpunk-fantasy streets of Neo Babylon, seemingly arrayed to grind the Envoys down, or at least into accepting an increasingly bleak status quo. Armed with cybernetics, magic, faith, skills, and most importantly, community, Envoys resist the domineering forces of an exploitive and authoritative system and build something better in its place—or be broken trying.

Play Subversion to discover the fate of your community and friends as they navigate the dangers of greedy corporations, malevolent demons, rival factions, corrupt Lawjacks, and your biggest fear: becoming just like them.

## HOW DO I PLAY?

Subversion is a tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG), a game where players use their imagination and the game rules to tell a story. Players take the roles of protagonists in the story, while one person takes the role of game moderator (GM) to build out the setting, secondary characters, and antagonists—and together everyone works to make an interesting, compelling, and above all else, fun story. The rules let players know what is possible, help ensure that no one character outshines the others, and to provide a foundation of understanding, so everyone is on the same page, and facilitate the ultimate goal to have fun telling a good story.

## PLAYERS

**Players** first help to create a community inside Neo Babylon, and then take the role of a character in a collectively told story. They bring their characters to life as complex people striving bravely to bring a better world into existence, kicking and screaming. Players' main responsibility is to interact with the scenario and with the other characters in a way that creates a rich, interesting, and above all, enjoyable story for all involved.

## CHARACTERS

A character created by a player is called a **Player Character**, or **PC**. PCs are Envoys, individuals selected by their community to serve as agents, defenders, ambassadors, and problem solvers opposed to the larger, impersonal forces that form the world's system of domination.

Stories in Subversion are driven forward by characters' beliefs, desires, needs, and circumstances, or those of their community. As these motivations conflict with each other or the larger world, characters work to refine what it is they believe in, what they're willing to do, and what their relationship are to their community. In the stories the players tell together, the PCs are the main characters.

## COMMUNITIES

Together, the group of Players and the GM create the community that the PCs belong to. Communities are filled with dramatic personalities, helpful resources, familiar places, and the hopes and dreams of the PCs. Communities act as a backdrop and a homebase, both leading, and being led by, the PCs. As play continues, communities grow alongside characters and become almost a character in and of themselves.

### Envoys and Other Roles

The default role that characters play in Subversion is that of Envoys of their various, mostly urban, communities and PCs will most often be from the same community. These are only defaults, however—Subversion's rules and setting are broad enough to allow many different kinds of adventures and stories, so one could easily imagine the PCs, instead of being Envoys, might be a group of thieves, a band of mercenaries, or explorers from a far-off place. Use your imagination and don't let us or anyone tell you how to have fun!



## GAME MODERATORS

A **Game Moderator**, or **GM**, narrates the antagonists, minor characters, and every other supporting role that helps tell the story. They shape the settings, chart out plots, place PCs in various confrontational situations, and handle the background of the stories, unfolding them as they see fit. The GM could use an Episode book from Fragging Unicorns, like the **Food Is Life** episode in the back of this book, or they could create a completely new story from scratch.

A character created and played by the GM is called a **Nonplayer Character**, or **NPC**. Together, the GM and players perform a narrative give-and-take, each building off the responses and descriptions the other gives, and in this way, tell a collaborative story together with their PCs and NPCs.

## RHYTHM OF PLAY

Subversion's gameplay is structured around three modes of play, Action, Reflection, and Downtime. Action is where most of the exciting stuff happens, either in **dramatic time**, where players interact with the world in a freeform way, or in **cinematic time**, where characters alternate actions and time is closely tracked. In the Action, characters confront problems and adversaries. The Action is where most of the narratively important events happen, and where the characters encounter the most pushback and risk.

Downtime covers the interludes between action as characters live their lives and interact with their communities. Players can use downtime to heal, gain new abilities, or help build up the people and places around them. The GM can use systems of debt, factions, and grit to create new plot hooks for the PCs and community-facing stories can be narrated.

Reflection is a non-narrative mode that happens at the end of each session. This time allows the players to reflect on the actions of their characters, and is where the GM gives out fortune rewards and the group tracks any long-term changes in goals, values, relationships, or their community.

## GAMEPLAY INSPIRATIONS

These are some games that have inspired the creation of Subversion. They were designs we compared our work to as we made it, innovations that gave us new ideas, and touchpoints we use to talk to new people about what they might expect from our game.

- ✂ Ancestry & Culture, by Eugene Marshall
- ✂ Blades in the Dark, by John Harper
- ✂ The Bloody Handed Name of Bronze, by Joshua A.C. Newman
- ✂ The Burning Wheel, by Luke Crane
- ✂ Earthdawn, by FASA Games
- ✂ Eclipse Phase, by Transhuman Studios
- ✂ Hard Wired Island, by Weird Age Games
- ✂ Hillfolk, by Robin D. Laws
- ✂ Misspent Youth, by Robert Bohl
- ✂ Shadow of the Demon Lord, by Robert J. Schwalb
- ✂ Shadowrun, by FASA Games

## THEMATIC INSPIRATIONS

- ✂ The technology from Neuromancer
- ✂ The sacrifice from The Hunger Games
- ✂ The magic from The Magicians
- ✂ The rebellion of Star Wars
- ✂ The truth telling of The Boondocks
- ✂ The community of The Goonies
- ✂ The heart of Avatar the Last Airbender

## WHAT YOU NEED

To play Subversion, you need:

- ✂ A handful of six-sided dice
- ✂ At least one character sheet per person (you can find them here: [XX](#))
- ✂ This Book for reference

We also recommend you grab some way of making notes and drawings, and (especially if you're playing in person), snacks, pizza, munchies, drinks, and whatever else puts you at ease.

## WHAT TO IGNORE

This game is designed for two things. 1) Friends having fun together, and 2) telling great stories about hopeful resistance to injustice. If, along the way, you find anything in these pages that hinders those two goals, talk about it with your friends and ignore, add, change, improve, or paint over anything that will get you back to fun, friends, hope, and resistance.



# THE GAME SYSTEM

The rules in Subversion are a way to give fairness, common language, and a bit of randomness to the stories that can be told in our game. Playing Subversion is ultimately about telling stories, and in many cases the story can be told without referring to the rules, particularly when describing and interacting with the world and its many inhabitants, and the stakes are low. When the stakes are higher, such as important negotiations, daring escapes, combat, attempting a death-defying stunt, and the like, the rules exist to provide narrative tension.

GMs and players should use their best judgment as to when dice need to be rolled, but a good rule of thumb is to **use dice whenever the result of failure or success would be dramatic**.

If the success or failure of an act would have little or no effect on the story, the players and GM are encouraged to resolve the situation narratively, while uncertainty, significant results, and dramatic impact are all great indicators dice might facilitate good fun.

## ROLLING DICE

In Subversion, dramatic results are often decided by rolling dice, what we call a **test**. When making a test, roll a number of six-sided dice (henceforth referred to as D6s) and keep the three highest of those dice. Add the three kept dice together and that is the result of the roll. That result is then compared to a Target Number, or TN, set by the GM:

- ✂ If you roll equal to or up to 4 above the TN, that's a success—you accomplish your goal or make progress towards it.
- ✂ If you roll 5 or more above the TN, it's a dynamic success—well done! You've solidly achieved your goal, or made even more progress.
- ✂ If each kept dice is a 6, the roll is a critical success—Awesome! You've gained significant progress or have fantastically achieved your goal.
- ✂ If you miss the TN by 1-4, that's a failure. You don't accomplish your goal or make any progress, and frequently suffer some minor complication.
- ✂ If you roll 5 or more below the TN, that is a dynamic failure. Not only did you fail to accomplish your goal, or make any progress, but you have botched it in such a way that you've brought a complication onto yourself.

Characters always roll at least three dice on a test: if they would roll less than 3 dice, they instead gain an instance of the **dulled** condition for that roll ([see pg. 17](#)).

For most tests, you roll a number of dice equal to your ranks in a skill— for example, If you have 4 ranks in melee combat, you would roll 4 dice to punch someone, and add the highest three for the result. Each skill also has a linked attribute. Attributes have a rank of 0-7, and when making a skill test, you add the attribute rank as a flat bonus to the roll.

Ex. Shannor has 4 ranks in their melee combat skill, and 3 ranks in Agility (melee combat's linked attribute). They roll 4D6, with a result of 3,4,5, and 5. They would take the highest three (4,5, and 5), add those up (14) and add their Agility rank as a bonus (3) for a total of 17.

Most dice rolls in subversion are variations of this basic roll. When in doubt, pick an appropriate skill, set a TN, compare the result, and go on with your story!

## ATTRIBUTES

Subversion has 6 **attributes** that represent your broad abilities across a number of domains. Attributes can range from rank 0 (Average for a person) to 7 (Amazing). Attributes provide a bonus to skill tests equal to the attribute rank. The six attributes are:

- ✂ **Brawn** (BRW): physical strength and toughness.
- ✂ **Agility** (AGI): reflexes and quickness.
- ✂ **Wit** (WIT): education, street smarts, or quick or critical thinking.
- ✂ **Awareness** (AWA): paying attention, observing, and processing the world around you.
- ✂ **Will** (WIL): the self-control to resist dominance, exert agency, or restrain impulses.
- ✂ **Charisma** (CHA): persuasiveness, attractiveness, or ability to socially affecting the world.

In addition to their roll in skill tests, attributes also affect a character's starting value in special attributes called Guard, Vigilance, Aegis, Health, Animity, and Grit. These special attributes have their own rules and are discussed in further detail below.



## SKILLS

Skills represent the training and aptitude the character has in a particular domain. Skills can range from rank 0 (complete ignorance) to 9 (a master of the craft). When rolling dice in Subversion, skill ranks tell you the number of dice you will roll to use that skill, and each skill has an attribute that is linked to it, indicating what attribute is most likely to be called upon when using that skill. The 12 skills are:

### ARTS

| Linked Attributes: Cha

Arts broadly covers the expressive and artistic endeavors of a person. Ranging from acting to painting, singing to dancing, and everything in between and adjacent, Arts is what you use to create something expressive and meaningful.

### CYBERTECH

| Linked Attributes: Wit

Cybertech represents the interaction with and manipulation of cybertechnology. Cybertechnology deals with using, hacking, and building computers. It allows you to understand Cybertechnology and its practical applications, if not its origins. Without additional paradigms, cybertech allows characters to interact with computers and other cybertech electronics in socially acceptable, legal ways. Paired with certain paradigms, it facilitates Breaching (hacking cybertech, [\(see "Breaching" on pg 55\)](#)) and the technical aspects of Jumping (remotely controlling drones and vehicles).

### DECEPTION

| Linked Attributes: Cha

Deception covers lying, misdirection, forgeries and manipulation—essentially any case where you're trying to convince someone something is true when it isn't.

### HUMANITIES

| Linked Attributes: Wit

Humanities cover a wide range of topics around the social sciences and people's nature, covering a wide range of topics including History, Law, Current Events, Geography, Sociology, Literature and Journalism. When you answer questions about people or society, use Humanities.

## INFLUENCE

| Linked Attribute: Cha

Influence covers Negotiating, Persuading, Intimidation, and Leadership. Influence uses win/win tactics, speaks honorably and straightforwardly, uses rhetoric that leads, but isn't manipulative. The line between Influence and Deception is sometimes thin, and the GM will make the final determination of whether your persuasive techniques cross over to Deception - propaganda is sometimes subtle and unconscious.

## MAGIC ARTS

| Linked Attribute: Will

Magic Arts cover anything dealing with magic. Below rank 3, Magic Arts is theoretical, providing information about magical effects, traditions, and creatures. At rank 3, you may choose Arcane, Sublime, or Sacred Magic. Once this choice is made, you cannot make another choice. You may only use magic and paradigms associated with that magic source.

## MELEE COMBAT

| Linked Attribute: Agility

Melee Combat deals with fighting in close proximity, either unarmed or wielding a melee weapon.

## OBSERVATION

| Linked Attribute: Awareness/Wit

Observation is the skill of learning things about the world, whether it be determining if someone is telling the truth, finding evidence, looking for food, shelter, judging what is safe or not, spotting traps, and deeply seeing the world around you. Searching and finding use Awareness while remembering, pattern recognition, deduction and analyzing use Wit.

## PHYSICALITY

| Linked Attribute: Brawn/Agility

Physicality covers the range of physical activities the PC might perform including jumping, lifting, balancing, tumbling, swimming, and running, as well as actions like sneaking, sleight of hand and other actions that rely on careful coordination and physical control.

Physicality in general and Athletics in particular normally rely on the Brawn Attribute while Acrobatics and Stealth usually involve the Agility Attribute.



## PILOTING

| Linked Attribute: Awareness

This is the skill that deals with your ability to do mundane and fancy things while piloting a vehicle, whether that is a machine or a creature. This covers land craft, air and sea craft, and creature mounts.

## RANGED COMBAT

| Linked Attribute: Agility

Ranged Combat is the art and science of employing ranged weapons. This covers firearms as well as more traditional weapons like bows and thrown weapons.

## SCIENCES

| Linked Attribute: Wit

Knowledge and practical application of sciences, this skill comprises medicine, engineering, and other natural, biological and mechanical sciences. Any time a roll is needed to know stuff about the natural world that has been learned by experimentation and observation, this is the right choice.

### Changing Linked Attributes and Flexible Skill Usage

Sometimes, it may make sense to use another attribute besides the default, either because of unusual circumstances (e.g. using Wit instead of Agility to calculate a trajectory for a grappling hook launched in the dark), a plausible alternative approach (choosing between Brawn and Agility for running through a dense forest where it's plausible to either barrel through the undergrowth or duck around it) or to represent semantic knowledge about an active skill (Using Wits with Piloting to know the model of a car you just spotted).

This may sometimes lead to cases where multiple skills cover the same case—the history of art could be either a Humanities roll or a wit based Arts roll. In this case, the player can choose the approach that makes sense to them, though the GM may flavor the results (and possibly apply modifiers) based on what skill is rolled.

## WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN

### SUCCESS

If you roll equal to or over the Target Number, you accomplish your goal. For a simple test, this means you straightforwardly accomplish what you're attempting. For more complicated tests, you make progress towards a goal or do damage, as specified by the ability.

### DYNAMIC SUCCESSES

Sometimes in making a test, you surpass the goal so decisively that you can achieve benefits beyond the default for success. If you roll 5 or higher past a TN, it is a dynamic success. A dynamic success has double the progress, damage or effect of an ordinary success. In cases where further success at the action has no effect, the GM should pick some other benefit to help the player.

When an ability specifies a specific result of a dynamic success, this overrides other uses of dynamic success.

Example: Ali is attempting to breach a secure door to get into a secure facility she needs some information from. She breaks out her cyberkit and rolls Cybertech against the Security Rating of the door, giving a TN of 11, and needs a total of 11 points of progress to breach its firewall ([see "Breaching" on pg 38](#)). Ali rolls 2 5s and a 4, plus 3 for her Wit, for a total of 17—more than 5 above the TN so Ali gets a Dynamic success. Normally, Ali would do 5 points of progress toward the goal, but the Dynamic success means she gains 10 points of progress to her goal. She's almost there!

### CRITICAL SUCCESS

If all 3 kept dice are 6s, that is a critical success. A critical success has triple the progress, damage, or effect of an ordinary success. In cases where further success at the action has no effect, the GM instead decides some other beneficial side effect to benefit the character.

In the above example, if Ali had instead rolled 3 6s (for a total of 18), she would have gotten a critical success—and since Ali normally would gain



5 progress points, she instead gains three times as much – 15 – which means she was able to breach the door in one go.

Just like a dynamic success, when an ability specifies a specific result of a critical success, this overrides any of the above uses. Critical successes replace dynamic successes, so no single test can achieve both.

## FAILURE

On a failure, you fail to accomplish your goal in a way that causes you difficulty or problems. In cinematics such as a chase or combat where each second counts, a failure means the action had no effect. In situations without a time pressure, a failure should cause a complication and worsen the situation in some way, even if it just means the attempted action is no longer available. For example:

- ✧ You are unable to use this skill again for the same goal again until circumstances change.
- ✧ A progress track (e.g. Concealment or Regard) moves 3 points in a direction to your detriment
- ✧ The GM gains 1 grit
- ✧ A narratively appropriate consequence worsens the situation

If no complication for failure seems appropriate and the player can keep trying until they succeed, they should be assumed to automatically succeed in any task they can accomplish

## DYNAMIC FAILURES

On the flip side, sometimes you fall short so disastrously. If you roll 5 points or lower below the target's TN, that is a Dynamic failure. On a dynamic failure, the GM chooses a more serious complication for failure. Some examples:

- ✧ The character gains an instance of dulled ([see pg 17](#)) for the remainder of the scene
- ✧ The character takes Health or Animity damage
- ✧ An enemy gets an opportunity to take an extra action

For both failures and dynamic failures, the GM is encouraged to be creative and do what fits the story and the moment!

*Example: After Ali finishes having a few beers with his new friends, they decide to catch a ride home. Realizing they're out of cash (having spent it all buying a few rounds of drinks), they try to see if they can hitch a ride with someone else and convince them to drop them off. Because Ali's drunk and it's a big ask of a stranger, the GM sets the TN at 18. Ali rolls 3 3s: with their Charisma of 3 that's a 12, more than 5 below the TN. The GM decides that in addition to not being able to get a ride this scene, they will add a check to a timer ([see pg 184](#)). It seems the person Ali harassed has called the Lawjacks, and Ali has to get out of there before the Lawjacks show up!*

### Balancing Success and Failure

It's hard to tell a good story by simply winning all the time. Good stories have dramatic downbeats as well, so having characters fail, be captured, lose something valuable, or make loved ones upset isn't bad! It makes for good storytelling. We encourage players to see losing as fun and a chance to tell good stories, not to treat Subversion as a game to be won.

## ROLL KEYWORDS

Abilities, gear, and rules will often modify a roll by applying the following keywords. If multiple keywords apply to the same roll, the player may choose what order to apply them in.

### RELIABLE (X)

Some abilities, gear, or other effects can make a roll **Reliable**. If a roll is reliable, you may increase the value of any rolled dice to the value specified in Reliable (So Reliable 2 may count all 1s as 2s instead, Reliable 3 may count all 1s, and 2s as 3s etc.)

### INSPIRED

Some abilities, gear or other effects can make a roll Inspired. If a roll is **inspired**, you may improve the result of one die by 1, to max of 6 (this can trigger a critical success).

### DULLED (X)

Some abilities limit the overall success of a skill. If an ability applies the **Dulled** trait to a roll, it reduces the highest possible value on a roll to the Dulled rating. Any dice results above the Dulled value become the value (so Dulled 5 treats all 6s as 5s, Dulled 4 treats all 5s and 6s as 4s etc.). Your first instance of dulled gives you Dulled 5, every further instance of Dulled reduces the number by 1.



Characters gain an instance of Dulled for each consequence they have. Additionally, if a character would ever roll less than 3 dice, due to their skill or penalties, they would still roll 3 dice, but gain an instance of Dulled for each dice under 3 they would roll (So a character with skill 2 gains one instance of Dulled (Dulled 5, meaning a maximum of 5 on all rolls with that skill, and a character with skill 1 gains two instances of Dulled (Dulled 4) for a max of 4 on each dice).

Dulled prevents a character from critically succeeding (as it reduces the sixes to fives). A character may spend grit to ignore dulled ([see "Using and Losing Grit" on pg 23](#)).

## AUGMENTED (X)

An **augmented** roll has a greater effect on success. Increase the amount of progress or damage done on a success by 1. Augmented is often provided by gear, weapons, paradigm abilities or specific circumstances.

# ITYPES OF ROLLS

When success isn't guaranteed and failure makes a difference to the narrative, the results are adjudicated by dice rolls.

## SIMPLE ROLLS

The simplest challenges only require a simple roll by the PCs to overcome. The GM will describe the situation and either the PCs suggest a skill roll that may apply or the GM will ask for a particular roll against a TN. If the PCs meet the TN on the skill roll, with or without complications, they overcome the challenge. If they fail, the GM narrates the result and the PCs may have to find another way to address the challenge or try again once something has changed.

TNs for most skills are determined by the GM, however some TNs are specified by the relevant defense of the target (Vigilance, Aegis, or Guard), or are specified as part of a rule, paradigm ability or piece of equipment.

## WHEN NOT TO ROLL

Not every situation requires a roll. Most of what characters do either isn't very difficult, or don't have narrative consequences. In these cases, no rolls are necessary. PCs don't need to roll to find their keys, drive to the bar, or chat with the bartender (in most circumstances).

## BASIC COMPETENCY

What characters are able to do without rolling depends on their skills—an ER doctor might find stabilizing a stab wound trivial, while a noodle shop owner might find it a tricky proposition. As a general rule, if the TN is less than Skill Rating x 2 + Attribute and there is no time pressure, there is no need to roll, even if there are consequences to failure.

## ROLLING FOR EFFECT

Sometimes, even though failure doesn't have a consequence, it's worth noting how well someone succeeded (perhaps someone on the team has baked cookies for the rest of the team, and everyone wants to know how good they are). Roll as per normal, but the quality of the success depends on the result.

## OPPOSED ROLLS

Sometimes you are competing against another character's action to succeed: perhaps you're trying to grab something off the table before another character, or win a debate. In this case, the TN becomes the higher of any base TN (if there's a chance that both characters fail), or the highest opponents roll.

## FAILURES AND OPPOSED ROLLS

Consequences for failures (including Dynamic Failures) only occur if you don't beat any base TN (or roll under the base TN by 5 or more), not your opponent's roll—your opponent winning is consequence enough! Dynamic successes on the other hand, require beating both the base TN and your opponent's roll by 5.



## CRITICAL SUCCESSES AND OPPOSED ROLLS

Occasionally, both participants in an opposed roll will roll a critical success. In this case, ignore the critical success in resolving the roll, and just compare the numerical value of the roll (depending on modifiers this may lead to a normal or dynamic success).

*Example: Alice and Casey are racing their mushushu through the crowded undercity of Neo Babylon. The GM determines that simply navigating the course safely is difficult, setting the TN at 10. Alice rolls a 16 and Casey rolls a 12—Alice wins though Casey finishes, though not with a critical success. If Casey instead rolled a 10, Casey would finish, but Alice would get a dynamic success—maybe the race wasn't close at all or her success impressed a key figure. If Casey rolled an 8, they would fail, perhaps they missed a turn or had a minor accident. If they rolled a 5 or under, they would get a dynamic failure—perhaps the accident wasn't that minor!*

## NON-SKILL TESTS

Sometimes, a test may be desirable which has no specific skill linked to it. In these rare cases, players should roll 3D6 + a relevant attribute versus a TN set by the GM.

## TEAMWORK TESTS

Sometimes one character is making a test and another wants to help out. When the primary character makes a skill roll, any number of allies may roll make a single dice (applying any roll keywords such as inspired, reliable, or dulled as normal), and contribute it to the check. The primary character may use the results of any die from any assisting character when determining the highest 3 dice for the results of the skill roll.

In cinematics, using teamwork costs a main action. If a PC has already taken their turn, they can still participate at the cost of 1 Grit. In addition, all participants in the final roll, even those just helping are likely to suffer consequences of a failure, if any.

*Example: Mari is working on figuring out what a complicated prototype does. She normally would roll 5d6+2 when using Science. Mari's allies, Nan and Octavia, decide to use teamwork to help out. Nan has Science trained at rank 3, while Octavia has science only at 2. Mari rolls her 5D6, for a result of 1,2,4,4,5. Nan rolls her teamwork dice (1D6) and gets a 5. Octavia rolls her teamwork die and gets a 6 (but since she only has science at rank 2, it is dulled 5, so her 6 only counts as a 5). This means that Mari can take Nan's 5, Octavia's 5, and her own 5, and add her attribute bonus of 2, for a total of 17 – a great roll with a little help from her friends!*

## GROUP TESTS

Sometimes a group needs to make a test where the total result of the group matters. In this case everyone rolls: if there are more successes than failures, the group succeeds, if there are more failures than successes, they fail. Dynamic successes and failures count double, critical successes count triple in addition to any special effect. On a tie, the group succeeds—barely. The GM chooses one complication for failure despite their success.

*Example: Ari, Brian, and Casey are trying to sneak past a guard. Ari gets a dynamic success, and Brian gets a normal success, but Casey rolls a dynamic failure. This counts as 3 successes and 2 failures, so the group barely succeeds, but the GM decides that Casey twisted their ankle and lost 2 health as a result of their dynamic failure.*

# PROGRESS TRACKS

When the results of an action can't be resolved in a single roll, Subversion relies on a **Progress Track** to resolve the situation. Progress tracks can represent the physical or mental health of a character or monster, the position of two characters in a race, the opinion of a character towards a PC, and more. Each success or failure moves the progress track closer or further from resolution, until the progress track is filled (or other events take precedence!)

## PROGRESSING TRACKS

To progress a track, characters make a test. **On a success, the character makes 5 progress on the track** (this may be modified by gear, abilities or situations). Multiply this x2 on a dynamic success, and x3 on a critical success. This applies after any of your modifiers (though before any modifiers such as armor your target may have).



## TRACK LENGTH

Each progress track has a length, which determines how much progress must be made before it is resolved. In order to make progress on a track, the PCs must use their skills and abilities successfully. When attempting to make progress on a track, players choose a skill appropriate to the challenge and state what they are trying to accomplish. Certain challenges may be immune to certain skills, meaning they cannot be used to progress on those tracks, or can only be progressed using only certain skills—the GM is final arbiter on what skills apply to a progress track.

### When to have a progress track

Progress Tracks provide an opportunity to split success (or failure!) over multiple actions, and allows for other events to take place in the meantime. This allows adversaries to react to a character's actions, other problems to arise and vie for attention, and multiple narrative actions to apply to the same challenge.

Sometimes, however, there's nothing interesting happening between starting and ending a progress track. In these cases, progress tracks can just feel like a bunch of superfluous rolls. In this case, the GM is encouraged to abbreviate the progress track with a simple roll capturing the overall quality of work towards the goal—or just assume success and forgo rolling altogether!

## BONUS TRACKS

In some cases, a track may have multiple goals or different degrees of potential success. In this case, a **Bonus Track** can be added to the progress track. A Bonus track adds additional length to the progress track that can be filled in once the main track is complete, and provides some additional benefit if the bonus track is completed.

## CONTESTED TRACKS

In some cases a progress track may be shared between two or more opposing parties. In such case, each party's actions will move the track in opposing directions ([see "Concealment" on pg 51](#)).

If both sides are actively contesting a track, progress on a contested track will rely on opposed rolls rather than a simple test. In this case, whichever side wins the roll makes progress in their preferred direction. If one side is distracted (or unaware the contest is taking place), make a simple test instead.

## DOWNTIME TRACKS

Downtime tracks are a specific type of progress track that can only be directly progressed by using the Advance Downtime Progress Track downtime action ([see pg 32](#)) to narratively pursue the goal—though the GM may modify the progress on a Downtime track based on other actions and events that relate to the goal.

### When all you have is a hammer...

By default, GMs are encouraged to be permissive of what skills might contribute to a progress track. This enables everyone to contribute to each scene, and can often be the source of clever problem solving and interesting twists.

However, in some cases, players may attempt to use a skill not because it makes sense, but because it's what they're best at. In the extreme case, the arguments for how a skill might help are tenuous, or flat out silly. In this case, the GM should raise the TN for the task (reflecting the difficulty of succeeding), decrease the amount of progress done on a success (reflecting how tangentially the task achieves the goal), or just disallow the skill altogether (unless a more plausible use can be proposed). On the flip side, some ideas might be particularly good or well suited to the problem—in this case the GM might decrease the TN or increase the amount of progress done on a success.

By giving bonuses for clever and realistic approaches (and penalties for dubious ones), the GM can encourage players to act realistically and come up with ideas that seem like they should work, rather than just trying to creatively apply their best skill.



| Length of Challenge | Progress Track Length             | Target Encounter Length  | Examples  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Instant             | Single Roll                       | A simple question of whether something happens with no opportunity for anything else to interrupt  | Do the PCs know something? Do they make a good impression? Accomplishing a task with no chance of interruption.   |
| Short               | 10                                | Players may accomplish the task in a handful of rolls (possibly a single good roll), with time for a small complication to occur before they finish.   | Get into an invite only club without provoking the bouncer. Track down an NPC without spooking them.  |
| Medium              | 20                                | Players attempt 4-5 actions to accomplish the challenge, taking enough time that multiple opportunities for complications can emerge.  | Figuring out how to fix the magical ward while dangerous spirits prowl around. Win the favor of a river spirit over another suitor.   |
| Long                | 30                                | Players spend a substantial amount of time trying to resolve an issue, perhaps spanning most of an episode. Threats and complications have time to develop, possibly requiring being resolved before the original challenge. | Stop the boat from sinking while in a storm. Find the way out of an underground labyrinth. Figure out who the assassin is at a dinner party.  |
| Downtime            | 10-100<br>(Downtime actions only) | A major undertaking, done bit by bit in the background over a long period of time.   | Designing and building a new vehicle from scratch. Starting a new business. Solving a cold case. Making a new scientific discovery. Building a new institution or community. Making an airtight criminal case against a mob boss. |

## EXAMPLE ENCOUNTER

The PCs are trying to locate a missing magical amulet before the Lawjacks can.

Jay asks how the PCs will try to find the amulet. One player suggests looking around using their paradigm ability to illuminate magical effects ([see "Aetherlight Ditty" on pg 157](#)), another wants to use Observation to look for clues, and one wants to start interviewing people who live close to the scene.

Jay thinks for a second. They could resolve this with a single opposed roll against the Lawjacks, but since the players all offered up neat ideas about how to proceed, Jay wants to make it something a bit longer and substantive. So they make two progress tracks of 20, and goes around the table to see what each player

wants to do. If they fail on the roll, Jay decides that the Lawjack track will go up by 3, and additionally he decides that the Lawjacks will roll once each round.

The players go through their various plans to find the amulet, and Jay assesses the likelihood of each plan and sets the TN appropriately. The first suggestion is to look for clues in the room it disappeared from—Jay thinks this has a very high probability of working because the magical amulet was stashed in a secret compartment in the room, so they set the TN at 12. On the flip side, nobody nearby knows where it was hidden, it is a longshot that anyone around could help advance the search, so Jay puts the TN for social progress at 17. For each test, on a success the Jay provides a clue that moves them towards the final position of the amulet: on a failure the GM builds tension as they try and furtively work around the Lawjacks and other complications arise...



# HEALTH, ANIMITY, AND GRIT

## HEALTH AND ANIMITY

Characters in Subversion have two special attributes called **Health** and **Animity**, representing body and mind. These serve as progress tracks (see "Progress Tracks" on pg 19) that determine how much disease, setback, incidental damage, or manageable stress a character can take before things start to really affect them.

When a PC's health reaches zero, they take a **consequence** (see pg 23) and become **unconscious**. This means they've succumbed to their injuries and unable to take any actions until their health is greater than zero. Likewise, when a character takes damage that would reduce them below 0 animity they gain a **consequence** and become **humbled**. This means they are mentally or emotionally exhausted and unable to take any actions targeting another character until their animity is greater than zero.

Health and Animity can be replenished with certain paradigm abilities like Soothe (see pg 142), using gear like medkits (see pg 103), spending grit (see below), or with over the course of downtime.

## ARMOR

Certain gear or abilities may give characters an armor rank. For every point of armor a character has, reduce any incoming health damage by the armor rank. Sometimes Armor is given with a keyword—in this case the Armor only applies to effects described with that keyword (for example, armor 2: Fire means any attacks or tests using fire will always do 2 less damage or progress).

## ADAMANT

Adamant works like armor, but for the mind. For every adamant rank a character has, reduce any incoming animity damage by that rank. Sometimes, characters are more resilient to certain stimuli, and this will be reflected in notations like the following: Adamant +X: Subject. This means the character will have an effective boost to their adamant, as noted, when it involves the particular subject mentioned (for example, Adamant +2: Death indicates that a character would have +2 adamant when a character takes animity damage because they experienced another character's death).

## FRIGHTENING

Some enemies are so scary, disturbing, or terrifying that they disquiet even the hardest minds. If the PCs encounter a beast, being, or situation with the **Frightening** (X) keyword, the PCs automatically take damage animity damage equal to X. Adamant lowers the animity damage taken by frightening by its rank. If characters encounter multiple beasts or beings that are frightening, only the highest number is in effect.

The first time each scene a beast or being with the frightening keyword attacks or successfully threatens a character, they take damage equal to the frightening value.

If a character does not have the frightening keyword, but is wielding a weapon that does, only apply animity damage if the weapon is used to threaten or attack.

*Alara encounters a manifested demon, with Frightening 4. Alara has Adamant 2 from one of her paradigm abilities, so takes 2 animity damage*

## GRIT

**Grit** is that hard to define quality that makes people able to remain resolute even through the toughest of times. It is heart, determination, anger, resolve, and destiny all rolled up into one.

PCs begin the game with grit equal to Will + 6. Under certain circumstances, they will lose or gain grit during sessions, but can never start a session with more grit than their max. On certain occasions, PCs may gain temporary grit, which goes away after the period of time described.



## Animity Damage Chart

While it may seem more or less obvious what sort of actions cause health damage, animity damage may not be as obvious. In addition to specific effects and abilities that trigger Animity damage, it also occurs in the following common situations. The GM may scale the damage up or down depending on what they feel is narratively appropriate.

| PC Experience  | Typical Animity Damage                                      |
|--|---|
| PC acts against their values (loss occurs during reflection)   | 5   |
| PC's long-term goal becomes unachievable (loss occurs during reflection)   | 5   |
| PC experiences traumatic sensory input (seeing someone dead or killed for the first time, encountering a personal phobia, seeing lots of blood, seeing people hurt that you can't stop, learning someone you love has betrayed you or betrayed their values, etc.)                     | 5-15 as per severity  |
| Any time agency (free will) is forcefully or consequentially taken away from a character. Note: please only do this with the informed consent of player.   | 5   |
| PC experiences shame, guilt, extreme anger, regret, inconsistency, heartbreak, job loss, grief, stress, fear or terror, feeling misunderstood, encounters specific places (home, streets, cities, countries) that are triggers, trauma/PTSD, feeling judged, attacked, or invalidated. | 5-15 as per severity  |
| PCs cause, directly or indirectly, the death of a PC or NPC  | 5 (or more if the character was particularly close to them) |
| PCs encounter beasts or beings with the Frightening keyword.   | Equal to Frightening rank                                   |

## USING AND LOSING GRIT

A character's Grit fluctuates throughout a session as they resist damage or spend it for benefits.

A character may always spend grit in these ways:

- ✖ 1 grit: PC can reroll one of their dice. No dice may be rerolled more than once.
- ✖ 2 grit: PC's next action is quick.
- ✖ 3 grit: Ignore all **Dulled** penalties for one roll after rolling.
- ✖ 4 grit: Gain 1 health and animity and lose the unconscious and humbled conditions.
- ✖ 5 grit: Negate the effect of a successful roll targeting you (but not a dynamic or critical success). This only applies to effects, not to damage or progress.
- ✖ X grit: Block X damage or progress from an effect targeting you.

If a character attempts to spend more grit than they have remaining they must make an immediate grit test (see below). On a success they may use their new grit to help pay the cost. On a failure, the grit is lost for no effect and they suffer the normal results of a failed grit test.

## GRIT TESTS

If a character spends their last point of grit they gain a **consequence** (see below) and must make a Grit Test. Roll 3D6 (various abilities may provide modifiers to this roll). If the result is 11 or higher, they pass the test and that PC is resolute. Increase their Grit to 5 (this grit may be spent immediately if so desired, for example to block additional damage or progress). If the result is less than 11, they are busted (See below).

## CONSEQUENCES

A **consequence** is something that impedes the character that impedes their ability to do things. A character gains a consequence whenever one of the following events occurs:



- ✖ When a character is unconscious or humbled (when their health or animity drops to zero), they gain a **consequence**. This happens even if they immediately use grit to heal or otherwise prevent the effects of becoming unconscious or humbled.
- ✖ When a character fails a grit test
- ✖ To resist the trigger of an Impulse ([see "Triggers" on pg 25](#))
- ✖ Certain other abilities or powers, as mentioned in their description.

The exact form a consequence takes is up to the player and should relate to how they gained it (e.g. a consequence from being knocked out in a fight might be a concussion, while one due to animity damage from a terrifying spirit might be heart-racing panic).

Regardless of origin or flavor, each consequence has the same mechanical effect and gives a character an instance of **dulled**. For each additional consequence the PC gains another instance of dulled, as described in the dulled description ([see pg 17](#)).

A character may never have more than 5 consequences.

## BUSTED

When a character takes enough of a beating that they can't keep going, they are said to be **Busted**. There are two ways to become busted:

- ✖ A character fails a Grit test
- ✖ A character gains 5 consequences.

A busted character is unable to take any actions, including to protect themselves, and are reliant on others to take care of them, either due to unconsciousness, shell shock, confusion, or a lack of will to fight on. Under most conditions, a busted character is completely out of commission until the next downtime, though some PC actions may rescue a busted character before then.

A character loses the busted condition when they lose a consequence. When a character becomes no longer busted, they gain 1 grit.

## NPC DEATH

Deaths, even of the most malevolent individuals, or in self-defense or in the defense of others, always leaves a consequence, be it blood feuds, spirals of violence, or wanted posters, metaphorical (and in the world of Subversion, not infrequently literal!) hauntings for the killers to deal with.

In addition to Animity loss, when a PC's actions causes the death or deaths of sapient NPCs (either directly or through willful negligence), the GM gains 3 Grit. The GM may increase this for particularly notable (or high death toll) actions.

## Injury, Death, and Health in Subversion

In Subversion, being reduced to zero health, animity, or grit can take a character out of action, but no explicit rules exist for determining if a character is killed. This is intentional! Death is intended to be impactful and we wanted to give the GM maximal control to ensure it occurred only when narratively appropriate. It can be a lot of fun when adversaries return to challenge the PCs again, allowing antagonistic characters to hound them another time, so having non-death as the norm allows this to happen.

If a PC reaches 0 health or animity, and are **busted**, they need serious help to recover fully. If they take substantial damage beyond that (as a rule of thumb, damage greater than their normal full health), the GM is encouraged to make survival a substantial plot point as the players seek to get their compatriot emergency medical attention. Failure to get care in time may lead to additional consequences, or ultimately, to death (see below).

In some cases, consequences for NPCs beyond being rendered unconscious might be appropriate. The GM might decide that a situation was hazardous enough that survival is unlikely, that a death, or a long-term severe injury, would be narratively meaningful, or that the PCs acted recklessly enough that their actions lead to deadly consequences. In all of these cases, death should be treated as a significant story point. A PC might also decide that their own death is narratively appropriate—the death of a PC should always be a joint decision between the GM and player. At the end of the day, the goal is for everyone to have fun and tell the story they want to tell—an implausibly unlikely survival (or death!) is well worth giving everyone that chance!

If a PC and GM decide to have a character death, the GM loses all remaining grit in their pool, and all other PCs immediately gain 3 grit.



# IMPULSES

People or communities often deal with the complications of life in ways that are ultimately unhealthy or cause collateral damage—in subversion these are called **Impulses**. An impulse is a coping method which may be helpful in the short-term, but may cause or reflect deeper harm.

Each impulse has one or more triggers, a response, and a downtime action.

In addition, for each impulse a PC has above 1, their max grit is reduced by 1.

## TRIGGERS

Triggers are events, objects, situations, or states of mind that cause an impulse to be activated.

Whenever either the GM or player thinks that a trigger applies, they may trigger the impulse. If a GM triggers an impulse, they reduce their grit by 3. If a player triggers an impulse, they gain 3 grit. If this increase in grit causes a PC to exceed their max grit, this acts as temporary grit that lasts until the end of the scene or cinematic. When an impulse is triggered, the PC chooses one of the following:

- ✗ The character acts out the impulse's response
- ✗ The character must take the Impulses downtime action in the next downtime.
- ✗ The player may resist the impulse trigger by taking 5 animity damage or taking a consequence.

Any grit in excess of the grit maximum goes away at the end of the current (or next) cinematic scene.

## RESPONSES

Responses describe the typical effect of the impulse being triggered, be it a behavior, complication, or other effect. While the response provides a default option, Players and GMs are encouraged to propose alternative actions or consequences that fit the situation.

## DOWNTIME ACTIONS

Some impulses trigger a slower burn response, instead leading to a later course of action. An Impulse's Downtime Action provides a response to the impulse at a later date. A GM may chose this as the consequence for a triggered impulse or a PC may voluntarily choose to perform it as one of their downtime actions.

*Hanna, a breacher, has the "indulgence" impulse, specifically around novelty and luxury. The group finds themselves in a shopping mall trying to hide from Lawjacks, but that mall has a Halo store selling the latest experimental accessories for Handheld Link Organizers. Hanna spent a bit of grit in the last scene, so she decides to indulge her impulse to gain 3 grit. Hanna leaves the group behind and forgets about being sneaky as she heads to the Halo store to learn, and perhaps buy, the latest toys for her halo.*

*Alternatively, the GM could have spent 3 grit to force this interaction, and Hanna could have gone along, pushed the impulse inside to let it out at downtime, or simply taken 5 animity damage or a consequence to ignore the impulse.*

## IMPULSE TYPES

The impulses listed below are general in nature. When a player choses an impulse for their PC, they decide the particular form that impulse takes.

### INDULGENCE

You have a hedonistic pleasure that you turn to when you want to have fun, or when you need a pick me up, or sometimes, just because it's there. On a good day you just tell yourself you're enjoying the finer things in life, on a bad day it's just easier than dealing with the important things in life. Sample Indulgences: Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling, Clubbing, Sex, Video-games etc.

#### TRIGGERS:

Object of Desire being easily available, Location where you've indulged in the past, being with someone you've indulged with in the past, being under stress, feeling down.

#### RESPONSE:

**Intoxication:** You partake of a drug or other activity that numbs your abilities or connection to the world. If you are addicted to a substance with specific rules (see "[Drugs](#)" on pg 103), you take a dose of the drug, following those rules. For other substances or activities, you partake to the point of impairment. Gain a temporary **consequence** until the next Reflection (or until a narratively appropriate time has passed – GM decision).



**Distraction:** You get distracted by your indulgence, missing your other responsibilities. Gain two instanced of Dulled until the next scene unless you are pursuing (or have indulged in) the subject of your indulgence.

**Largesse:** You make a large, irresponsible purchase or expenditures. Spend 1 Fortune

#### ■ DOWNTIME ACTION:

**Night Out:** You've got a pent up need to live things up. Spend 1 fortune, recover 3 grit, and the GM gains 5 grit.

## PHOBIA

Some thing or situation triggers an irrational fear response in you. Sample Phobias: Claustrophobia, Achluophobia (fear of the dark), Acrophobia (Fear of heights), Hydrophobia (fear of water), Teraphobia (fear of monsters).

#### ■ TRIGGERS:

Object of Phobia being present, or association with a situation where they experience the phobia firsthand, believing that the object of the phobia might be near.

#### ■ RESPONSE:

**Fear:** Take 5 Animity damage or double the frightening value of the object of the phobia (with a minimum frightening value of 5). If reduced to 0 Animity while in the presence of the object of the Phobia, the character gains an additional consequence.

#### ■ DOWNTIME ACTION:

**Precautions:** You become consumed with preparing against the object of your phobias. The first time your phobia is triggered in the next act phase, gain 3 grit.

## IMPETUOUS

Through overconfidence, poor impulse control, or a love of thrill of uncertainty, you tend to not think through the consequences of your action.

#### ■ TRIGGERS:

Proposing a bad idea, being faced with a split-second decision, decision making taking too long, accused or confronted with uncomfortable questioning

#### ■ RESPONSE:

**No Take Backs (GM trigger only):** If the player suggests a plan of action they can immediately embark upon, the GM may trigger this response. If the PC does not act on this, GM grit spends cost half as much for the remainder of this session.

**Shouldn't have done that:** The player makes a poor or reckless choice (GM discretion)

**Lie, even when the truth would work better:** The PC makes up some falsehood to divert attention or get out of trouble, even if they wouldn't have been in trouble to begin with.

#### ■ DOWNTIME ACTION:

**Trouble:** The character makes a poor decision during downtime that leads to a downside. Gain 3 grit and the character and GM each choose one of the following consequences: take 5 health damage, take 5 animity damage, lose one fortune, break one piece of gear until repaired, decrease the Regard of a contact by one.

## PRIDE

You have an excessively high opinion of your own importance resulting in or from a dangerous overconfidence or arrogance. It is common for you to feel you have a right to demand humility or servile behavior from others.

#### ■ TRIGGERS:

Being insulted or disrespected, being given an opportunity to showcase your strongest skills, being upstaged by someone else, being flattered by someone else

#### ■ RESPONSE:

**Won't back down:** You refuse to retreat, de-escalate, or otherwise avoid a situation where you are challenged.

**Full of yourself:** You rub another character the wrong way, decreasing their Current Regard towards you by 5.

#### ■ DOWNTIME ACTION:

**Burnish Reputation:** You attempt to get your due by proving your worth. The GM chooses one of the following: you gain 2 animity and grit, or improve an NPCs Regard to you by one. The GM gains 5 grit.



# VALUES

Values are things a character believes in that mark their core principals and drive their behavior. Staying true to their values can be a source of grit, but breaking their values quickly saps it.

In any scene where the player suffered downsides or complications due to their values, they gain 3 grit. On the flip side, whenever a character compromises their values, they take 5 animity damage.

If a situation is discordant with a character's values or goals, (that is whenever either the GM, player, or ideally both, think it makes sense) it can trigger a value in the same ways as an impulse. The GM spends 3 grit and proposes an effect due to the character's values. If the character rejects the trigger and ignores their value, they take 5 animity damage. If the player proposes triggering a value and the GM accepts, they gain 3 grit (instead of the GM losing 3 grit).

Sample values are listed in Character Creation (pg. 91).

*Casey has the value that they will not allow children to get hurt. In the course of an episode, Casey and the other Envoys come across a refugee camp with injured children in it. The GM decides that this invokes Casey's values, so spends 3 grit to propose that Casey sacrifices their medkit (worth 1 fortune) to help out the children. Casey accepts, losing the medkit, but gaining 1 grit for staying true to their values. If Casey's player had proposed the trigger, they would instead gain 4 grit (1 for staying true to their values, and 3 for invoking a trigger with a consequence).*

## BETRAYING VALUES

In Subversion, there is almost always a way to compromise your values to get what you want. The cost is high, but for some, suffering moral injury is worth the short term gain – at least in the moment. No more than once per Episode, a PC may alter the moral trajectory of their life by betraying a value or trying to redeem one.

If a PC takes an action that goes against one of their values while making a roll, they can go a step further and renounce that value, Choosing a **corrupted value** to replace it (see pg 94). On this roll, they may replace any two dice result with 6s. The PC still takes all normal penalties for acting against their values until the next Reflection. When PCs fail a roll, they always have the option to sell out before things move on or the GM can introduce any failure consequences.

A character may not gain this benefit by betraying a corrupted value.

*Example: Alice is trying to convince the Lawjacks that she's just an innocent bystander to the break-in she was part of. She rolls a 1, 2, 3 and 4 on her deception roll—9: an unconvincing showing. Alice decides that she really needs to succeed at this test, so she is going to betray one of her values to do it. Alice has a value of **loyalty to her friends**, but in the moment she realizes that she cares more about survival than her friends, and tells the Lawjacks she spotted her friend leaving from one of the windows. Because she betrayed a value, Alice can replace the 2 and 3 from her roll with 6s, and ends up with 6, 6, 4, and 1—with the inspired bonus this gets her a solid 16. The Lawjacks are distracted by her misdirection, and Alice loses the value of **loyalty to friends** and replaces it with **I will always look out for myself**.*

## REDEEMING VALUES

Alternatively, a PC may redeem a value that had previously been betrayed. In order to do this, a PC must spend at least one entire episode living up to the former value (and taking any penalties as normal for breaking the corrupted version). Then, at the beginning of a new episode, they gain a consequence for the duration of the episode. The PC may renounce the redemption attempt at any time, release themselves from the consequence, and if they do so, the redemption process would start all over. But if they complete the episode with the consequence and being faithful to their original value, once that episode is over, during the Reflection, the PC may revert the betrayed value back to the original.

*Alice has been feeling awful about what happened with the Lawjacks. The realization that, when push came to shove, she valued her own hide of that of her friends has made her question if she was a good person—and as the weeks dragged on she's noticed*



all the other ways she's acted selfishly at the cost of her friends. Eventually, Alice decides to work at redeeming herself. She tells the GM she is going to try to redeem her value of loyalty to her friends and she makes a point to be loyal for an entire episode, suffering grit damage along the way as she goes against her current value of looking out for herself. One that episode is complete, Alice decides the time has come to redeem herself. When the next episode begins, Alice tells the GM she is willing to take a consequence (gaining an instance of Dulled) for the entire Episode to finish her redemption process. She struggles, and has some mishaps, but remains true and finishes the episode. At the Reflection, she reconciles with her friends and her value of looking out for herself is redeemed back to loyalty to her friends.



# Chapter 3: Modes of Play

In gameplay terms, a session is defined as one get-together among friends playing Subversion. Sessions could be 4 hours on Tuesday night over pizza at a friend's house, or 2 hours on Sunday afternoon streaming online.

An episode is a complete short story, usually around one 4-5 hour session, but it can often spill into two or three sessions depending on how long each session is and how much happens in the episode.

Episodes play out in different modes of play, each of which has different rules. The various modes of play are:

- ✂ Action
- ✂ Reflection
- ✂ Downtime

## ACTION

The **Action** is the mode that fills up the most play time. This is when the PCs head out into the world to solve the problems of the community and achieve their own goals. The Action is split up between **dramatic time** and **cinematic time**. Dramatic time let's the players' agency run the show. They can go, do, interact, and role-play as they want to. In dramatic time, it is the drama, or the exciting, emotional, and unexpected actions, circumstances, and interactions that make the game exciting. In cinematic time, things are more rules-focused and time, and the actions of characters, are tracked more closely. In the Action, PCs confront problems and adversaries. While important events can and do happen in other modes, the Action is where most of the big discoveries and confrontations happen, and where the characters encounter the most pushback and risk.

## REFLECTION

**Reflection** comes at the end of each session of play, before everyone leaves the table. This is where the group comes together to talk what their characters did. Did they accomplish the goals they wanted to? Is anything different now? What did they do right? What did they do wrong? If they did wrong, how can they make amends or right it? How will next time be different? Was there any Grit damage as a result of the action?

Action and Reflection generally have the PCs dealing each other and the wider world.

Downtime generally has the PCs interacting or dealing with their communities.

The GM can move between Action and Downtime as the story requires. Typically this will involve an episode in Action mode followed by Downtime, but if the story involves substantial time between events it may make sense to intersperse downtime (possibly more than once) in an episode.

Reflection is generally intended to take place at the ne of each session (while events are fresh in people's mind), though it can sometimes make sense to skip to reflection at a major narrative break, even if you plan on continuing to play more that day.

This is usually out of character talk, and happens after gameplay sessions. When the action part of a session is over, the players reflect on what happened. This is where the GM and Players discuss:

- ✂ Did PCs stay true to their Values?
- ✂ Did PCs stay true to their community's values?
- ✂ Did PCs accomplish any session or long-term goals?



- ✂ Was there anything that happened that may have caused animity damage upon reflection?

Once the group agrees, the GM gives out fortune (or in some cases penalties) to the Characters, who can then use them to progress in various ways. Fortune is an abstraction of the wealth, experiences, and training a PC needs to grow their abilities.

### Session Reward Chart

This chart serves only as a guide for rewards (or consequences) GMs can hand out during the Reflection. GMs should feel free to increase or decrease these amounts as their preference or table's culture dictates.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Accomplishing a community goal or hitting a major milestone:   | 5 Fortune/player  |
| Completion of a session:   | 1 fortune/each hour of play   |
| Staying true to all of the character's values:   | 1 fortune/session   |
| Breaking Community Values:   | Lose 1 downtime action & give GM 1 Grit/value broken. Also see Faction Regard below |
| Check the Animity Damage chart on (see pg 23) to see if there was any causes of animity loss that happened during the session. | Lose Animity per instance as noted (unless already taken during the session)        |
| Acting for or against a faction's intertests:  | Add or subtract regard per instance (see below)                                     |

## UPDATE GOALS

Check over the community goals and decide whether any have been achieved. When the PCs achieve a community goal, one ongoing community impulse effect of their choice ends.

For every goal you achieve on your community's behalf the GM chooses a new one of the same type (long-term or session).

- ✂ We should find a job
- ✂ We need to rescue a relation from a gang
- ✂ We want to find a Yojin for training
- ✂ We should find some food
- ✂ We need to protect a relation
- ✂ We need to impress a faction
- ✂ We need to get some weapons
- ✂ We need to stop the flooding
- ✂ We want to find something fun to do
- ✂ We need to find a way into the undercity

## PRIMARY GOAL

Regardless of whether or not any goals were accomplished in the session, players should choose a primary goal—the goal that's the party's top priority for the next session. This can be an outstanding community goal, or a new goal chosen by the players. This gives an opportunity for the GM to plan for the next session—assuming something doesn't intervene to interrupt their plans.

These can make good interpersonal role-playing prompts, such as if a goal is to "Visit Uriel's home in Churuq," or "Attend a party together where we get to know each other." Primary goals don't need to be dramatic, or even accomplished in a session, but they should drive some of the characters' actions. Some sample primary goals:

## OFFER TO HELP SOMEONE IN THE COMMUNITY

If the players don't have a specific goal in mind, they may choose to instead go to the community to look for an issue to respond. In this case, all the PCs gain 2 grit and the GM loses 5 grit. The GM picks a primary goal (or creates a new one), as the path for the next session.



## CATASTROPHE

The GM can also spend grit to create a **Catastrophe** (see pg 184). Something horrible has gone wrong, and the players need to respond immediately to prevent even further chaos. In this case, the primary goal becomes to resolve the catastrophe, and the players may not use the option to offer to help someone in the community.

## UPDATE REGARD FOR FACTIONS AND RELATIONS

The players and GM should also consider the events, consequences, and actions of the PCs and how they affect the goals and values of relations, factions, and their community (particularly any they interacted with in that session).

Typically, base regard will only increase by one point per episode, though exceptions exist (e.g. if you avert a disaster). Falls in base regard due to betrayals or threats can be much more precipitous, however! Additionally, the GM gets one grit for each decrease in base regard.

The GM should apply their own judgement on the impact of their action. As a general rule, it requires larger acts to shift opinions the further from neutral you get—it's easy to make a good first impression, but harder to get someone to completely throw in with you, and similarly, it's easy to get someone annoyed at you, but you have to do more to get them to spend effort trying to destroy you.

Community, faction, and relations are covered in more details in [Chapter 7 on page 45](#).

## UPDATING COMMUNITY REGARD

If the PCs' community Regard is 5 or less, it improves by one if the PCs accomplished any community goals.

If the PCs violated one or more of the community's goals or values, they risk decreasing the communities Regard towards them. Make an Influence test with a TN equal to 8 (+ 3 for every value violated). On a failure, decrease the base regard of the community towards them by one.

*Weyjane and Voktu did the best they could, but they had to violate one of their community's values in order to save their friend. Their community forbids seeking outside help, but their friend Orlais needed*

*a hospital quick. On the way to the hospital, they defied a group of Blue Raider gangers demanding tribute for passing through their turf.*

*When the Reflection comes around, they think back on those actions, recognizing they violated one of their community's rules and acted against another faction.*

*In regard to the Blue Raider gang, each of them simply lose 1 Regard with that faction for defying their wishes on their own turf.*

*To see if they lose Regard with their home faction, both Weyjane and Voktu make an influence test equal to 8 + 3 for each value violated, in this case 1, bringing the TN to 11. Weyjane and Voktu roll 8 and 10 on their influence tests, respectively. So Weyjane would lose 1 Regard with her community, while Voktu would not.*

### Reflecting In Character

Most groups will default to performing the Reflection phase as an out of character discussion—but it's not the only option! Reflection can be anything from an in-character discussion between the PCs at a restaurant after the action to a series of in character interviews ala reality TV—be creative!



# DOWNTIME

“Building up what we love is more important than tearing down what we hate.”

Gula Belmar, Envoy from Sapphire Village

**Downtime** represents any narratively appropriate length of time where there isn't anything urgent or pressing acting on the PCs. Downtime offers the PCs opportunity to recover, engage in long duration projects, and focus inward to home and role-playing within the community. Players may role-play or discuss in-character and play out how their characters are going to use their downtime (see downtime actions, below).

Downtime is also about refining the community. How will it build? What are its philosophies? What are its goals? How does it handle conflict? Who are its members? What is different about it since the last session (or because of it)?

Scenes might include, for example, a training montage for how a character improved a skill or learned a new paradigm, or a scene of characters working with their friends to help build a new community gym. Conflicts should generally not be a part of these scenes, but activities may lead to goals or conflicts after the downtime is over.

The GM and Players should discuss how the community narratively and mechanically changes based on the players' wishes and PCs' actions.

## DOWNTIME ACTIONS

Each downtime, each PC may take a single downtime action, representing how they're spending their time between the action. Players may gain up to two additional downtime actions in the following way:

- ✧ A character gains an additional downtime action if they pay the maintenance cost of their lifestyle (see "Maintain Lifestyle" on pg 33), as they use their resources or saving to replace their day job or other work they normally do to support themselves
- ✧ By default, a character is presumed to spend some time resting, regaining one grit and up to 5 health and/or animity damage (split between the tracks as desired). A character may gain an additional downtime action by taking 1 animity damage (ignoring adamant) and forgoing rest.

## ADVANCE DOWNTIME PROGRESS TRACK

Make progress on a longterm goal with a **downtime track** (see pg 20), or start a new one. Choose a skill and describe how your character is employing that skill to work towards the goal.

You may also start a new downtime progress track as part of this action. Work with the GM to determine length and TNs. A few examples below:

- ✧ **Increase Relation Influence:** You work to help out a relation and increase their ability and clout. Make a progress track with a TN of 10 equal to their current Influence x5 (x10 for faction relations). On a success, pay 5 fortune (10 for faction relations) and increase their influence by one.
- ✧ **Project:** You work to build or something. Make a progress track with a length equal to twice the fortune cost of the gear and a TN of 10, community resource, or other project. When you complete the progress track, pay fortune equal to half the normal cost.

## AID RECOVERY

Make a TN 11 Sciences or Arts Roll and choose another PC who took the Recover downtime action. On a success, they heal an additional 5 health (Sciences), or 5 Animity (Arts).

## INDULGE IMPULSE

If an impulse downtime action was triggered, you must take its corresponding downtime action in the next downtime (see "Downtime Actions" on pg 25). You may also choose to trigger it during downtime, in this case you gain the 3 grit for player trigger impulses (in addition to any other grit gained from the downtime action).

## INTERACT WITH RELATION

You spend time boosting your personal or community relations. Pick one of the following options:

- ✧ **Smooth over problem:** Reset a relation's regard to their base regard
- ✧ **Boost Relationship:** Increase a relations current regard by 3. If this brings their regard above their base regard, you may spend 2 fortune (4 fortune for faction relations) to increase their base regard by one.



- ✧ **Visit Relation:** Use the ability of a relation or resource with a specified downtime action in their description ([see "Relation Archetypes" on pg 47](#)).

## RECOVER

You work to recover from a wound, trauma, or other effect that is holding you back. Gain 1 Health, Animity, and Grit and remove one **Consequence**. You may not take the recover action if you forgoed rest.

## SIDE GIG

You do some work to make extra fortune. Make a skill test based on the relevant skill:

### Skill Roll Result

- ✧ 0-4: 0 Fortune
- ✧ 5-9: 1 Fortune
- ✧ 10-19: 2 Fortune
- ✧ 20+: 3 Fortune
- ✧ Critical: 5 Fortune

Hustling for money often comes with a side of risk—the GM gains 1 grit each time a character takes this option.

## PREPARE FOR TROUBLE

You spend time preparing for some problem that might be facing the community. Describe what you're doing and make a skill check against TN 10. On a success, the GM loses 2 grit and you may move the starting position of a progress track 5 points in your favor during the next act phase. Some non-exhaustive examples:

- ✧ Scout out a building before breaking in (Observation, increase starting concealment by 5)
- ✧ Make introductions or earn good will with a group you'll need to ask a favor of (Influence, increase their current regard by 5 for the next act phase)
- ✧ Scope out an escape route away from a heist (Observation, increase starting escape track by 5 for a chase)
- ✧ Establish an elaborate disguise or false identity for infiltrating an event (Deception, increase starting concealment by 5).
- ✧ Look for backdoors in a computer system (Cybertech, decrease Firewall by 5)

Each PC who takes this action (regardless of success) raises the grit cost for the GM to trigger an impulse or catastrophe by 3.

## Prepare for Trouble

It's downtime for the team, but they know during the next Action, they need to infiltrate a prison to rescue their friend. Daphne wants to scout the prison before they go in.

GM: Okay, you're wanting to give your group an edge going in by staking out the prison.

Daphne: Ok, my physicality is 5 and my agility is 4. I rolled... 17!

GM: Nice! That's a dynamic success. Since the Lawjacks aren't expecting any trouble tonight, you find it rather easy to observe the facility in detail. You spend time hidden just outside the compound seeing where they go and what they do, and you see that there are times when the shifts change and things are bit looser and less regimented. This means that if your group goes in just before a shift change, you'll have a harder time getting detected, and can start your infiltration at +10 concealment, and I lose 4 grit as you eliminate some future surprises.

## MAINTAIN LIFESTYLE

As part of downtime, players keep up with their expenses. By default characters are assumed to maintain their lifestyle through a day job that covers their expenses, though characters can also pay fortune to cover their lifestyle, which is based on their caste:

- ✧ Undercity: 0 Fortune
- ✧ Lower: 1 Fortune
- ✧ Lower-Middle: 2 fortune
- ✧ Upper-Middle: 4 fortune
- ✧ Upper: 10 Fortune
- ✧ Elite: 20 Fortune

A character may optionally pay for a different lifestyle, gaining the trappings of that lifestyle until the next downtime ([see "Caste Gear" on pg 101](#)). If this is below their lifestyle, a character takes 3 animity damage and the GM gains 3 grit for each level below their caste their lifestyle is.

## PAY DEBT

At the end of each downtime, any characters with debt must resolve one of the options for each point of debt they have ([see "Step 9. Choose Debt" on pg. 95](#)).



# Chapter 4: Cinematics

One of the best parts of watching movies is the soundtracks. You can tell, just by the music shifts, when something big is about to happen. That is what is being channeled when gameplay shifts into a cinematic. No longer are things meandering and free-flowing. Now, each moment is important.

## WHEN TO USE CINEMATICS

Cinematics are used whenever there's a time pressure on the players with consequences (to them or others) for failure, either because there is a danger that actively threatens the PCs until it's overcome, or there's a timer of some sort that the PCs need to overcome. Common examples of cinematics:

- ✗ Combat (every round the PCs fail to end the combat brings more risk to them)

- ✗ Chases (if the PCs fail their opponents will end the chase)
- ✗ Dangerous environmental hazards (i.e. the room is filling with water, or the artifact is emitting harmful radiation)
- ✗ Breaching against an actively defended system
- ✗ A tense standoff or negotiation that threatens to escalate
- ✗ A formal social situation where PCs only have limited opportunity to make their case (e.g. a formal debate or trial)

## CINEMATICS

Subversion breaks Cinematics into rounds and turns, in which every participant uses actions. During a **round**, every character in the Cinematic will have a **turn**. Once everyone has taken their turn, a new round starts. Unless otherwise stated, every character only gets one turn per round.

Rounds continue until the PCs have won, lost, or the Cinematic ends by other means.

### TIME AND CINEMATICS

Generally speaking, a round is enough time to do achieve something meaningful, however long that makes sense for in that cinematic. For a normal action scene, each round corresponds to about 6 seconds—enough time to do something meaningful while moving around—but the GM may decide that a round covers substantially longer (or shorter) than that as makes sense for the situation.

### URNS

On a character's turn, they may take one main action and one backup action, or two backup actions, as well as a narratively appropriate number of **free actions**. These actions are described in detail below.

### RANGE

**Range** in subversion is measured in meters. Whenever a range is given, that is the maximum range an ability can be used at.

Sometimes an ability requires touching a target. This is given as Range Touch (or **T**). To use a T range ability, you must be adjacent to a target (i.e. within 1 meter).

Occasionally, some abilities also have a minimum range—in this case their range is given as a band between two numbers (e.g. a weapon that can't be used at ranges shorter than 10m and can be used up to 200 meters will be written as 10–200m).

### Tactical Movement and Distance

Most scenes in Subversion don't need extremely carefully measured distance—and even scenes like combat can be played while only vaguely keeping track of distance. We give specific ranges because a) some groups prefer to play on maps with defined grids, and b) it's easier to



## STARTING A CINEMATIC

### INITIATIVE /ACTION ORDER

Each character has an initiative score ([see "Initiative" on pg 99](#)), which dictates the order in which characters take their turns in cinematics. Cinematics occur in descending order of initiative. On a tie, the PCs go first. If multiple PCs or NPCs have the same initiative score, they decide among themselves.

### SURPRISE ROUND

If a character initiates the cinematic before the other side is ready, they get one round to act before unaware characters can act. By default, only characters preparing for imminent action can act in the surprise round. Characters who are not prepared for action but aware of the character (such as their allies or other characters that are **Aware** of them) may spend 1 grit to act in the surprise round. Other characters may choose to spend 3 grit to act in the surprise round. The instigating character goes first, after which all other participants in the surprise round act in initiative order.

## ACTIONS

There are four types of actions characters can make: **Main Actions**, **Backup Actions**, **Free Actions**, and **Interrupt Actions**. On a character's turn, they may take one main action and one backup action, or two backup actions.

### QUICK KEYWORD

Some actions, referred to with the **quick** keyword, are easier to do concurrently with other actions. When you take an action, or use gear with the quick keyword, you may take an additional backup action.

### USE A SKILL

The player uses a skill to accomplish a task or make progress towards a goal, deal damage, or cause an effect.

### USE A PARADIGM ABILITY

Many paradigm abilities, as specified in their descriptions, require a main action to use.

## MAIN ACTIONS

**Main actions** are the things characters do that are essential to winning the Cinematic. Any actions that directly affect a progress track or inflict damage are main actions. Some actions which don't directly affect progress may still be main actions because they are so potent.

### HARMONIZE

Casting all but the simplest arcane spells requires time gathering the correct types of mana. See [Casting Arcane Magic \(pg 64\)](#) for more details.

### INTERACT

When a player wants to do something significant to the world (open a window, pick up a large object, etc), this is a main action.

### ATTUNE

Sacred magic users use prayers and other mental practices to prevent their magic from destroying their mental well being. See [Casting Sacred Magic \(pg 65\)](#) for more details.

### HOLD ACTION

You may take the hold action to specify a condition to take a main action under. If that condition occurs before your next turn, you may immediately take a main action, interrupting the current turn for your main action.

### DISTRACT

You use whatever you have on hand to distract or degrade the opponent's performance. This could be laying down suppressive fire with a machine gun, drawing attention away by running, or throwing your voice. Choose a skill and describe what you're doing to distract or disorient. Roll: (chosen skill) vs Vigilance of a target (within range). If successful, target takes a -2 on actions on their next round.



## CHANGE THE RULES

A character may use a main action to attempt to add a new progress track to the cinematic, representing an alternative method of resolving the cinematic (for example, a character might want to attempt to run away by initiating a chase, hide, or convince an opponent to join their side). Make a relevant opposed check as specified by the rules appropriate for that progress check (e.g. Stealth vs Observation for sneaking, Physicality vs Physicality for a chase) or determined by the GM. On success, you create a progress track appropriate to the situation, which may either provide a new route to end the scene or establish an obstacle that the other side must circumvent before continuing their original goal.

## BACKUP ACTIONS

A **Backup Action** is an action that isn't time-consuming or complicated enough to be main actions, but is still tactically important to a Cinematic. Characters can use one backup action on their turn. Backup actions don't advance progress tracks or reduce health, but they often give ancillary bonuses or penalties that may make winning easier.

## DEFEND

A PC may spend a backup action to take advantage of an element of the situation to improve their defenses. What this looks like depends on the Cinematic (it might be name-dropping an influential ally in a social Cinematic, or ducking for cover behind a wall in a fire-fight), but in order to take the defend action, the player must make use of elements already present in the scene.

Taking the defend action gives a +2 to a specified defense (Guard, Aegis, or Vigilance). In addition, characters taking the Defend action can neither benefit from, nor be affected by, dynamic or critical successes. Both effects last until the end of the defending character's next turn.

## MINOR MOVE

You may move some distance as a backup action. By default a character may move up to 10m as a backup action, representing walking interspersed with other actions.

A character may increase their speed to go faster than this. Each minor move action, a character can increase their speed by one (up to their maximum speed). If a character or vehicle has the Acceleration quality (pg 112), they may instead increase speed by their Acceleration value.

Most characters have a max speed of one, though many vehicles have a higher maximum speed. A character may spend 1 grit while taking the minor move action to raise their maximum speed by one until the start of their next turn, if they do they (or their vehicle, as appropriate) take 1 health damage.

A character moving at a speed greater than zero moves a number of meters equal to the table below. If a character does not move at least as far away from their starting position as the minimum value listed for their speed, decrease their speed to correspond to how far they actually moved (if they moved less than 10 m decrease their speed to zero).

A character in a vehicle may take the minor move action as a free action as long as they don't change their speed by more than one step.

*Note: These distances are provided when it's necessary to keep track of or estimate range when a fast character is moving—for chases we recommend using the Chase rules (see "Chases" on pg 60).*

| Speed | Example                                | Distance Moved |
|-------|--|----------------|
| 0     | Walking                                | 0-10m          |
| 1     | Running                                | 11-30m         |
| 2     | Athlete Sprinting                      | 31-50m         |
| 3     | Residential Traffic                    | 51-75m         |
| 4     | Galloping Horse / Traffic on Main Road | 76-100m        |
| 5     | Gryphon/Freeway Traffic                | 101-150m       |
| 6     | Most Car Top Speeds                    | 151-225m       |
| 7     | Helicopter                             | 226-350m       |
| 8     | Super Cars                             | 351-500m       |
| 9     | Tilt Rotor VTOLs                       | 501-750m       |
| 10    | Jets                                   | 751-1250m      |
| +1    |  | x1.5           |



## FOCUS AND AIM

Whether shutting out all distractions or aiming a weapon, as a backup action, a player may focus on their action (such as aiming a weapon or concentrating on a spell, etc.). This gives +1 bonus to the next time the player makes a specified skill roll. You may focus as many times as you have ranks in the skill for a +1 bonus for each focus action, though taking any action other than focusing or using the focused skill negates the bonus. Note: Focus and Aim may be done outside of Cinematic time, but for those skills for which focus or aim is assumed (research, arts, etc.), the GM should disallow any focus/aim bonus.

### Losing Isn't Bad!

It can be tempting for PCs to feel the need to win the Cinematic at all costs. Losing can provide narrative tension, and ultimately set the character up for a better story in the future. Consider how often in books, movies, and games that losing is a crucial part of the hero's overall journey. Don't be afraid of losing Cinematics. Value them and learn to enjoy losing as much as winning.

## FREE ACTIONS

A **Free Action** is an action that is not likely to have a significant impact on the Cinematic and requires very little effort or time. There are no hard limits on how many free actions a character may use, but the GM has the final say on when more free actions are no longer narratively appropriate.

Some examples of free actions:

- ✂ Dropping Something
- ✂ Making a Face
- ✂ Speaking a sentence
- ✂ Pushing a button on a device

## INTERRUPT ACTIONS

An **Interrupt Action** is an action that can be taken at any time, even on another turn. Once a character has taken any given Interrupt Action, they cannot do so again until the start of their next turn.

## ENDING A CINEMATIC

A Cinematic usually ends when the PCs have made full progress on a track, have reduced their opponent's health or animity, have been defeated, or a loss condition has been achieved. After a Cinematic ends, the GM will describe the aftermath (or allow the PCs to do so) and the story slips back to dramatic time.



# PART II: EXTENDED RULES

The following chapters are an expansion of the basic rules for specific, but common, types of scenes. It may help to refer to their various sections more often when playing scenes with these rules. Furthermore, we hope that these rules provide inspiration in guidance in how to adapt the basic rules for progress tracks and cinematics to new challenges that might face the PCs.

- ✂ Combat
- ✂ Social
- ✂ Stealth
- ✂ Breaching
- ✂ Chases
- ✂ Magic



# Chapter 5: Combat

Given the consequential nature of violence, there are some particular rules that come into play when a cinematic involves combat. In addition to the general cinematic rules ([see "Cinematics" on pg. 34](#)), the following rules exist for combat scenes.

## COMBAT ACTIONS

The following combat specific actions are available to anyone.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

#### MELEE ATTACK

I Main Action

Roll: Melee Combat vs. Guard of an opponent within Touch (T) range. If successful, target loses health based on the damage of the weapon you use, minus any physical armor, if successful.

#### RANGED ATTACK

I Main Action

Roll: Ranged Combat vs. Guard within range of a ranged weapon you're wielding. If successful, do damage based on weapon damage code.

#### GRAPPLE

I Main Action

You attempt to physically restrain an opponent. As a main action, make a Physicality test vs the Guard of a target with T range. If successful, they are grappled. While grappled, targets have +1 consequence and cannot take actions to move. A grappled opponent can break free, as main action, on their turn, if they are successful in an opposed test using melee combat or physicality versus the grappler's physicality.

#### DE-ESCALATE

I Main Action

Create a progress track equal to the target's Animity. Roll Influence vs. Vigilance of the target. Success adds 3 to the progress track. Health damage and intimidation also progress this track once it is established. Once the track is completed, the target will temporarily stop fighting, at least long enough for a social encounter to occur. If there are others still fighting, the target will either remain silent or try to encourage their allies to back down (GM decision). For every opponent that has been fully de-escalated, the vigilance of other opponents is reduced by 1.

#### DE-ESCALATE (ALT)

I Main Action

You attempt to stop the combat by using your words instead of weapons. Determine the starting Ask ([see "Asks" on pg 43](#)) to convince the enemy to stop fighting based on the enemies perceived odds of success (see table below). If the Ask is below the targets Regard ([see "Regard" on pg 41](#)) they will stop fighting for as long as you are talking to them and they are not being attacked by you or your allies. If the Ask is above the targets regard, you may roll Influence vs. Vigilance of the target. On a success, decrease the value of the ask by 5. If the fight shifts in favor of one side or another during the course of the attempt to de-escalate, alter the ask appropriately.

De-escalating pauses the combat only as long as you continue to talk to them, though it may lead to an agreement to walk away (or surrender). If it becomes clear that a nonviolent resolution is impossible after each side has tried to persuade each other, combat will resume.



| Starting Ask*  | Combat Situation                     |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| -15  | Enemy has no hope of victory         |
| -10  | Enemy seems likely to lose fight     |
| -5   | Victory is uncertain                 |
| 0  | Enemy seems likely to win fight      |
| 5  | Enemy is almost certain to win fight |
| * The GM may move increase the value of the ask to make deescalation harder if the fight has important stakes for the NPCs values or other, and decrease the value of the ask if the NPC has reasons to be inclined to deescalate. |                                      |

## ARMOR

Characters may not always be wearing armor, but when they are, reduce any health damage from each attack by the armor's rating. If a weapon has an armor penetration rating (AP), this will negate armor ratings on a 1 to 1 basis. Ex: if a character is struck by a weapon dealing 5 damage, but has 5 armor, the character takes 0 damage. If that character is struck by a weapon dealing 5 damage with 3 AP, but has 5 armor, the character takes 2 damage, as 3 of their 5 armor was mitigated by the AP of the attack.

## CONCEDE

### I Main Action

You attempt to end the combat by surrendering or otherwise refusing to fight. Make and Influence test (if being honest) or Deception (if being dishonest) against the target's Vigilance. Gain a +5 bonus on this roll if you take clear actions to surrender or disadvantage yourself (such as disarming yourself or allowing yourself to be restrained)—the GM may waive the roll if the attempt to concede is particularly clear and compelling. On a success the enemy ceases to attack you for as long as you do not resist any attempts to restrain or disarm you and take no action against them.

If an enemy attacks you after you have conceded, you may make another test against their vigilance. On a success, they take 5 animity damage.

## WEAPONS AND DAMAGE

Most of the time when a character makes a melee or ranged attack, they will be doing so with a weapon. Ranged attacks cannot be made without a weapon, but melee attacks can be made unarmed. The damage for an unarmed attack is 1D6 + the Brawn attribute of the attacker. For all other weapons, the damage they do is listed in their description in the weapons section of the gear chapter ([see "Combat Gear" on pg 109](#)).



# Chapter 6: Social Encounters

Whether you're asking for help from a friend, navigating a hostage situation, or simply trying to not stick out a party, social situations are one of the most common interactions characters have with the world.

In Subversion, Social Encounters are defined by two features: **Regard**, the measure of the opinion a character has of another, and **Asks**, what a character is trying to get from another character.

## Roleplay vs “Rollplay”?

For many groups, the best part about a social scene is the chance to be immersed in character and roleplay out the situation. Often, rolls and rules feel like that they can get in the way of this—breaking the immersion.

All of the social rules boil down to two basic questions—what are the NPCs attitude towards the PCs (their **Regard**), and are the PCs trying to get them to do something disproportionate to the how much the NPC likes (or hates) the PCs (the **Ask**). In an immersive scene, these questions can be shown by dialogue and reactions, and only stated in mechanical terms when necessary.

Both **Regard** and **Asks** can be influenced without rolling. Doing things to win someone over makes them think better of you (**Deeds**), and the strength of an **Ask** fluctuates as the parties negotiate exactly what the deal is (**Renegotiate**). These allow a push and pull to occur without needing to spend time rolling.

What are the point of rolls then? Rolls represent opportunities to influence the situation beyond concrete actions, either when making a first impression, trying to charm someone, or pushing them to accept an ask that is just out of their comfort zone. Rolls provide narrative tension where it feels like a discussion could go in either direction.

Rolls also play an important role in characterization—they provide the difference between suave salesman who can push the most tenuous deals and awkward wallflowers who live life with their foot in their mouth. Even in groups that favor immersive roleplay, including key rolls gives characters that invested in social skills a chance to show off what they're good at. This is especially important when there are mismatches between the most charismatic *characters* and the most charismatic *players*...

Of course, not every social scene is worth playing out in detail—in these cases rolls provide a quick way of resolving a situation and getting on to other parts of the story!

## REGARD

**Regard** is a measure of how willing an NPC is to help (or hinder) another. **Regard** is a progress track that ranges from -15 to 15, corresponding to the opinion they have of you.

The **base Regard** of an NPC is determined by the GM, based on any biases they have for or against the character and the player's **Regard**.

On top of that, the GM may also adjust their **current Regard** of the NPC based on the situation—even normally genial people tend to be quite aggressive when they find you unexpectedly in their house!

Most ways of changing **Regard** only affect **current Regard**—but if PCs take the time to cultivate relationships over the long term, they can create steadfast friends and allies willing to help them in the future, or at least have fewer enemies trying to make life difficult for them.



| Regard Value | Description   |
|--------------|---|
| 11 – 15      | <b>Allied:</b> The NPC is working with you towards your goal                                      |
| 6 – 10       | <b>Friendly:</b> The NPC likes you and will take opportunities to help you                        |
| 1 – 5        | <b>Favored:</b> The NPC generally is favorable towards you and gives you the benefit of the doubt |
| 0            | <b>Neutral:</b> The NPC has no positive or negative opinions of you                               |
| -1 – -5      | <b>Unfavored:</b> The NPC generally doesn't like you and is suspicious of you                     |
| -6 – -10     | <b>Antagonistic:</b> The NPC is opposed to you and will take opportunities to hinder you          |
| -10 – -15    | <b>Hostile:</b> the NPC is actively attempting to stop you by any means they deem appropriate     |

## CHANGING REGARD

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Upon meeting a new character, the player may make an influence test to try and influence their reaction. On a success, increase Regard by 5. On a failure, decrease Regard by 3 (unless another consequence makes more sense ([see "Failure" on pg 17](#))).

The GM may decide that influence can be replaced with another skill depending on the situation: maybe the players are giving a show and their arts roll wins over everyone in the crowd, or they attempt to impress the scientist with their own knowledge, or a prospective employer with their skills. Players are encouraged to come up with creative ways of making a good impression, but the GM has final say.

### CHARM

I Main Action

Charm is an attempt to temporarily win over a character. Make a roll against Vigilance, increased by their Regard value (whether positive or negative). On a success, increase Regard by 5. On a failure, further charm attempts are impossible until their Regard has been improved by a deed or the next downtime, whichever is first.

### DEEDS

Regard can also change based on significant favors or actions taken to help or hinder the NPC. A deed is anything you do to benefit or harm an NPC and changes their opinion of you. The GM is the final arbiter of when an action changes Regard. While most deeds will only provide a temporary change to Regard, some deeds may change their **Base Regard**—permanently changing their opinion of the character.

### TENDING RELATIONSHIPS

Without effort, relations tend to fall by the wayside and any changes in Regard disappear. If a player spends time keeping in touch by taking the **Visit Relations** downtime action ([see pg 32](#)), they can make long lasting relations.

Whenever the Base Regard of an NPC is modified (either by the Tend Relationship action or by Deeds), PCs should list the character as a Relation—a character they have a long-term relationship who may provide them with help (or hindrances) in the future. More rules on Relations are in the next chapter.

#### Losing Base Regard

For chronic mistreatment, or particularly heinous treatment or betrayal, a GM may lower the base regard of a PCs relation.



# ASKS

While Regard measures the attitude of an NPC, Asks represent any attempts to get the NPC to do anything. Each Ask has a rating from -15 to 15, with higher numbers corresponding to more difficult Asks. By default, an NPC will perform any Ask lower than their Regard (In other words, an Ask of -15 is something you can convince even your worst enemy to do, while an Ask of 15 is something only your best friend would do—at least without coaxing). An ask higher than the NPC's regard requires some effort, see Convince, below.

A successful Ask, particularly a higher rating ask, will often lower the current Regard of an NPC by an amount determined by the GM—there's a limit to how much you can ask one person to do, at least without waiting or reciprocating their favors.

## SOCIAL ACTIONS

The following actions are generally used when an Ask is too big for an NPC to do, the PCs may have to spend time convincing the NPC to do it.

### CONVINCE

I Main Action

The PCs can also attempt to convince a reluctant NPC to accept the ask through Persuasion, Inspiration, or Deception. After providing a relevant argument to shift their mind, roll an appropriate skill. On a success, decrease the value of the Ask by five. On a failure, they may be no longer amenable to discussion on the topic or their regard may decrease ([see "Failure" on pg.17](#)).

### RENEGOTIATE

I Main Action

The PCs can attempt to lower the rating of the Ask by asking for less, or agreeing to provide some benefit in response. Once the players have laid out a new set of terms sufficient to decrease the rating of the ask, they may attempt another Convince roll (even if they were blocked from trying again as a complication for failure).

### SWEETEN THE DEAL

The PCs can attempt to lower the rating of the Ask by offering the NPC fortune. By default, lower the rating of the ask by three for each point of fortune offered, to a maximum of -15 for 5 fortune spent. The GM may modify this based on the situation or the caste of the target—in the undercity a single fortune might be enough to convince a stranger to put their life at risk, while a CEO might not bat an eye until the numbers get higher than most people have ever seen!

### THREATEN

I Main Action

You attempt to get what you want by an overt or covert threat or blackmail. Decrease their Regard of you by 5 and make a roll to deliver your threat—for purely verbal threats roll Influence or Deception. You may roll any skill related to your threat if you can stage a demonstration (e.g. a weapon skill if you're threatening violence, or cybertech if you're threatening them with breaching). On a success, decrease the value of the Ask by 10 and deal animity damage equal to your charisma, plus any Frightening the character might have (either due to abilities or wielded weapons).

### BERATE

I Main Action

The PC attempts to deal animity damage directly to an NPC by verbally attacking them, using whatever hurtful tone, volume, subject, or language they can. Roll an Influence or Deception test versus the target's Vigilance. On a success, deal 1D6+charisma animity damage and decrease their regard by the same amount.

#### Failure

The cardinal rule of rolling is that you should only roll if the result matters. Failing a roll doesn't mean that the scene is over however! Instead, failure means that the desired approach, with the desired conditions won't work. The players may still get what they want if they try again—they may just need to provide more favorable terms when they Renegotiate, or try and perform Deeds to convince the others to look more favorably to them.



| Ask Rating  | Description  | Examples  |
|---|--|---|
| -15   | Agree to stop an action with significant risk to themselves. Something even your worse enemy will agree to do. | Convincing someone to leave a building that's about to collapse.  |
| -10   | Accept an agreement that benefits the NPC. Something an enemy will agree to do.                                | Convincing a merchant to take your money and let you buy something, convincing an enemy to walk away from a fight they think they'll lose.                    |
| -5  | Accept a mutually beneficial agreement. Something someone who dislikes you will agree to do.                   | Making a fair deal. Convincing an enemy to walk away from a fight they are unsure if they'll win.   |
| 0   | Help the PCs at minimal or no cost to themselves. Something an average person will agree to do.                | Providing basic Information, swaying someone between two choices they're indifferent on.  |
| 5   | Help the PCs at a minor cost or risk to themselves. Something someone who likes you will agree to do.          | Spend a free afternoon helping you out. Convincing a Lawjack to let a minor offense slide. Convince someone to walk away from a fight they think they'll win. |
| 10*   | Help at a major cost or risk to themselves. Something a friend will do.  | Skipping a day of work to help you out.   |
| 15*   | Help the PCs at major risk to their life or livelihood. Something your best friend will agree to do.           | Agreeing to be your getaway driver for a robbery, convincing a Lawjack to not arrest you knowing they'll get fired.   |
| Decrease Rating (or impossible)   | Violate NPCs Value or Goal   | Asking a law-abiding citizen to be your getaway driver for an armed robbery   |
| Increase Rating (or automatic)  | Matches NPCs Value, Goal, or Impulse   | Convincing your hedonist friend to go clubbing with you   |
| *Asks of 10 or greater are likely to lead to a decrease in current regard |  |   |



# Chapter 7: Relations and Resources

Envoys need all the help they can get if they are going to make a difference, and the biggest supports they have are the people and groups they've invested in. These people are called **Relations**.

A PC's **Relations** cover everyone from your family to your mechanic—anyone who might be able to provide some help to you if you need it. When making a relation, the PC chooses the Influence, Primary Skill, Archetype, and Aspect of the relation, which gives the cost of gaining them (as detailed below). Then, the PC gives the relation a name and notes the community or faction they are a part of (when appropriate). In addition to individual relations, each community will have **Community relations** (see "[4. Choose Resources And Community Relations](#)" on [pg 75](#)), embedded in the community itself, are available to all the PCs.

## INFLUENCE

Influence measures a relation's ability to help (or hinder) you, either indirectly or directly. Whenever a relation is required to make a roll related to their primary skill or archetype, roll a number of dice equal to their Influence with a bonus equal to half their Influence (round up). If the roll is only somewhat related to their profession, divide their Influence by two, and if they are asked for their help in a way completely unrelated to their skill, treat them as an Influence of 1. Influence can be improved through as a longterm project (see "[Advance Downtime Progress Track](#)" on [pg 32](#)).

## RELATION ATTRIBUTES

By default, Relations have defenses (most relevantly Vigilance) equal to 9+ their influence, and Health and Animity tracks equal to Influence x 2 +10, though the GM is encouraged to tweak this to suit individual Relations if it becomes relevant.

| Influence | Examples  |
|-----------|---|
| 1         | A child or other character that is mostly dependent on others   |
| 2         | A teenager or unskilled laborer. A gang of street urchins   |
| 3         | A typical competent adult. A small group of unskilled teens or adults. An undercity community with no power of its own. A typical family or small social group.   |
| 4         | An expert tradesman, city councilperson, or leader of a prominent organization. A small, lower caste neighborhood or gang.  |
| 5         | An influential business or businessperson. Local Gang boss or crime boss.   |
| 6         | A notable subject matter expert or influential power-broker. A medium sized neighborhood, or prominent school, temple, or other prominent organization with more than 100 members. An upper caste family. |
| 7         | A powerful mayor, or medium/large neighborhood or influential business. District Crime boss.  |
| 8         | A governor, prominent celebrity or expert. A small city, major university, or other institution with more than 10,000 members.  |
| 9         | World Expert or Universally Known Celebrity. A powerful lobbyist group, powerful elite family, large city or less influential district in Neo Babylon. Head of Bravia Crime Family.                       |
| 10        | Head of state, member of the Ukkim Council, CEO or majority shareholder of a major corporation. A small state, large city, or top-tier corporation.   |
| 11        | An influential district of Neo Babylon, or major governmental agency of Neo Babylon.  |
| 12        | A small nation, A national political party, Multinational Conglomerate, or Branch of a major government.  |



## REGARD

The Regard of a relation toward the PC or PCs is how disposed the relation is to help them ([see "Regard" on pg 41](#)). **Base Regard** is the default attitude unless things change somehow. Sometimes, Regard will grow higher than its base, this temporary value is referred to as **Current Regard**. In these cases, the relation's Regard decreases to its base regard at the end of each downtime. A PC can maintain or improve the regard of a relation across downtimes by taking the Interact with Relation downtime action ([see "Interact With Relation" on pg 32](#)).

## FAVORS

If you have an ask for a relation, you may be able to get them to help out in exchange for a **Favor**. At some later point, a relation may cash in that favor—if you refuse decrease the contacts base Regard by one. Similarly, if you do something for a relation, you might get a Favor. A favor can be used to decrease a future **Ask** by five, or to increase current Regard by three.

# BUILDING RELATIONS

Each relation has a two key components, their **Primary Skill** and their Relation **Archetype**. Additionally, relations may have one or more Aspects that affect how they interact with the PCs.

## PRIMARY SKILL

A **Primary skill** is the relation's main skill and the most likely skill you'll call on them to use to help you.

## RELATION ARCHETYPE

A relation's **Archetype** (see below) gives particular bonuses when a PC makes certain types of Asks.

## RELATION ASPECTS

**Relation Aspects** are optional qualities for relations that affect the terms, effectiveness, availability, and ultimately the cost, of relations. Aspects may be chosen during their creation.

Relations may agree to asks that are not related to their Archetype or Primary Skill, but they do not gain the associated bonus and are treated as having a reduced Influence (see Influence, above).

## FACTIONS

Factions are groups of characters that work together towards a common goal. Factions are treated as normal relations, though they may always be used as Connection Archetypes (see the Connection archetype for details), and some archetypes and aspects may only be chosen for factions.

## LINKED FACTIONS AND COMMUNITIES

Many relations are part of a faction or community. In this case, whenever the Influence or Regard of the faction or community they are part of increases or decreases, the Influence and Regard of that relation goes up by the same amount. Linked relations are denoted by a +/-X (Total) in their Influence and Regard, where X denotes how much higher (or lower) their Influence and Regard for the character is than their parent faction or community.

### SUBFACTIONS

Sometimes it makes sense to consider a faction as part of a community or a larger faction. In this case, they may be linked to the community or faction they are part of.

## COMMUNITIES

In each Subversion Story, the PCs' community—the primary society in which the PCs live, breathe, and hopefully derive a sense of belonging and identity—sometimes functions as a relation. Communities act like a faction for all intents and purposes, including having an Influence and archetype. And importantly, PCs have a Base Regard with their community.

Communities are developed at the beginning of a Subversion Story communally using the rules in [Chapter 13: Creating a Community \(pg 73\)](#). Each player starts with a Base Regard of 5 to their community for free.



# RELATION ARCHETYPES

Each relationship archetype provides special rules related to that archetype as well as sample Asks (see pg 43) that a character might use with that relation.

## CARE

This relation provides medical or mental care for you. As long as you have a positive Regard with this faction, they will take the provide care action on your behalf in downtime whenever you take the recover action. For every five points of Regard you have with them, gain one grit whenever they help you.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✖ 0: Basic Medical Advice, Provide a referral
- ✖ 5: Provide Immediate Medical Attention
- ✖ 10: Provide Long Term care to someone else for you
- ✖ 15: Go with you someplace dangerous in case you get hurt

## CLOUT (FACTION ONLY)

This faction has official or unofficial responsibility over a domain of daily life, such as law enforcement, local crime, community relations, or government. Reduce the Ask by 2 for any Asks related to the functioning of this faction and their domain.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✖ 0: Provide advice related to their domain
- ✖ 5: Cut through red tape (Automatic success on an influence check to get something done)
- ✖ 10: Exempt you from the rules of their domain (Reduce 5 grit or progress due to consequences they're involved in)
- ✖ 15: Use the power of their domain directly for you.

## CONNECTION

This relation can put you in contact with other people you might want to know. As a rating zero Ask, they will put you in contact with a one-use relation with an influence less than their influence and a current regard of zero. For every 3 points you increase the Ask, you can increase the current regard of the contact by 3 on their influence by one.

*Special:* All factions count as connection relations (in addition to any other archetype they might pick). Using the connection ability of a faction requires a downtime action, and they may only connect characters to a member of that faction (which may limit the type of characters accessible). If a faction picks connection as its archetype, this restriction does not apply, and any relations made with this ability instead get +2 Regard and +1 Influence.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✖ 0: Provide basic information and contact info about people
- ✖ 5: Make introductions and vouch for you
- ✖ 10: Make introductions in person and help convince the new relation to help you
- ✖ 15: Cash in all their chips to get a VIP to agree to meet and help you out.

## DEALER

There is a seedy side to many communities. Dealers can get you things that other, more legitimate, businesses can't.

Pick one broad category of illegal goods (Drugs, Weapons, Stolen Information etc.). You may use your dealer contact to purchase anything from that category of an Illicit value equal to half their influence or less (round down).

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✖ 0: Provide advice or gossip related to illicit goods
- ✖ 5: Sell you an illicit good
- ✖ 10: Use their connections to track down something outside their usual fare (either of a higher illicit value or a different category of goods)
- ✖ 15: Convince them to help set up a sting on one of their clients.

## EMPLOYER

This relation is always looking for work, and willing to provide it on generous terms. Whenever you take the Side Gig downtime action with them, gain a bonus on the roll equal to their Influence divided by 2 (round up). For every five points of regard you have with them, decrease the GM grit by one when you take the Side Gig action.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✖ 0: Provide information about their work and opportunities they know about.
- ✖ 5: Give you first dibs on an opportunity for work.



- ✂ 10: Let you borrow something from their jobs for you to use or take advantage of their business at a discount.
- ✂ 15: Convince them to forge an alibi for you to get you out of a major crime.

## INFORMATION

This relation knows stuff about a specific domain. Pick a subset of their primary skill as a specialty (e.g. a Biology Professor would have a domain of science and a specialty in biology). They gain Reliable 3 on any roll to know something related to their primary skill, and gain a +3 on any roll related to their specialty.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✂ 0: Provide off the cuff advice
- ✂ 5: Spend an afternoon researching something for you
- ✂ 10: Doing a long term research project for you
- ✂ 15: Go on a dangerous trip with you to provide hands on analysis.

## MELTING POT (FACTION ONLY)

While united by a common connection, each individual member of this group has a unique mix of skills. The faction does not have a primary skill. Instead, they are treated as if they had all skills available, but roll two fewer dice than normal when making a test.

### SAMPLE ASKS

Anything!

## SERVICE

This relation has a useful skill, trade, or job that can help out the PC. Whenever an Ask involves them using their primary skill to perform an action for a character, that roll gains +1 dice and **Augmented 1**.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✂ 0: Provide advice or a quote related to a job
- ✂ 5: Do a couple hours of free work for you
- ✂ 10: Take a downtime action on your behalf doing something or providing support for a job from a safe distance.
- ✂ 15: Join you going someplace dangerous and using their skills for you.

## SWAG

This relation has easy access to a broad category of legal gear (e.g Electronics and Software, Tools Science and Medicine, Combat Gear). They can always provide you with gear for purchase from that category. If you spend 1 downtime action, you may purchase gear through them at a discount of 1 fortune per item (minimum cost of 1 per item). Furthermore, you may spend a downtime action to borrow a piece of gear from them—the maximum value you can borrow is equal to the value of the Ask times their influence rating. If you fail to return it by the end of the next downtime, or if it's broken, you gain a debt to them equal to the value of the gear.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✂ 0: Ask for advice about gear they sell
- ✂ 5: Borrow something worth five times their Influence Rating
- ✂ 10: Borrow something even though you haven't paid them back for the last thing you lost.
- ✂ 15: Borrow something valuable even though they know you aren't going to bring it back.

## TEACHER

This relation provides specific training for those willing to spend time learning. You may take a downtime action to gain one of the benefits:

- ✂ Choose a paradigm when this relation is made. When you use this ability, you may select a paradigm ability whose prerequisites you meet and spend 1 fortune per 10 fortune the paradigm ability costs, if you do, you gain the paradigm ability until the start of the next downtime. For each 5 Regard you have with the relation, decrease the fortune cost of this ability by 1.
- ✂ Reduce the cost to buy a rank in their primary skill by half your Regard (round up) with them if the new rank in the skill is equal to or lower than their Influence
- ✂ Gain Inspired with their primary skill until the start of the next downtime.

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✂ 0: Provide advice
- ✂ 5: Look after someone for a couple of hours
- ✂ 10: Take someone as a student on your recommendation
- ✂ 15: Use their skills to intervene for you



## TRANSPORT

This relation is an expert at moving people and goods around without issues. They can automatically elude normal security, law enforcement, piracy etc. from any organization equal to or lower than their Influence, and gain Reliable 4 on all rolls to evade notice or deflect suspicion about transported peoples or good.

A transporter relation has a specific area of specialty (either by goods type, method of transportation, or location)—treat their Influence as two points higher when using that specialty. The range of a Transport relation depends on their influence, see below

### SAMPLE ASKS

- ✧ 0: Provide directions or advice
- ✧ 5: Give you short ride somewhere or make a short delivery.

- ✧ 10: Take a long trip with you or smuggle something extra for you.
- ✧ 15: Take you somewhere that's likely to be dangerous or drastically increase their odds of being caught.

| Influence | Examples                                |
|-----------|---|
| 1         | Moving things within a single community |
| 2         | Moving things within a city             |
| 3         | Moving things within a country          |
| 4         | Moving things regionally                |
| 5+        | Moving things globally                  |

## RELATION ASPECTS

### PATERNALISTIC

Your relation cares a lot about you, but they don't care a lot about what you want to do. If they think they need to intervene to protect you or help you, they will, but they're unlikely to help with more mundane requests. Treat their Regard as 5 higher when they decide to help you out, but 5 lower when asking for help they weren't already predisposed to offer.

### UNRELIABLE

Your relation might be good, but they're hard to get a hold of. Whenever you try and reach them, roll 1d6. On a 4-6, gain a favor with them, on a 3 lose a favor (or they gain a favor on you). On a 1-2, they are unavailable until the start of the next downtime. You may spend 1 grit to reroll this dice.

### UNSHAKEABLE

Maybe it's family, maybe it's a debt, or maybe it's just a really long history. Regardless of the reason, their Regard towards you will not go below their Base Regard. Furthermore, at the end of every downtime, if you owe them more than one favor, decrease the number of favors you owe by one, and if they owe you more than one favor, do likewise. Unshakeable relations cost twice as much fortune.

### TOXIC

Being around this person is bad for you. You decrease your max grit by one, and take 1 grit damage any session (downtime or act) that you substantially interact with them. Toxic contacts cost 5 less fortune (after any other modifiers).

### SUPPORTIVE

This person is a grounding influence on you. You increase your max grit by one. Additionally, the first time you interact with them in a session you gain one grit (up to your max). Supportive contacts cost 15 fortune more (after any other multipliers). Only contacts with a Regard of 6 or higher may be supportive contacts.

### TRANSACTIONAL

This contact is unwilling to show any favors or allow them to be in debt to you. They will never accept or give favors. If they do agree to help you for future rewards, instead gain a **debt** to them ([see pg 95](#)). On the flip side, their transactional nature makes it easier to grease the wheels with them—when using Sweeten the Deal to reduce an Ask, you gain twice the normal benefit per fortune spent (-6 instead of -3).



## MULTITALENTED

This relation is good for multiple things. Pick any number of additional relation archetypes or primary skills: multiply the cost of the contact by 1 plus half the number of relation archetypes or primary skills added (i.e. one additional archetype increases their cost by x1.5, two increases it by x2, three increases by x2.5 etc.).

## DUES

I Faction only

You can make a regular “contribution” to this faction in order to stay in their good graces. This could be protection money, tribute, or membership dues. Each downtime, pay fortune equal to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the faction’s influence (round up), or decrease your Base Regard with this faction by 1. If this would reduce your Base Regard below zero, you lose the Faction as a relation. Factions with dues cost half as much.



# Chapter 8: Stealth

Whether it's a vigilante creeping along rooftops, a thief silently tracking their mark, or a frightened rebel hiding behind a car from the Lawjacks, stealth plays a large part in almost every kind of story. In these kinds of stories, much swings on whether the enemies discover the good guys and can catch them.

To channel the narrative tension of stealth into gameplay, we use a progress track called **Concealment**.

## Simple Observation Tests vs Concealment

Not every situation involving something hidden requires a concealment track. Like all Progress Tracks, Concealment is designed for situations that slowly evolve over time. Snap questions of whether the party notices something in their vicinity are better resolved by an observation test (either opposed or against a simple TN). A party that passes near a tree with a lurking jaguar in it doesn't need to bother with concealment—a simple observation test is fine. On the flip side, if the jaguar starts stalking them through the jungle (or vice versa!) concealment may be more appropriate.

## CONCEALMENT

The **Concealment** progress track represents how hidden a character (or group) is from another in a situation where the hiding party has an opportunity to craft their approach or detection may require multiple actions to reveal the hiding party. Concealment takes different forms based on the situation, ranging from sneaking past a guard, blending in at a party, or avoiding suspicion in an investigation.

Concealment is a progress track ranging from 0 to 15. When the sneaking party manages to avoid suspicion or draw attention away from themselves, concealment increases, while when they raise suspicions or perform actions to make them more noticeable, concealment decreases—when concealment reaches zero, the target is **Discovered**. Concealment most often changes as the result of opposed [Concealment Rolls \(pg 52\)](#) or as a consequence for [Failure \(pg 17\)](#). The GM may also decide that some actions automatically adjust the concealment track (or end it all together!).

The concealment levels correspond to different levels of attention from the seeking party:

### ■ UNAWARE (CONCEALMENT 11+)

The seeker is not paying attention to the hider (either because they are unaware of the hider or are looking in the wrong place), (e.g. A guard or bouncer on a slow night, an executive expecting someone to try and talk their target out of a deal, or an investigator with no suspects)

### ■ SUSPICIOUS (CONCEALMENT 6-10)

The seeker is not alerted to the hider, but is on alert for some troubles (e.g. a guard who's heard some suspicious noises, a partier who thinks a party crasher might not fit in, or an investigator with some clues pointing towards the perpetrator).

### ■ ALERTED (CONCEALMENT 1-5)

The seeker is aware of the hider, but not exactly where they are or what they're doing (e.g. a guard who's spotted the PCs but has lost sight of them, an executive who know the PCs are here under false pretenses but not why they're here, or an investigator who thinks the PCs are their prime suspects but can't prove it). An alerted character will generally take immediate actions to try and uncover the hider if they can, though the hider still has a chance to throw them off the trail. In many cases, a seeker becoming alerted may cause the scene to switch to a cinematic if it was not already.

### ■ DISCOVERED (CONCEALMENT 0)

The seeker has discovered the hider and what they're up to (e.g. a guard watching the PCs, a socialite aware of who the PCs are and why they are at the ball, an investigator has solved the case). Depending on the situation, this may immediately lead to a new scene or cinematic (as the seeker confronts the hider) or otherwise trigger consequences for the hider being discovered.



## CONCEALMENT ROLLS

The primary method of changing concealment is the **concealment roll**—an opposed roll of the hider and the seeker as they aim to hide themselves from detection or find the opposing party respectively. What exactly a concealment roll is depends on the situation, some examples are below:

- ✧ Avoiding Detection: Physicality (hider) vs Observation (seeker)
- ✧ Blending In: Deception or Appropriate Skill (hider) vs Observation (seeker)
- ✧ Tailing a vehicle: Piloting (seeker) vs Observation (seeker)
- ✧ Hacking a system: Cybertech vs Cybertech
- ✧ Avoiding leaving forensic evidence behind: Science or Physicality (hider) vs Observation (seeker)

Characters make a concealment roll in the following conditions:

- ✧ A concealment track is established, representing the initial opportunity to detect or avoid notice
- ✧ Either side performs an action that enables a substantial new opportunity be detected (e.g. a player investigates the room their target is hiding in, or a character engages in a risky action or enters a more secure area).

On a success, the winner of the roll moves the concealment progress track 5 points in their favor (to a maximum of 15).

If one side is distracted, preoccupied, or otherwise not actively attempting to find or hide, the concealment roll becomes an unopposed roll against an appropriate defense (usually vigilance), and the distracted side doesn't make progress on the roll (as per normal for non-opposed progress tracks).

When multiple characters are hiding they make a **group test** (pg 19), if they are seeking, they make a **teamwork test** (pg 19) (the average result matters when hiding, the best result matters when seeking—though the GM may sometimes modify this based on situations).

## INITIAL CONCEALMENT

When the GM decides that a concealment track is appropriate, they begin by determining the initial value of concealment. The initial value of concealment is primarily a measure of how closely the seeker is paying attention to the hider, and is usually between 10 and 15, though if the seeker begins with strong reason to be suspicious or close to discovering the hider it may begin lower. The hider and seeker then make an immediate concealment roll, adjusting concealment as per normal. If a character has used the **Prepare for Trouble** downtime action (see pg 33), this applies after the initial concealment roll (and can cause the concealment to go above the normal maximum of 15).

*Example: Ari is attempting to sneak into city hall to steal some records. The GM decides the guard on duty isn't suspecting anything, so the initial level of Concealment is concealment 12 (**Unaware**). Ari rolls a 12, however, the guard rolls a 14—a failure. As Ari starts trying to break into the building, the guard spots some movement on one of the security cameras, and is now concealment 7 (**Suspicious**).*

## CONCEALMENT ACTIONS

The following actions are available to characters to attempt to move the concealment track in the direction of their choice.

### IMPROVE CONCEALMENT

▮ Seeker and Hider, Main Action

The character makes a move to change what they're doing in an attempt to to improve their concealment or detect their target. Make an immediate concealment roll—on a success their approach achieves the desire end, on a failure it backfires, further exposing them or bringing attention away from what they're trying to do.



## DIVERT

I Hider's Ally, Main Action

A character jeopardizes their own concealment to make a distraction for an ally. Make a concealment roll—on a success, they increase concealment by 5. On a failure, they become immediately discovered, though their undiscovered allies' concealment is unaffected.

## SET TRAP

I Seeker, Main Action

The Seeker takes some action to attempt to flush out the hider. The Seeker makes a roll vs the highest vigilance of the hiders. On a success, the hiders take a -5 on their next roll related to the trap the Seeker set.

## TAKE OUT

I Hider, Main Action

If the player can, by use of other means, take out a witness that is onto them, shut down a camera tracking them, etc., they can increase their concealment. If the character or piece of equipment was solely responsible for an instance of concealment going down, and hasn't yet alerted others, simply reverse the concealment loss. If other characters or measures have been alerted, increase concealment by 3.

## SWITCHING APPROACHES

I Hider, Main Action

Sometimes a stealthy infiltration switches to a social infiltration, or tailing someone by car switches to tailing them by foot. In this case, make an immediate concealment roll with the new skill. GMs may apply penalties to this based on circumstances or decide it's impossible: you're going to stand out at a black tie formal if you're dressed in a stealth suit, and it's hard to sneak away when you've spent all evening on stage in a bright sequined jump suit.

*Example: Ari is continuing to break into city hall. The GM decides that the guard is investigating what they saw on the camera and goes over to look—a Change Approach action. The GM makes a concealment roll on behalf of the guard, rolling their observation, and get a 9. Ari rolls physicality to hide under a desk—and gets a 14—a dynamic success. Ari moves the concealment track 10 in their preferred direction: up from 7 to the maximum of 15. The guard goes away, assuming the camera was just someone outside looking in the window.*

*Ari continues moving through the building and gets to the records room. They attempt to pick the lock, rolling Physicality against a TN of 12. Ari rolls an 8—a failure. The GM picks a 3 point shift of Concealment as the complication, and says that Ari triggers an alarm, reducing Concealment back to 12. Ari tries again and succeeds, ducking into the records room. The GM decides that the record room has higher security, and therefore calls for another concealment roll for Ari. Ari rolls an 8, while the guard rolls a 13—another dynamic success, reducing the concealment to 3. The guard spots Ari on the camera and starts running towards the record room. Ari grabs the records before hearing the guard fumble at the door. Ari spots a large crate and decides to hide in there—taking the Increase Concealment action. He makes an opposed roll against the guard and succeeds, 11 to 9, raising concealment to 8. As the guard searches the room, he fails to check the crate, and eventually goes back to check the surrounding hallways. Ari decides to stop hiding and sneak out—the GM has him make one more Change Approach Roll—another success, raising concealment back to 13, as Ari gets out of the area the guard is searching, Ari manages to make it out of city hall, records in hand.*

### Concealment and Multiple NPCs

In theory, every character could have their own Concealment track, and these could be different for each other character looking for them. This would quickly get out of hand! As a general rule, GMs should use one concealment track to represent the overall stance of all hiding characters and those pursuing them, unless the party has split up on completely independent approaches. If multiple independent opponents are at play, generally we recommend only tracking the lowest relevant concealment track—everyone else is a less pressing and dangerous issue. If it becomes necessary to track a different NPC, the GM can switch focus to them, picking a concealment that make sense (but usually higher than the previous target)

Sometimes a second NPC is particularly important, or independent of the primary NPC—in that case it might make sense to track them separately, even if they are less of an immediate threat.



## HIDING THINGS

Sometimes, it isn't yourself that you are trying to keep hidden. This could be shoving a weapon in your clothing or putting evidence in a secure place. In cases where you are trying to hide or conceal items, roll Wit + Deception, then add 10. This is the TN for NPCs to discover the item if they are looking for it. Concealing an item requires at least one minute of careful effort.



# Chapter 9: Breaching

Cybertech pervades almost every element of modern life. Computers control everything from locks to vehicles, and almost everything you might want to know is in digital form, from magical lore to corporate secrets. Given its importance, security is tight on cybertech, but it's not impregnable—at least to breachers with the right gear.

## SECURITY RATING, FIREWALLS AND RANGE

Three elements determine the security of a system or device, the **security rating**, the **firewall**, and the **range**.

### SECURITY RATING

**Security Ratings** determine the TN to breach a device.

#### ACTIVE DEFENSE

##### I Backup Action

With attention, a talented breacher can improve the security rating of a system they own or have authorized access to. Roll cybertech—this result becomes the security rating of any device the character is an authorized user for and within range of (see below).

### FIREWALL

**Firewall** is a progress track (like Health or Animity) that represents the progress a breacher has made against the system of redundant security measures designed to prevent unauthorized access, providing opportunities to alert the owner of an attempted intrusion before the system becomes fully compromised. A system with a firewall is not compromised until the breacher reduces the firewall to zero. Once the firewall is reduced to zero (or if the breacher succeeds against a system without a firewall), the breacher has full access to the system and is able to do anything an authorized user could do. Firewall recovers at a rate of one per hour.

### RANGE

The last line of defense is the **Range** of a system—or from where it can be accessed. By careful measurements of the time it takes for a signal to get from a user to the system and back, systems can prevent access by anyone outside of a certain distance. While nominally range may be set to any distance, typically ranges are set at one of these bands:

- ✂ **T** systems must be directly plugged into by someone in immediate proximity
- ✂ **S** systems are accessible wirelessly within 10m
- ✂ **M** systems are accessible within 50m
- ✂ **L** systems are accessible within 1000m
- ✂ **G** systems are accessible globally.

The range of a system can be controlled by anyone with authorized access to the system using the Change Range Action.

Cybertech Range is most commonly used to limit wireless access to devices to people nearby or prevent a device from being accessed wirelessly. Some systems are incapable of being used at certain ranges, this will be described in their description.

### DATAJACKS

In order to beat security, a specialized piece of cyberware called a datajack is necessary. In addition to Firewall and Security Rating, each datajack has two additional attributes: **Breach Power**, and **Slicing Bonus**. **Breach Power** provides **Augment** equal to its value on all breaching rolls (including rolls to bypass firewall or detect a hidden device). **Slicing** represents any bonus or penalty the datajack gives to breaching rolls.



# GAINING ACCESS

In order to gain access to a system, a breacher with a Datajack makes a **Breaching Roll**, rolling a cybertech roll (modified by the slicing of their datajack) vs the Security Rating of the system or device. On a success, they decrease the firewall of the targeted system by the damage given by their datajack. If the firewall is reduced to zero (or the system or device has no firewall), the breacher has compromised the system and they may do anything an authorized user of the system could do.

## CONCEALMENT AND BREACHING ROLLS

In order to make a breaching roll against a target, it must be **Discovered** (Concealment 0) to you ([see "Concealment" on pg 51](#)). You automatically **Discover** of any system you know the physical location of, as well as any system that makes itself known (which is most consumer devices, though anyone may put their devices in privacy mode to avoid detection). All other devices (and those in private mode) begin with concealment 10, though some abilities may increase that. You may attempt a **Concealment Roll** ([see pg 52](#)) to find a specific device or system that you can identify: if it is unattended this is a cybertech roll against its security rating (each success reduces concealment by 5), if the user is actively attempting to evade notice this an opposed cybertech roll. You can also attempt to find a device by using the Trace Access action on a device or system you know they're using. This applies in reverse as well—if you're breaching a system any security begins with a Concealment of 10 against you, though a failure may result in decrease in concealment ([see "Failure" on pg 17](#)), and possibly trigger efforts by opposing breachers to find you.

# AUTHORIZED ACTIONS

Authorized actions are everything you can do once you've successfully gained access (by succeeding on a breaching roll and depleting the firewall), or because you're the legitimate user of the device.

## CONTROL DEVICE

You may operate the device and use any of its normal functions. Alternatively, you may interfere with its normal operation. If you interfere with its usage, any attempts to use it gain 2 instances of Dulled. The GM may require deception rolls when impersonating the normal operator of the device, or any other skill when determining how well the device is used (as per normal use of the device).

## COPY IDENTITY

You may copy the files identifying the device to another device with a Cybertech roll with a TN equal to the Security rating of the Device +5. On success, you gain all digital access that the original device had—you can do whatever they can, and become an authorized user for all devices they were (though they are still subject to any restrictions on range).



## DOWNLOAD/UPLOAD/DELETE/EDIT FILES

Data is the mainstay of devices and systems, ranging from location data, communications, camera information, sensitive documents, and more. Exactly what this action can do depends on the function of the device, but this action covers everything from geotracking a device, listening in on conversations, wiping or stealing incriminating information, and more (use your imagination!). As a main action, a user may copy data to and from any device or system they have access to, or delete or edit any data on that device. GM may require multiple actions for elaborate edits, or a Deception roll to edit a data to fool another user of the system (e.g. looping camera feeds or falsifying authorization or IDs).

## CHANGE RANGE

A user may change the range of the device, either restricting access to users nearby or allowing users from further away to access the device

## DISABLE DEVICE

A user may turn the device off, or optionally render it inoperable until repaired. To render a device inoperable, make a cybertech roll, your result becomes the TN to repair it. A repair attempt takes 10 minutes. A character may attempt to repair a device as a downtime action, gaining a +5 on the roll.

## GRANT ACCESS

You may make any other user an authorized user of the device or system. You may limit what authorized actions the other user may take (for example forbidding them from revoking access or changing range) but this is risky—if the user makes a breaching roll against the system to gain full access, they ignore the Firewall of the system. Once granted, access lasts until revoked by an authorized user. A breacher may use the Grant Access action on themselves to create a backdoor that they can access later.

## REVOKE ACCESS

You may revoke the access of an authorized user. If they are not currently using the device or system this happens automatically, otherwise you must succeed on an opposed cybertech roll against the target. Revoke access has no effect against a breacher who has reduced the firewall of the device to zero.

## TRACE ACCESS

Roll Cybertech. Anyone who has used or breached the system in the last hour becomes **Discovered** to you if they are within range, provided their Security Rating is less than your result. If they are out of range (for example they have switched their device to T range), you instead learn the last location they accessed the device from.

# DEVICES IN THE WORLD

## HALOS

Halos, short for Harmonic Array Link Organizers, are the most common device in the world—only the poor, imprisoned, or those actively shunning society are without. For everyone else, Halos are what links them to the rest of the world. Governments like Neo Babylon expect people to keep a copy of their ID on them at all times, and it's how most people do everything from make payments to unlock doors.

### THE INTERFACE

Interacting with a Halo, like most things in Neo Babylon, depend on how much money you spend.

Cheap Halos, known colloquially as Paylos, typically worn as bracers, rely on a cheap integrated touch screens and buttons to interface with them. While those forced to rely on them are able to perform most vital tasks a person needs, they're often awkward, both ergonomically and because other devices assume an augmented reality interface, and the support for a screen can be awkward and buggy.

The most common Halo form factor is worn on the head (hence the backronym), and operated via AR. Visual input is handled via wireless connection to smart glasses or contacts, or via Eyedrops, tiny cybertech devices that rest above and below the eye and stimulate the retina to overlay images. Sound is covered by speakers on the Halo or miniaturized earbuds. Images and objects are able to be manipulated via hand gestures, tracked by sensors on the Halo.



The most seamless digital experience however, occurs with cybernetic implants. Cybereyes and cyberears allow completely immersive sensory experiences, providing not only better resolution than other methods, but also enabling a seamless integration of digital and reality, while datajacks bypass the need to make any movements to interact with the device at all, as the user learns to simply imagine manipulating objects to interact with the world.

## CONNECTING TO THE WORLD

While many people have a wide number of cybertech devices on (or in!) their person, covering everything from headphones to biomonitors to smart clothing, the Halo is unique in that its typically the only device that directly interfaces with the rest of the world, serving as the hub for everything else on their person (which typically are set to a Range of T, to avoid being directly hacked).

Because of its privileged role as Hub and link to the rest of the world, the Halo also is the store of digital identity for the user. Each Halo stores cryptographic keys that allow other devices to recognize that user and determine if they are authorized for access. If a breacher gains access to a Halo, they can gain access to those keys, allowing them to act as if they were that user for all intents and purposes.

The dangers of a breached Halo limit some of what is able to be done on the cybernet. Most banks have transaction limits on Halo initiated transactions, requiring either some form of non-digital verification for larger purchases or at least a verification period where a breached user has time to reverse the transaction without losing money. Secure systems and servers rely on range restrictions to ensure that anyone nearby has also passed through physical security, or rely on control from designated wired terminals who are the only authorized users, preventing a remote breaching from stealing their credentials. Of course, all bets are off if a breacher gets physical access to one of these terminals...

## DATAJACKS

The modern computer system was designed to be unbreachable, and by and large this is true for any legal consumer device.

That leaves breachers to rely on datajacks, specialty cyberware that exploits dedicated hardware, illegal programs, and a direct connection to the breachers brain to bypass the security of the system. While the original breachers were independent researchers and criminals interested in breaking the system, corporations and governments quickly found the need to hire their own breachers to secure their systems from otehr breachers.

A datajack can do everything a user with a Halo can do, but can additionally perform Exploits and make Breaching Rolls, allowing them to gain access to a system without being explicitly authorized.

## SERVERS

Even the highest end Halos can be compromised by a decent breacher. For corporations, governments, banks, and anyone else who wants higher security, there are servers. Servers range from the size of a briefcase to the size of a small warehouse, depending on the data, security, computational needs, and of course, wealth, of their owner.

Most servers are designed to be accessed remotely, having a range of Global, though some high security servers are only accessible from within their building, or through hard wires. Servers have higher firewall and security rating than links, and major servers have dedicated breachers manning wired terminals ready to jump in if anyone trips any alarms in order to locate breachers, undo their damage, and, if necessary, decrease the range of the server such that they can no longer be remotely breached.

## ACTIVE COUNTERMEASURES

Some servers have active countermeasures: programs running that automatically target the Firewall of breachers targeting them. There are three main types of active countermeasures:

### INTRUSIVE COUNTERMEASURES (IC)

On a failed breaching roll targeting the server, the breacher rolls a number of d6 equal to the IC rating, and decreases their firewall by that amount.

### OBSERVANT COUNTERMEASURES (OC)

On a failed breaching roll targeting the server, the target loses concealment against the server and any approved breachers equal to the rating of the OC.



## **PAYLOAD COUNTERMEASURES:**

While some servers rely on their own breachers to ultimately deal with intruders, most servers have a payload, or specific code that is triggered when a breacher fails a breaching roll against the server and their firewall is zero. White hat breachers are often creative with this code, but a few standard results:

- ✂ The attacking breacher immediately sends their location to the server and designated defensive breachers
- ✂ The attacking breachers device has its software scrambled and forced to shut down, making it inoperable as per the Disable Device authorized action
- ✂ The server and any breachers designated by its programming are immediately made authorized users on the attacking cyberjack.
- ✂ The attacking breacher is rerouted to a virtual machine with fake data and simulated IC and Breachers, requiring the breacher to reduce a new concealment track to zero to recognize the shift
- ✂ Anything else accomplishable with an authorized action

## **SURVEILLANCE**

Surveillance in Neo Babylon is omnipresent. Drones and Vehicles fill the streets and skies, each with their own sets of sensors. Every storefront has an array of cameras, both for security and to inform interactive advertisements and displays for people walking by. If that wasn't enough, most people in Neo-Babylon have Halos able to see and hear what's happening around them, or failing that cybereyes and ears able to do so with even greater acuity.

Fortunately, most of these systems are highly local and don't talk to each other, and the sheer scale of information lends some bare semblance of anonymity as long as you don't draw too much attention to yourself. Still, a dedicated breacher (or a Lawjack or Watchdog able to request footage) can almost always find evidence of what's going on—at as long as a breacher hasn't hacked the system already.

Surveillance systems are usually tied to a hub, either a personal Halo of the owner or security guard or a small server. Security conscience security systems set their range to the minimum required to access this hub, limiting access to breachers who are nearby (and ideally able to be spotted by the security system)—though more casual security setups may allow their owner (and breachers) to access the cameras even while they are across the city. Once a breacher gets within range, they can breach the sensors and erase or loop their feeds. If the breacher instead targets the hub, they can get access to all the feeds—and erase any previous footage.

## **C-LINKS**

C-links (referred to as Clinks), are the omnipresent vending machines of Neo Babylon. Rather than store inventory on hand, inside each C-link is a small microfabrication plant that can produce almost anything you can imagine making out of plastic, wires, and a handful of standardized motors, springs, and other components. While of inferior quality to goods produced in dedicated factories, creative designers and engineers (both official corporate ones and a thriving counterculture of breachers happy to hack them) have made it possible to get almost every necessity from a C-link—and for many of lower castes, almost everything they own might be from a C-link.

A C-link typically can produce goods at a rate of 1 fortune per hour, and C-links are usually stocked with enough supplies to create up to 5 fortune of goods. In the upper city, Lawjacks often patrol C-links to make sure no one is breaching them to make contraband—in the undercity the occasional breacher is a cost of doing business to extract what remaining resources have trickled down there.

## **CYBERWARE**

Cyberware started as attempts to restore function to amputees and other grievous injuries, and quickly developed to enable the replacement of many parts of the body with technological replacements that are more capable than the biology they're replacing. Given the existence of breachers, most people keep their ware at range T, only accessible via a hidden port or ultra-low range communication that allows access to a link directly touching their body. The exception, of course are sensory implants—there's no point getting your eyes ripped out for top of the line augmented reality if you can't actually get the data for augmented reality. Similarly, if the goal is to share what you're seeing with a friend hiding around the corner, you need to connect at a range higher than T.



# Chapter 10: Chases

Chases are just like other cinematics. Initiative determines turn order, and each character gets Main Actions and Backup Actions as normal.

## PROGRESS TRACKS

When a chase begins, each side gains a progress track (referred to as the Escape Track and the Pursuit Track respectively). By default each track requires 15 progress to finish, though the GM may alter this for shorter or longer chases.

To make progress on either track, characters make a Physicality (if on foot) or Piloting (if in a vehicle) test against a TN of 10 + the highest rank in the relevant skill among their opponents. The GM may modify this if one side has any miscellaneous advantages or disadvantages (such as difficult terrain, home turf, friendly bystanders, etc.) If there are more than one characters on a side in a chance, only one character can make progress on their side's track each round (use the highest progress in the case of multiple attempts).

## ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS FLEEING

For each additional character or vehicle (beyond 1) fleeing, the pursuers add a **bonus track** (see pg 20) of length 5 to the Pursuit Track. Upon completing the initial track, the pursuers catch one character of their choice. For each bonus track they complete before the escaping side completes their track, they catch up to one additional character.

## HEAD STARTS

If the side fleeing has a head start: add 5 to the pursuit track if those fleeing are at short range, add 10 if those fleeing are at medium range, and add 20 if those fleeing are at long range.

## SPEED

**Speed** represents how fast a character or vehicle is going. By default, a character's speed is zero, though many vehicles and some individuals and creatures have the ability to go much faster (see "Speed" on pg 111). A character increases all progress they make, and reduces all progress against them by their speed. A character can take the **Minor Move** backup action (see pg 36) to increase their speed by one, up to their maximum speed. The GM may decide that some terrain effectively limits the safe speed of a vehicle (this may be affected by the size of the vehicle). For each point of speed a character is going above the safe speed, they roll one less die on their test, and on a dynamic failure they may crash!

| Speed Value | Speed/ Example                     | Max speed in this terrain...        |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0           | 10 mph (15 kph): Human Walking     | A packed crowd or traffic           |
| 1           | 15 mph (25 kph): Human Running     | A typical room with objects in it   |
| 2           | 20 mph (30 kph): Athlete Sprinting | A winding footpath or dense traffic |
| 3           | 30 mph (50 kph): Heavy Vehicles    | Busy downtown area                  |
| 4           | 45 mph (70 kph): Electric Bikes    | Light Traffic                       |
| 5           | 70 mph (110 kph): Most Cars        | Freeway traffic                     |
| +1          | Increase top speed by 50%          | -                                   |

## OTHER SKILLS:

Characters may use other skills in chases. Broadly speaking, these fall into three categories:

- ✳ An ability that is directly likely to affect the chase with it's normal effects (e.g. breaching or shooting an opponents vehicle to stop them). In this case resolve the effect as per normal.



- ✧ An attempt to use a skill other than Physicality or Piloting to make Progress (e.g. a Baruk of Nature attempting to summon winds to support a sailboat). Allow creative substitutions in skills, likely at a penalty (see ["When all you have is a hammer..." on pg 20](#)).
- ✧ An attempt to use a skill to hinder a specific opponent or opponents. Target an appropriate defense (modified by the GM if desired). On a success, increase the TN for that character by 2 to make progress on a chase track.

## ENDING A CHASE

A chase ends when one side reaches the progress goal.

If there is more than 1 person fleeing, each goal reached (including bonus goals) counts as 1 person escaped or caught.

### Now What?

When one side has caught up to other, they have closed to their preferred range and cornered or otherwise gained such an advantage that the other side can't make any progress in escaping, at least immediately. Often this will lead to another scene (for example a social confrontation or a combat). Sometimes however, upon catching up their targets, the pursuers will be unable or unwilling to prevent them from continuing to attempt to escape. As long as the pursuers attempt pursuit, they automatically keep pace with their quarry as long as the situation remains similar. If the situation changes in their favor (perhaps the quarry's breacher disables the pursuers car, or an ally provides a distraction), the erstwhile escapee may attempt to escape again, though their opponent's pursuit track starts at one third the normal value.



# Chapter 11: Magic

Magic has been synonymous with power since before recorded history, and since then, those who could most effectively wield it have leveraged their abilities into wealth and political control. Only recently, with the advent of Cybertech has magic's hold on society begun to wane—though even now many corporate boards are full of mages leveraging their old power and wealth.

Each of the three known paths to magical power interact with different aspects of the world, and each brings their own special rules, abilities and limitations.

**Arcane Magic** is the magic of forces and energy. Arcane spellcasters describe their art as evoking scales of cosmic music, with each pattern either absorbing energy in the world and turning it into pure mana, or calling on mana to unleash energy in the world. While the basic principle is the same for different types of energy, be it heat, force, electricity, chemistry, or light, different energies require different scales, and most users of arcane magic specialize in one force or another (though almost all have some mastery of the direct manipulation of mana itself). Mages use arcane magic to soar through the sky, create illusions, call forth deadly blasts of fire, or manipulate the chemistry inside living things.

The heights of arcane knowledge rest in the tomes of the great universities of Neo Babylon, where many of the greatest mages train. This knowledge enabled the wonders (and atrocities) Neo Babylon used to dominate the world. Not all arcane spellcasters are collegiate trained—gutter witches, through intuition and scraps of uncovered lore also sing the cosmic songs of arcane magic for their own ends and those of their communities.

**Sublime Magic** is the magic of affinity. Through careful meditation, sublime practitioners focus on traits and aspects of the world, and by doing so, embody them. Sublime magic is fundamentally a magic of the self, or as many practitioners describe it, a magic of becoming.

The most prominent sublime practitioners are found in the monasteries of the Yojin, who focus on taking on the ways of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, or Void, both physically and metaphorically. By becoming like their object of meditation, Yojin are capable of supernatural feats of physical skill, and the most powerful of Yojin can become one with their element of focus. While Yojin are the most prominent, other sublime practitioners exist, using their power to gain affinity to other aspects of the world. It is believed that many magical beasts channel a form of sublime magic, granting them their particular abilities.

**Sacred Magic** is the magic of ideas. For many sacred practitioners, it is clear that their relationship with the powers of the world empowers them as they embody ideals, gaining the powers of their deities because of their faith. Some minority theologians suggest the powers are nothing more than ideas themselves, albeit personified, and that speaking of a relationship with these powers is like speaking of a relationship with a waterfall. Regardless of their source, Sacred practitioners, sometimes called Chosen or Disciples, describe their magic as flashes of insight as they reach into the source of their power, willing an instantiation of their ideal in the world. This insight exerts a psychic toll on the practitioner, however through careful practice sacred practitioners learn to protect themselves from the cost of magic through prayer, mantras, or philosophy.

The most prominent sacred practitioners are the Baru, who attribute their powers to one of the many gods of the Neo Babylonian pantheon (many of which are syncretized from other faiths as they were colonized and evangelized by the Neo Babylonians), and through worship of the gods, take on and champion one of their ideals. Nonetheless, chosen of many other faiths exist, as well as those who evoke the ideals, consciously or unconsciously, without any worship of a deity at all.

The relationship between the three magics is a matter of much discussion, and despite millennia of hypotheses and theorizing, little is known for sure. They all interact with mana in the world, that much is known, but beyond that it is unclear if they are all manifestations of a single unifying cosmic magic, limited only by the conceptions of mortals, or if each magic instead is a unique and separate force. What is clear, however, is that any individual can only ever practice one type of magic—once an affinity is found, it can never be changed.



A PC can only ever express as one type of caster and use magic in one of these three ways. While this path need not be chosen at character creation, it must be chosen when the PC first takes a magical paradigm, and henceforth all other options are inaccessible.

## ARCANE, SACRED, AND SUBLIME ITEMS

There are certain pieces of gear, labeled arcane, sacred, or sublime, that require a PC to have ability in the noted type of magic. These items generally grant a straightforward ability based on the magical skill of the user, but their effect will be clear from its description. Staves, rods, and wands are common arcane items. Holy symbols, purification kits, and exorcism kits are typical sacred items. Yojin wraps, beads, and clappers shadow bags are examples of sublime items.

## THE SHINE AND ETHEREAL BEINGS

Those who wield one of the three forms of magic have the ability to sense and interact with ethereal beings in ways that others cannot.

### AFFECTING THE ETHEREAL

Spirits that have manifested, appearing in both our world and the Shine, can be touched and interacted with just like non-ethereal beings. Characters, even non-magical ones, may still attempt to interact with an ethereal being, even if they cannot or have not seen it or verified its presence. It is up to the spirit to decide to respond... or not. Casters of magic however, can interact with ethereal beings even if they have not manifested. The three magic sources have abilities that affect ethereal beings directly.

### SHINE PERCEPTION

Magic permeates the entire world, but is largely imperceptible. People's minds filter out the subtle impressions ethereal beings and magic leave in their perception, allowing them to focus on more mundane reality. But leave your mind to wander, look for patterns in the nothingness, or attend to the glint in the corner of your eye, and you might catch glimpses of the mana behind it all.

The Shine is the name magic practitioners give to this other layer of reality, imposed onto the physical by the subtle effects mana has on living minds. With practice, one can focus on the impressions left by mana on the mind, creating a perception of the world integrating the material and the magical—producing a world that appears much like ours, but, as many mages have described it, shinier. Focusing your attention on the Shine is called **Shine Perception** or **Shinesight**. As a main action, any character may make a test using Magic Arts + awareness to look around. The TN to see things in the shine is the higher of 12 or the Aegis of any spirits they might see. If a character has 3 or more ranks in Magic Arts, they can use a backup action to focus on the Shine. Even without focusing on the mana, sometimes characters will notice signs of magical activity influencing their perception of the world—an observation test that beats the Shinesight TN by 5 may still notice the presence of magical effects. As Shinesight is not a physical effect but a side effect of the impression mana leaves on living minds, the shine cannot be detected on cameras or other sensors.

Looking at the shine is distracting however, and the character gains dulled 2 on observation tests while focusing on the Shine. This lasts until the character takes another Major action to refocus on the material world (or a backup action if they have 3 or more ranks in Magic Arts).

Most spirits do not try to hide themselves in the Shine, but some, particularly malevolent spirits like demons, start out concealed, even with shine perception. Shine perception can also be used to observe things in detail in the Shine. Once spirits have been discovered, they can be directly observed, with or without shine perception, by anyone who has spotted them as long as they remain in sight.

More specifics of how each source of magic interacts with ethereal beings are described in the various magic sections below.



# ARCANE MAGIC

"Power forges ore into metal, power raises towers and grind stone into streets, power pumps water to the crops, and lights the streets against the darkness. Power is civilization—and mana is power."

— Arcanist Theophrastus

Arcane magic is described as a building song, with notes and melodies slowly coming together until the final effect comes together, exerting a specific force on the world. Each type of force has its own "scale", most magicians become more comfortable with some types of spells than others, some maintaining expertise in one type of magic above all else, becoming masters of a single "college" of arcane magic, while others learn to harmonize together different scales into discordant yet beautiful songs produces effects piecing together different types of songs—at least according to others with the gift to hear them.

Regardless of the type of force, the fundamental effect is the same: the building melody either increases the force, draining mana from the nearby area, or decreases it, coalescing the force into mana.

## CASTING ARCANE MAGIC

Arcane abilities, such as spells, are learned by investing in Arcane paradigms. With the exception of ditties, arcane magic requires taking the **harmonize** main action before the effect can be completed.

### HARMONIZE

I Main Action

You gain 1 bar of a mana type of your choice, up the maximum number of bars you have access to ([see "Arcane Magic" on pg 157](#)). You may use that bar to fulfill the prerequisite of any Arcane spell (as listed in its description) or to power one of its Amps (see below). Each bar lasts until you cast a spell or a turn passes without taking a Harmonize action. Each Harmonize action gives a cumulative +2 on the Magic Arts roll for the final spell.

To observers, harmonizing mana is obvious, as mana around the caster reacts to the act of harmonizing, leaving physical effects related to the bar being harmonized. A TN 8 Magic Arts test (as an interrupt action) identifies the type of mana being harmonized.

### AMPS

Many spells can be amplified, varying their power or effect. Amplifications of spells, called amps, allow a mage to add additional harmonized mana bars into spells for greater effect. Additionally, The College of Mana has various amps that can affect other spells.

### DITTIES

Ditties are the simplest melodies, and the first bits of arcane magic a witch learns. Unlike other arcane spells, a ditty takes effect immediately and does not require the harmonize action.

### SUSTAINABLE SPELLS

Some spells are marked Sustainable, this allows the effect to be maintained for an additional round by taking a sustaining action. The spell continues as long as they take a backup action to sustain the spell. Only one spell can be sustained with each action, though some abilities change this.

### RIFFING

Talented arcane casters can, with some additional time and effort, improvise new effects. To riff, the caster explains the effect they're attempting to accomplish and makes an Arcane Arts test based on the complexity of the effect. If they succeed, the GM will set a number of bars required to achieve the effect. The caster may then choose to spend 1 grit to start riffing for that effect.

Riffing is always more difficult than pre-existing spells—it should always take at least one more bar than a similar effect.

### REPEATED RIFFS AND LEARNING SPELLS

Riffs are inherently unpredictable, and may require a different amount of bars even for the same effect. Nonetheless, they tend to become easier with repeated use, and eventually, with GM permission, the GM may decide that a player can learn a riff as a spell by paying fortune.

When learning a riff as a spell, count it as a paradigm ability in the college that it requires the most bars for with a fortune cost equal to 10 times the number of bars required in that college—if there's a tie, it can count as either college.



## Balancing Riffs and Learning Spells

Riffs are inherently weaker than established spells, in exchange for being more flexible. This means that GMs should feel free to err on the side of underpowering an effect when allowing it as a riff. If a player uses a riff multiple times, the GM can reassess and decide how powerful the effect should be. Once the GM is confident that a riff is balanced, they may then offer it to the players as a spell if they want to learn it.

As a basic guideline, riffs should not allow concrete mechanical effects that exceed these guidelines:

A riff should not do more than 2d6 damage per additional bar devoted to damage

A riff should not provide more than 4 armor/adamant per bar devoted to blocking damage

A riff should not provide more +2 on rolls per bar devoted to assistance

A riff should not provide more than +3 bonus to a defense per turn per bar

Most riffs should last no more than one round unless they are sustainable or they provide an effect other than damage or a numerical bonus.

These rules aren't hard and fast rules, and the GM might decide to break one or more of them if other factors make them seem appropriate or they take advantage of a situation.

## ETHEREAL BEINGS AND INVERTED SPELLS

Arcane magic works by transforming mana into energy and vice versa. Mages have learned to affect ethereal beings by "Inverting" their spells, causing them to affect ethereal beings rather than material ones. An inverted spell follows all the same rules as a normal spell, except it only affects ethereal beings.

An inverted spell leaves an impression of its opposite in the physical realm—an inverted fireball may leave a dusting of frost in its wake, or an inverted blinding flash may lead to a brief shadow over the area. This is usually cosmetic but the GM may decide that particularly powerful inverted spells have minor effects.

## SACRED MAGIC

"Who can equal her greatness? Anyone?  
Powerful, exalted, and fabulous is her status.  
Ishtar: can anyone equal her greatness?  
Powerful, exalted, and fabulous is her status!  
— Ancient Prayer to Ishtar

Unlike Arcane or Sublime magic, Sacred magic originates from beyond matter or energy, coming from beyond because a sacred practitioner is so in tune with a divine being representing an ideal. This resonance allows Sacred magicians to accomplish miraculous things (particularly as they tie to that ideal), but requires care to avoid being overwhelmed by the sudden power flowing through them.

## CASTING SACRED MAGIC

Resonating with a divine power can cause a caster to lose touch with their own will. To get back in touch with themselves, chosen have spend time attuning themselves back into balance. Each Sacred spell has a **Dissonance** score. For each point of **Dissonance**, the caster must take one **attune** main action each turn until the dissonance score is reduced to zero. If they fail to take the **attune** action on their next turn, they take 3 points of animity damage for each point of remaining dissonance on the spell.

Whenever casting a Sacred spell, a dynamic success reduces the **Dissonance** of the spell by 1. On a critical success, ignore all **Dissonance** on the spell. On a dynamic failure, immediately take animity damage as if you failed to take the attune action.



## CHANTS

Sometimes Sacred casters can empty themselves beyond their practiced prayers to achieve completely novel effects through the will of the divine. This takes the form of chanting. Pay 3 grit and make a Sacred Arts roll against a TN set by the GM based on the desired effect. On a success, the effect happens. Effects should generally be within the scope of sacred magic itself, but the GM has final say on what is possible.

Chanting takes a higher toll of **Dissonance** than normal spells, even for similar amount of effects. The GM should set the **Dissonance** value of the spell/chant to at least one higher than comparable spells. Chosen find it difficult to empty themselves through chanting repeatedly—so if a chosen tries chanting too soon after their last chant, they may find the TN and **Dissonance** of the chant increasing.

## EXORCISM AND ETHEREAL BEINGS

Sacred magic spells and abilities do not affect purely ethereal beings normally. Instead Sacred casters use a technique called exorcism to deal with purely ethereal beings by directly channeling pure sacred magic at a spirit. The channeled magic pushes into the space occupied by the spirit and evicts it. Exorcism-usually- does not kill or destroy an ethereal being, but it disrupts their connection to a particular person, place, or thing, and prevents that being from manifesting for a time, or perhaps, for good. Further, exorcism breaks a spirit's ability to manifest in the normal world. Once it is broken, they cannot stay.

Exorcism tests are Magic Arts vs. Aegis of the ethereal being. On a success, the spirit takes 5 animity damage. If the spirit is a haunt or a demon, things work a bit differently. A successful exorcism roll versus a haunt or a demon reduces the power of the spirit by 1. Once they reach 0 power, they are disrupted. Once a haunt or demon is reduced to 1 power, they take all actions as if they were at full power until their final power is reduced.

## CHOOSING A GOD

Most baru priests don't think much about the order of gods in their worship. They worship the entire pantheon of Babylonian Powers. But for those chosen to wield sacred magic, their connection is more pronounced and particular. Before choosing any sacred paradigms, a PC must first choose a specific Power that they are in tune with over and above the others. Being in tune with the divine is symbolized by mantles. Chosen do wear robes, vestments, or other garments known as mantles to identify themselves as priests, but the mantles are also metaphors for their embodiment of the divine. Thus, a chosen bearing the mantle of authority allows a sacred caster to take choices from that particular paradigm, but not others. The powers and their related mantles are listed below. Casters cannot choose sacred paradigms that don't relate to their Power's mantles.

| Power                        | Mantles                         |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Marduk                       | Authority, Justice, Cultivation |
| Ishtar                       | Passion, Death, Authority       |
| Nabu                         | Knowledge, Secrets, Passion     |
| Shamash                      | Justice, Passion, Knowledge     |
| Sayin                        | Secrets, Cultivation, Nature    |
| Nergal                       | Death, Secrets, Nature          |
| Ninurta                      | Cultivation, Justice, Authority |
| Enlil (Disgraced, Forbidden) | Nature, Knowledge, Death        |



# SUBLIME MAGIC

*The most fundamental magic pervades all things, it determines what they are. Yet, what we are is a choice, and therefore, we decide what the magic inside us can do*

— Void Yojin Teaching

Sublime magic is the magic of embodiment—both of the body but also of matter itself. Sublime practitioners through careful meditation can take aspects of that element into themselves, as well as manipulate that element around them. Each Yojin must choose one way, or element, and may only take abilities from that way's paradigm.

## CASTING SUBLIME MAGIC

Unlike Sacred or Arcane Magic, Sublime Magic is not a matter of casting a spell in the moment, but rather imbuing the sublime practitioner with power they can channel throughout the day.

Each Sublime practitioner has a number of meditations they can practice that unlock abilities. While the form the meditations take varies by practitioner and tradition, each meditation takes five minutes to perform, and lasts for 24 hours, or until replaced by a different meditation.

## SUBLIME RHYTHM

A sublime practitioner, most notably the yojin, have learned not to rely on their physical bodies. Instead, they can call upon the power within to boost their natural abilities. Once per session, a sublime PC may spend 1 grit to make magic arts skill test in place of any single physicality, melee combat, ranged combat, piloting, or observation test.

## SUBLIME MAGIC AND ETHEREAL BEINGS

Sublime casters learn to channel their magic into their body. A sublime caster can use this to effect an ethereal spirit as if it was physical—treat this as an unarmed attack against the spirit but use Magic Arts in lieu of Melee Combat.



# PART III: CHARACTER CREATION



# Chapter 12: Starting a Story

## SESSION ZERO

Once you've determined who you're playing with (and who's the GM), there are a number of things to determine about your story before you start the first session. We refer to this step before the first session as "Session Zero".

The session zero has several goals:

- ✧ Determine the scope of the game
- ✧ Determine theme, tone, mood
- ✧ Establish expectations and boundaries
- ✧ Determine the setting and community
- ✧ Establish Character Concepts and Connections

Together, these goals aim to get everyone on the same page for the game so everything that comes after flows better and is more satisfying for all and create a rich starting point where PCs are connected to the world and each other

### STEP 1: SCOPE

Scope refers to how long and at what level the games that follow will be. Sometimes, it is fun to run a one-shot game night where everyone plays high-power characters that all die in a blaze of glory at the end. This is, of course, something you should talk to each other about lest someone bring a brand-new character to the table they have spent hours creating and hope to play forever. Whether your group will be together a set number of sessions or whether your game will be every week until darkness consumes the world, that is something you should talk about beforehand. Also, since Subversion's community and character creation process is so collaborative, ask the GM ahead of time what parts of a character are ok to make ahead of time and which parts should wait until the session zero. This is so some players don't spend the first half of the meeting helping others make characters while others twiddle their thumbs.

#### SCOPE CHECKLIST:

- ✧ How many sessions will we be playing? How often? Where?

- ✧ Premade characters? New characters? Does anyone need help making their characters? Any GM caveats for character creation?

### STEP 2: THEME, TONE, MOOD

So often in games, otherwise well-intentioned people start off with such high hopes for a role playing experience only to end after a few sessions in frustration. Some may come to a Subversion group desperately wanting an experience like Blade Runner or the Matrix where broody protagonists take out bad guys with their wits and cold steel. Another player may come to that same group wanting a heartfelt family story where things go bad, and yes, sometimes you need to steal from a corporation, but things work out in the end, just like an episode of She-Ra or Avatar the Last Airbender. Still others are looking for a group where silly heroes make fart jokes, seduce everything that moves, and maybe save the day if they get around to it. Frankly, those expectations are not likely to all be met in one game.

Ask your players what themes they are interested in exploring, and tell them yours. Redemption? Revenge? Do-gooding? Crime? Those are all worthwhile games to play... but not if someone is not going to have fun playing them. Trust us, you'll want to know ahead of time if that's the case. Finding out after you've spent hours and hours crafting a complex story with an ever-growing cast of characters will burn you right out. Ask your players also what tone and mood they are looking for as well. Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, and Monty Python's Holy Grail are all, generally, in the medieval fantasy genre, but the tone and mood of each is vastly different. Find out if players are looking for cartoony violence, explicit violence, or somewhere between. Find out if they want a dark mood, where things are scary, or something lighter, where the bad guys are all dealt with nice and cleanly. Asking these questions in a session zero will save everyone heartache in the long run.



## THEME, TONE, AND MOOD CHECKLIST

- ✖ Is the mood of the game hopeful? Realistic? Dark? Bleak? Grim? No hope?
- ✖ Is the tone of the game silly? Goofy? Dark humor? Realistic? Severe? Dead serious?
- ✖ What are some themes the GM and players want to highlight?

## STEP 3: EXPECTATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

Every table has different expectations for how games should be run, and what sort of behavior and topics are expected.

One of the most important things to be brought up in a session zero is the idea of player boundaries. As a GM it is certainly possible that content within the game is disturbing to you. But since you are the one facilitating the story, you simply won't include what makes you uncomfortable. But players never really know what's going to come next. That can be part of the fun of playing RPGs! But it can also lead to some awkward and disappointing moments. Fortunately, those moments can be mitigated fairly easily. Since players are coming to the group with all sorts of hidden hurts and personal situations, it is impossible for a GM to know all the players well enough to anticipate what sort of things might bring up unpleasant/traumatic feelings or memories. Without trying to stifle the creativity of anyone, it is always better to what topics are sensitive to players. If someone you love just passed, you may not want to play a game of Subversion where your loved ones are murdered. That is ok. And if you are really one of those people who can't see how people's feelings are more important than a game, Subversion isn't for you. We'll refund your money.

In order to minimize this kind of uncomfortability (or in some cases re-traumatizing victims, triggering PTSD, etc.), discuss what sort of things your players (or you, the GM!) don't want to deal with at the table. There are many ways to do this, including the checklist below you can use if you don't have something else to use. Sometimes, a GM can simply ask players the sort of thing they don't want to include in a game. This works best if players and GM are already familiar with each other. Other times, it might be helpful to have players write down any soft spots on a piece of paper in terms of what things they definitely want none of and things they just don't want to deal with in detail. You might decide to hand out a questionnaire for each player to fill out so you can make a list of things not to have in your campaign. The tools aren't the important thing. Talking with each other and caring about each other enough to show the utmost respect, is.

## WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Sometimes, despite our best effort, something unpleasant can come up while playing a game, perhaps even during the session zero! The kind of game you want to run may not be compatible with the kind the players, or a single player, want to play. That is ok! That doesn't make them, or you, a failure or bad. That just means one of life's little frustrations has reared its head. Don't let that stop you from trying again or recruiting new players.

It is inevitable that sometime, someone at the table is going to upset someone else, or maybe something no one could have planned for caused someone unintended pain. These situations also do not mean anyone is bad. But it is an opportunity for discussion. Ask the person who was upset if they want to talk about it or if they would like whatever upset them to be undone or not brought back up again. Whatever they say, listen. Let them make the call and respect their decision. Then keep playing and give them the chance to start having fun again!

## EXPECTATIONS AND BOUNDARIES CHECKLIST

- ✖ Expectations for food/drink/alcohol
- ✖ Expectations for cell phones/distractions
- ✖ What topics are hard lines (do not include in the game at all)
- ✖ What topics should be veiled (only occur off-screen)



## PARTICULAR BOUNDARIES

The following is a list of common boundaries to consider. Depending on your group, you may find it easy to run through all of them, or to set up a survey or other way of soliciting boundaries from your group.

### VIOLENCE

- ✖ To children
- ✖ To animals
- ✖ To women/men
- ✖ Sexual violence
- ✖ Blood/Gore
- ✖ Torture
- ✖ Self harm/suicide
- ✖ Genocide
- ✖ Rape
- ✖ Terrorism

### DISCRIMINATION

- ✖ Racism
- ✖ Sexism
- ✖ Homophobia
- ✖ Transphobia

### RELIGION (REAL WORLD)

### POLITICS (REAL WORLD)

### ROMANCE

- ✖ Sex

- ✖ Explicit Sex
- ✖ Between PCs
- ✖ Body humor

### PREGNANCY

- ✖ Miscarriage
- ✖ Abortion

## STEP 4: DETERMINING THE COMMUNITY

The first step in creating a party is determining what community they are part of. Detailed rules for creating a community are in [Chapter 13: Creating a Community \(pg 73\)](#). However, at this stage the question is where does the party fit in the world? Are they part of a neighborhood, an organization, a religion, a government, a movement, or something else?

### COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

- ✖ Where is the community?
- ✖ Who lives there?
- ✖ What sort of place is it?
- ✖ What are the main issues and conflicts in the community?



## STEP 5: DETERMINE CHARACTER CONCEPTS AND CONNECTIONS

Once you've determined the themes and community of the story, now is the time to figure out what sort of characters people are interested in playing. Detailed character creation rules are in [Chapter 14: PC Generation \(pg 80\)](#), but at this point, the goal is to establish ideas in broad strokes before anything is set in stone. Don't worry about making any definite decisions at this point—you'll return to this in more detail once the community is fully fleshed out.

## CHARACTER CONCEPT CHECKLIST

- ✗ What skills and abilities do each member of the group have?
- ✗ What sort of things are each character motivated to do?
- ✗ How are the characters connected to the community?
- ✗ How well do the different characters know each other?

Once you've completed your initial brainstorming, you can move on to create the community in more detail.

### Alternate Party Types

The default role that characters play in Subversion is that of Envoys - representatives that act as agents, defenders, ambassadors, and problem solvers of their various, mostly urban, communities. PCs will most often be Envoys from the same community, and sent by whatever mechanism that community uses to determine how problems should be dealt with.

There are many more stories to be told in Subversion though than just those of Envoys. If another type of story is more compelling to your group, do it! Below are a few other options:

**Victims of Circumstance:** Instead of having a formal role, the characters may have just been in a certain place at a certain time and that's where the adventure begins.

**Explorers:** The world of Subversion is filled with magic and wonders, and explorers venture out into those places to discover the secrets hidden in these hard to reach places.

**Gangers:** The undercity of Neo Babylon is parceled up between gangs that eke out an existence on the few blocks they've designated as their turf, and gangers seek to promote their gang and stay alive.

**Freebooters:** Freebooters is the term for professional criminals that do jobs for hire. That's not to say they don't have their own agenda, goals and morals, of course...

**Employees:** Employees work for some organization. Maybe you're work for the department of beast control, or are all members of a traveling circus, or anyone else who has the money to pay for you to do interesting things.



# Chapter 13: Creating a Community

Each group of PCs will build a community together. The community represents the larger group the PCs represent. The PCs are patrons, protectors, advocates, and products of their communities. However they are formed, they represent what binds the PCs to each other and what resources the PCs have to draw from beyond their own.

When creating a community, follow these steps:

## 1. CHOOSE COMMUNITY TYPE

Type defines the broad kind of community the PCs belong to. Communities have considerable influence, for good or ill, on all their members. A community's type provides community relations as well as a community impulse. At this point the players brainstorm the broad thematic concept of their community. Some examples below:

- ✧ **Neighborhood:** The community is part of a larger town or city.
- ✧ **Town:** The community represents the entirety of a village, town, enclave, commune, or other small gathering.
- ✧ **Corporate:** The community is directly controlled, and probably mostly owned by, a single corporation or business entity, or perhaps a strongly unified collection of businesses.
- ✧ **Temple:** The community is either wholly a Barua Temple or Yojin monastery or such an institution plays a large role in the community.
- ✧ **Rebel:** The community exists to rebel against an unjust authority. Elite, Upper Castes Unavailable.
- ✧ **Nomadic:** The community has no one place it calls home, but travels from place to place.

Additionally, groups are encouraged to come up with some aspects of the community that reflect its background, culture, and economy.

A few suggestions:

- ✧ **Agricultural:** The community focusses on cultivating crops or livestock, either in a rural setting or as part of a massive hydroponic growfarm
- ✧ **Artist:** The community has a large proportion of artists, performers, or craftsman, and art, shows, and exhibits play a large part in the community
- ✧ **Crime:** Your community is either victimized by, the source of, or both, of crime in the area

- ✧ **Frontier:** Your community is either an outpost for delvers and explorers, or else otherwise sparsely populated and away from major cities
- ✧ **Ideological:** Your community focusses on a specific belief or political philosophy
- ✧ **Military:** Your community is connected to a military base, mercenary company, or similar
- ✧ **Refugee:** Your community has fled from somewhere else seeking safety and a better life
- ✧ **Religious:** The community has a strong religious or spiritual basis
- ✧ **Nomadic:** The community has no one place it calls home, but travels from place to place.
- ✧ **Undermage:** The community is connected to an arcane college, and driven by the scholarly goals and politics of that college.



## 2. CHOOSE INFLUENCE AND CASTE

Determine the general amount of influence your community has (1-10), as well as its caste status among the rest of Neo Babylon. Normally, the GM will set these choices in place, but if players want to suggest options, that's great! Some individuals within the community may be of higher and lower influence and caste, but this is a measure of where the community itself fits within the larger political, social, and economic setting. Caste defines what narrative lifestyle the community and PCs fit into. Influence determines the mechanics-based assets the community can pull together to act with.

**The default influence for a new community in Subversion is 4, while the default caste is lower-middle.**

Caste is a catch-all term that describes a person's or group's general relationship to the economic, social, and power structures in Neo Babylon. It covers food, daily clothing, transportation options, rent, utilities, respect, and access to the financial and legal system.

Caste is a narrative/role-playing distinction. Higher classes do have more resources available, but unless they invest themselves in using them, they might as well not have them. So whether it is building the resource from the ground up (like lower classes have to) or rearranging lifestyles in order to make room for needed resources (as upper castes must), fortune costs and availabilities for resources are the same between castes.

**The effect of caste can be broken into four main effects:**

- ✂ The services and goods you are assumed to have (aside from what has been bought as gear).
- ✂ How much it costs to maintain your lifestyle (See Downtime Rules)
- ✂ How easy and how much it costs to take on debt.

GMs may desire to set boundaries for which Castes PCs can choose, at least without a very strong narrative justification.

### CASTE

#### UNDERCITY

You have no rights or protection under the law. The food you have is what you grow, scavenge or what is given by your gang. Clothing is homemade, stolen, or bought one piece at a time from a trader or C-link. No limits on transportation, but roads are a mess and vehicles larger than motorbikes appear rarely. Creatures are often feral and hostile. You live in an abandoned building, hovel, dilapidated apartment, or whatever you can take from someone else. No utilities other than those your gang provides or you have juryrigged. Failures often. There is no active law in the Undercity. The best you can do is apply for Lower caste status and with a sponsor in the Uppers, maybe one day, you can move up there and become lower caste; but it is unlikely.

Low caste characters get 10 bonus fortune

#### LOWER

Bad food. Clothing in poor repair. Transportation limited to single operator vehicles. Illegal to use creatures. Hovel or dilapidated apartment, spotty utilities, failures often. No respect. No access to lawyers. Law is hostile.

Low caste characters get 5 bonus fortune

#### LOWER-MIDDLE

Food is usually average quality, as is clothing. Transportation is limited to 4-passenger vehicles. Single passenger creatures are ok. Permits to use flying transportation are too expensive for you. Small home or decent apartment. Utilities work almost 100% if the time, but there are always issues here and there. You get little respect, but you can get the attention of others if you try. Lawyers suck, and law is ambivalent.

Lower-middle caste start with the normal amount of fortune



## UPPER-MIDDLE

Food is good. Clothing is good and variable. Ground Transport is not limited (though it may not be prioritized). Creature travel on land is unlimited. Air travel not permitted. Large home or very nice apartment. Utilities are always on, but may be slowed in times of need. Respect given by default, but can be lost. Raised voices get things done. Lawyers get you fair trials. Law shows up and takes your side against others of similar or lower lifestyle.

Upper-middle caste characters start with -10 starting fortune

## UPPER

Food is great and you can get whatever you want. Clothing is never a problem and you buy new wardrobes often. Ground transport not limited, creature travel may fly. Mechanized flight available, but only via city-controlled options. Utilities are prioritized, and always on, even during crises. Respect is always given unless someone of a higher status is involved. Lower lifestyles usually cower. You get what you want without having to raise voices. Lawyers win for you, regardless of guilt. Law prioritizes you and may even take orders or bribes.

Upper-middle caste characters start with -25 starting fortune.

## ELITE

You get what you want. Food, clothing, whatever. You can take any transport you like, ground, air, mechanized, creature, or magic. Utilities are never down, as backups favor you as well. Respect is given to you above all else. You get what you want, even from upper classes. Laws change for you and law listens to you.

Elite caste characters start with -125 starting fortune.

# 3. CHOOSE PRIMARY SKILL AND ARCHETYPE

Like other factions, each community has a primary skill ([see pg 46](#)) and archetype ([see pg 46](#)) that define what the community is best at when it comes together and does something. For example:

- ✧ A Fishing Community has a primary skill of piloting, and an archetype of transporter—if anyone needs to get somewhere they can always find a boat willing to take an extra hand
- ✧ A University has a primary skill of Humanities and an Archetype of Information—there is always someone able to answer some question.

- ✧ A disorganized neighborhood has the Melting Pot archetype (and therefore no primary skill)
- ✧ A small town has a primary skill in Influence and the Connection Archetype—everyone knows everyone else and can always point you to the best person for a job.

When used this way, the community is treated like any other relation—sometimes you ask and the community answers.

# 4. CHOOSE RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Every community has things, places or people that lend it the ability to do unique things. These represent the skills of the community, it's buildings and architecture, or natural resources and beauty. These resources are captured in the **Community Paradigm** ([see pg 125](#)), representing the relations and other resources common to the community.

The community begins with 40 fortune that it can spend on resources and community relations ([see "Community Paradigm" on pg 125](#)). At any later point, one or more characters can invest more fortune into the community to help boost its resources (or even it's influence and caste).



## REGARD AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

If the community's Regard towards a PC is below zero, the PC may not take advantage of any of the community relations unless they spend 1 additional downtime action or Fortune than what is normally required.

If the community's Regard towards a PC is ever below -5, they are in jeopardy. If the PCs end two episodes in a row at this level, they are ejected from the community. In many Subversion Stories (such as if the PC is an Envoy), this may mean the character is no longer functional as a PC. In that case, they become an NPC and the player should create a new character. If the GM decides that being part of the community isn't a crucial part of the Story, the PC no longer has any community, and can use no community relations. At the GMs discretion, the player may spend a downtime action to join another community that they have at least a +1 in—they've found a new home.

## 5. CHOOSE IMPULSES

Every community represents a collection of biases that can motivate a majority of them to react in a certain way. A community begins with two impulses chosen from its background.

A community impulse can be triggered by the GM spending grit, typically in conjunction with one of the trigger conditions occur over the course of events. When an impulse is triggered, the GM will narrate how the impulse is triggered.

The response to an impulse is a narrative guide and prompt for the story, but also describes what happens mechanically when an impulse is triggered. When adding impulses to a community, both players and GM should customize the impulse beyond their generic form here. For example, if the group choses "indulgence," they should decide what the community often indulges in, whether it be alcohol-fueled block parties, drug benders, etc.

Each community starts with two impulses

### RESPONSE:

**Intoxication:** Your community widely indulges in a drug or other substance that numbs their abilities to help or lead. Even if everyone doesn't indulge, it makes getting anything done nearly impossible. All rolls during downtime gain one instance of dulled.

**Distraction:** The community is distracted by indulgence, missing their other responsibilities. Each PC loses their default downtime action. Even if they didn't indulge, they weren't able to avoid dealing with the fallout.

**Largesse:** The community makes a large, irresponsible purchase or expenditures that they'll need to spend time later paying back. To end this impulse, the players must collectively contribute 5 fortune to the community (or find another way to pay off the debt). Until the cost is paid off, the GM gains 2 additional grit each downtime and no fortune can be invested in the community paradigm.

## LIST OF IMPULSES

### INDULGENCE:

Your community is known for a particular pleasure that they turn to when they want catharsis, a distraction, or to forget about their troubles. Most of the time, it stays as at the level of pleasantry, but sometimes it gets in the way of actually dealing with important stuff. Sample Indulgences: Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling, Clubbing, Sex, Festivities, etc.,

### TRIGGERS:

Object of Desire being easily available, times of the year, upcoming threat that is overwhelming, community under stress, bad news.

### PHOBIA:

Some thing or situation triggers mob fear in your community. These are often irrational, but that doesn't ever stop a mob. Sample Phobias: Progress (being left behind), Change (things they don't understand), Losing Jobs, Immigrants (if narratively appropriate), Certain peoples (Humans, Elves, Orcs, etc. if narratively appropriate).

### TRIGGERS:

Frustration, or person/group riling them up, suffering a loss, losing control.



**RESPONSE:**

**Blame:** Everyone in the community take 5 Animity damage and cannot regain animity. This happens whether they share the fear/blame response or because they are frustrated or disgusted by it. The community may also lash out at anyone they see as fitting the description of their fear/blame response.

**IMPETUOUS**

Through overconfidence, poor impulse control, or a love of thrill of uncertainty, your community tends to not think through the consequences of their actions.

**TRIGGERS:**

Leaders proposing ill-advised ideas, community is faced with an urgent decision, frustration about things not getting done.

**RESPONSES:**

**No Take Backs (GM trigger only):** If the players or community members (via GM) suggest a plan of action or a cause the community can immediately take up, the GM may trigger this response to force the community into action.

**Shouldn't have done that:** The community makes a large, irresponsible purchase or expenditures that they'll need to spend time later paying back. To end this impulse, the players must collectively contribute 5 fortune to the community (or find another way to pay off the debt). Until the cost is paid off, the GM gains 2 additional grit each downtime and no fortune can be invested in the community paradigm.

**PRIDE:**

Your community has an exceedingly high opinion of its own importance, resulting in or from a dangerous overconfidence or arrogance. It is common for them to feel they have a right to demand humility or servile behavior from others.

**TRIGGERS:**

Being insulted or disrespected, being given an opportunity to showcase their strongest skills, being upstaged by another group, being offered power, fame, wealth.

**RESPONSE:**

**Won't back down:** Your community refuses to retreat, de-escalate, or otherwise avoid a situation where they have been challenged or stand to gain big (power, fame, wealth). Reduce regard with a relevant faction by 5 until this impulse has been resolved.

**You Aren't Welcome Here:** Anyone from another community present is immediately targeted by hostility. Decrease the regard of all relations outside of the community by 3 until this impulse has been resolved.

## 6. CHOOSE VALUES

A community's values are likely shared by most individuals. These values are generally accepted as right and normal. Acting in accordance with the community's values is easy. Acting in opposition to, or challenging the community's values is difficult and leads to contention. Attempting to change a community's values is a monumental task, almost certain to fail. Any time a community acquires or discards a value is a major event.

Unlike the PCs' values, community values should be more general because they reflect values that are widely held collectively among the members of the community.

The players choose two values, and the GM chooses one. Note that the examples below are just that: examples. Groups are encouraged to create their own as befits their story.

Examples:

- ✧ **Religious Devotion** – We WILL participate/faithfully observe the religious practices
- ✧ **Justice is our own** – We will never help the Lawjacks
- ✧ **Everybody Eats** - We will make sure all our own people have food
- ✧ **Economic Freedom** – We will always make sure our community comes first fiscally
- ✧ **Keep it Nice** - No property damage in community
- ✧ **Take Care of Ourselves** -We will keep community problems within the community
- ✧ **Lay Low** - Don't bring government heat down on our community
- ✧ **The Most Good** - Do what's best for our community, not what is best for the individual
- ✧ **Don't Invite Trouble** - We will keep out of trouble with every authority



- ✂ **Frag 'Em** - We will not voluntarily serve, aid, or help authorities in any official capacities
- ✂ **Food is Life** - We will always find some food for those who need it.

- ✂ **Vengeful Pride** - We will not be passive when challenged or confronted. We won't accept criticism from outsiders.

## 5. FACTIONS

No community is an island. Each community finds itself situated among others that surround and affect it. Each player, and the GM, should choose a faction that the community is affected by in some way. These factions can be groups within the community with their own goals and motivations apart from the larger community, or they can be completely separate groups that exist outside the community itself. A mix of both is good, but there should be at least 5 factions, and one of them is the community's authority (see The Authority below). If you have less than 5 folks at your table, choose more factions however you like until you have 5.

Factions can be chosen from the list of Factions on (see "Sample Factions" on pg 208) or you can make up your own, picking a primary skill and archetype following the normal rules (see pg 46)

Each faction beside the authority should be within 1 Influence of your community. By default each faction begins at a Regard of zero towards the players and community. The group can choose to boost the starting regard of one faction with an Influence equal to or lower than the community by 2. In exchange, another faction (with an Influence equal to or higher than that of your community) is reduced by 3. You may do this as many times as you desire, but no faction may begin with a base regard above 4 or below -6.

### THE AUTHORITY

Every community in Subversion has (at least one) Authority—someone who expects your community to act in a certain way or they will intervene to make it so. The relationship between your community and the authority is (most likely) amiable on the surface, but the honor, power, and wealth disparity is not in your favor. Some in your community resent this power dynamic and the condescending behavior that it enables. From time to time, the authority makes demands and expects obedience. These demands often seem trivial and their effects are not noticed by most - but other demands may require a community to act against its own values or interests.

The Authority can be of any influence level higher than the community, but if a community's influence ever becomes greater than their Authority, a new, higher, authority must be chosen.

### LAWJACKS

The Lawjacks are omnipresent in the world of Neo Babylon, serving government and corporation alike to maintain the order of the world. The Lawjacks always count as a faction in every game, however their influence depends on the resources deployed to your community—in the downtown areas of Neo Babylon, the Lawjacks are omnipresent and willing and able to muster whatever force necessary to reestablish order (Influence 10), while the Lawjack presence at frontier outpost might be reduced to a Halo code you can contact to report a crime. Of course, Influence can change quickly with the Lawjacks—especially if it looks like there's trouble brewing that affects other factions with power.

## 7. CHOOSE GOALS

These are what the community is striving towards. The shared hopes and dreams, or perhaps the collective desire to move away from an undesired fate.

Each community should pick at least 3 goals. Some examples:

- ✂ We want to improve our standards of living/ caste

- ✂ We want to improve relations with another faction
- ✂ We want to increase our power and Influence
- ✂ We want to build a specific resource or monument
- ✂ We want to get out of the thumb of a specific Authority
- ✂ We want to gain access to a particular necessity or amenity



- ✖ We want to deal with a problem in our community
- ✖ We want to weaken a rival community
- ✖ We want to regain our former glory
- ✖ We want things to stay exactly like they are

Goals provide aims for the players to choose when picking what to do each session ([see "Primary Goal" on pg 30](#)) and signal what Envoys are expected to work towards (and what actions the community might consider a betrayal!)

### Groups Without Community

Subversion is designed so that PCs are part of a broader community and grounded in their impact in the world. Sometimes though, characters might start without being grounded in a larger community—maybe they left (voluntarily or otherwise) from their previous community, or their previous community no longer exists. You can even imagine PCs coming from different communities. Maybe one or more members of the party are outsiders, tied to the rest of the group by personal connections rather than shared community. In these case, the community of the party might just be the party themselves as they try to figure out their place in the world—at least until they find a broader community to join or return to their own.



# Chapter 14: PC Generation

Once your group has determined who your group is, the next step is for each player to create their PC. PC creation can be broken into 14 steps:

- ✖ 1. Choose Lineage
- ✖ 2. Choose Origins
- ✖ 3. Choose Background
- ✖ 4. Choose Caste
- ✖ 5. Choose Impulse
- ✖ 6. Choose Values
- ✖ 7. Choose Dramatic Hook
- ✖ 8. Create Relations
- ✖ 9. Choose Debt
- ✖ 10. Choose Attribute Scores
- ✖ 11. Choose Skills
- ✖ 12. Choose Paradigms
- ✖ 13. Purchase Gear
- ✖ 14. Finishing Steps

## FORTUNE

Fortune is the currency of Subversion. Fortune is what PCs will gain most often for their actions during sessions and use to advance their characters. It is common for folk in Neo Babylon to talk about their blessings in terms of fortune, whether they worked for them or not. Skills, natural ability, wealth, and community are all blessings from the gods. Fortune can be exchanged in-game for 2,000 (2,000 stanz) each. For convenience's sake, prices are given in fortune, representing the fact that sometimes goods might be paid in labor, favors, or as a gesture of goodwill rather than in official currency. If you find it necessary to keep track of purchases smaller than 1 fortune, you can convert fortune to stanz and keep track of stanz instead.

When starting new characters, Players have 275 fortune to spend between attributes, skills, paradigms, gear, and petty cash. Players may increase or decrease their available fortune through their choice of caste, or if they choose to begin with a corrupted value (see ["Corrupted Values" on pg. 94](#)), as specified below:

- ✖ Starting as Undercity caste (10 bonus fortune)
- ✖ Starting as Lower caste (5 bonus fortune)
- ✖ Starting as Lower Middle Caste (No bonus fortune, recommended as default)
- ✖ Starting as Upper Middle Caste (-10 starting fortune)
- ✖ Starting as Upper Caste (-25 starting fortune)
- ✖ Starting as Elite Caste (-125 starting fortune)
- ✖ Starting with a corrupted value (5 bonus fortune)
- ✖ Starting with debt, see debt Step 9

If this is your first time, we strongly recommend playing lower-middle caste (no bonus fortune) and the following distribution of fortune:

- ✖ 275 Fortune
- ✖ Attributes: 35 fortune
- ✖ Skills: 165 fortune
- ✖ Paradigms: 60 fortune
- ✖ Gear: 10 fortune
- ✖ Remaining: 5 fortune (to spend as petty cash, or buy something you forgot later.)

## STEP 1: CHOOSE LINEAGE

Choose a lineage, and one lineage option



The playable lineages in Subversion represent the most common biological peoples on the planet. Choosing a lineage (Dwarf, Elf, Goblin, Human, Orc, Yettin) impacts your PC's general physical appearance and abilities, and allows you to choose from a menu of options reflecting the variety of people who share that lineage. After choosing your Lineage, you choose an Origin that represents where your PC is from, or more accurately, the culture they were brought up with. Finally, your PC's Background speaks to their individual history and experience, profession, etc.

## LINEAGE AND ORIGIN

While Humans are the most common peoples on the planet, they still do not represent a majority among the others. Despite human cultures apparently dominating the planet during the last two millennia, they and others such as dwarves, elves, goblins, orcs, and yettin have assimilated into each other's cities where they work, play, and live alongside each other with a variety of less numerous and more remarkable lineages as well.

## LINEAGE AND BIOLOGY

The lineages presented here all have the same basic body plan, organs, mental acuity, etc., it is uncertain if or how closely the different lineages may be related. Romantic and sexual attraction across the lineages is common, and there is no dearth of couples who choose to begin families along those lines, however, there has never been offspring recorded between members of different lineages, even those that are the most similar (e.g. elves and humans); families in this situation often grow through other methods, such as adoption, if they feel parental urges.

## DWARVEN

I See [pg 202](#) for more about Dwarves

"Then went all the gods to their judgment seats, and thereon took counsel: who should create the race of dwarves, out from the bones of the earth and the wine-dark sea? And in forelikeness of humans they then made them and placed them onto the earth."

The scriptures say dwarves were one of the seven peoples created from the earth by the goddesses Antu and Damkina. Perhaps that is why they've traditionally built civilizations around connections to the land. Originally, dwarven culture relied heavily on farming and mining, but once their ancestors took to the sea and skies, they excelled there as well, as pilots, pirates, and engineers.

**Lineage Trait:** Dwarven tongues are very acute and can taste more complex and subtle nuances than other peoples. They might taste a faint citrus note in an otherwise undetectable poison.

Dwarven Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✂ Toxin Resistant: Gain +4 to Guard when resisting Toxins
- ✂ Lessons from the Ground: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Brawn attribute.
- ✂ Small: You and/or your family are smaller and less stocky than most dwarves. Gain +2 on physicality rolls related to hiding or navigating tight spaces.
- ✂ Monstrous heritage: You grow moss or grass in place of hair. Gain: Natural Weapons (Claws): Your Unarmed attacks do 2d6 damage and have AP 1

## ELVEN

I See [pg 202](#) for more about Elves

The earliest manuscripts from On High do not mention the elven peoples. Later redactions and official Baru documents, however, include elves as one of the peoples created by the goddesses Antu and Damkina. Elves have had a complicated history with the other peoples of the world, and a good deal of mistrust still exists due to the Fairy Wars of recent memory. But time moves on and the elven people, some of which still keep ancient traditions alive, are also finding their place in a modern world.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Elves do not age like other lineages. They mature at a similar rate to humans, but upon reaching maturity cease to age further. Furthermore, elves don't die of old age—instead each year starting around age 40, about 1 in 100 elves experience Faergol, a period of about a week where they realize their death is imminent. Faergol strikes younger and older elves at a similar rate, so while the average lifespan of elves is close to 140 years, there's a wide range in individual lifespans.

**Size:** The height of the average elf is 1.65 meters, or 5.5 feet tall. There is less variation in size among elves than other peoples, but outliers do exist.



**Physical Description:** Elves appear to only have slight cosmetic differences from humans, but this is deceiving. Elves do have pointed ears and somewhat severe features compared to average humans, their hair is also thinner, but stronger, than other species. They have thinner skin and tend to have more allergies than other peoples as well. Their skin color is similar to that common among humans, with green and purplish tints being less common.

**Lineage Trait:** Elves can see in a broader spectrum than other peoples, for example, plants might have more varied colors, or they might discern anger if someone gives off more infrared.

Elven Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✂ Graceful Agility: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Agility attribute.
- ✂ Benefits of Long Life: When using a skill at Rank 1 (untrained), gain reliable 2.
- ✂ Hale if not Hearty: +5 Health
- ✂ Keen Eye: +1 dice to Observation rolls
- ✂ Fae Sight: +3 on rolls to detect or identify magic

## GOBLIN

I See [pg 203](#) for more about Goblins

All those under heaven,  
The primal Seven,  
E'en the small and slick  
Goblin so quick  
Do not ignore  
Their deep-learned lore  
O'er spirits will ye  
Ne'er master will be.

Goblins, more than any other species, have made an art of fitting in. According to the words from On High, they were one of the seven peoples made by Antu from clay and blood and midwived by the goddess Damkina. Goblins have always been associated with fixing, helping, or otherwise enhancing other cultures and species; despite their breadth of heritage world-wide, rarely have their own unique cultures been given centre stage.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Goblins have a similar life cycle to humans, living typically less than 100 years. Goblin bodies show external signs of aging such as hair graying and thinning and skin becoming more lined and wrinkled, but their physical and mental facilities do not deteriorate as they age.

**Size:** Most goblins stand about 1.25 meters tall, or about 4 feet, but it is common for goblins to be slightly less than one meter as well.

**Physical Description:** Goblins are among the smallest of the world's peoples, and range in skin color from green, being most common, to yellow and orange, with many wonderful shades between. Typical goblins have large, bulbous noses, elongated and pointed ears, and lean, wiry musculatures.

**Lineage Trait:** Goblins have expanded tactile faculties; they feel more delicately than others; for example, some are even able to feel the letters on a printed page.

Goblin Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✂ Goblin Scamper: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Agility attribute.
- ✂ Quick Mind, Quick Feet: At the start of a conflict, if you were not caught unaware, you can perform a Backup Action before the turn order begins.
- ✂ Sensitive Ears: +2 to Vigilance and Observation tests when related to sound
- ✂ Long Fingers: +1D6 to any test that requires fine manipulation (e.g. Medicine when performing surgery, Science when manipulating small parts)
- ✂ Diminutive: Gain +2 on physicality rolls related to hiding or navigating tight spaces.

## HUMAN

I See [pg 203](#) for more about Humans

"As for the human, their days are numbered,  
whatever they might do, it is but wind."

The scriptures from On High say that humans were created using divine blood to be the preeminent servants of the gods, and are the last of those peoples created by them. Despite being the youngest people, it is said they have more of the gods' ambition than all the rest. Humans have spread to every corner of the world, assimilating, and being assimilated by, all other peoples.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** A human reaches physical maturity around the age of 20, and with mental and emotional faculties slightly later. A human in good health can expect to live between 80 to 100 years on average

**Size:** The average human is 1.7m tall, though there is a great deal of variation.



**Physical Description:** Humans are somewhat a physically unremarkable lineage compared to the other peoples. Their hair color ranges from earthy browns and reds to pale blonde or dark black. Their skin colors are likewise varied from dark brown to olive to ruddy to pale.

**Lineage Trait:** Humans have an excellent sense of their own body's position, movement, and acceleration (proprioception). This allows them to master complex physical skills a bit more quickly than other lineages on average.

Human Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✂ Force of Will: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Will attribute.
- ✂ Residual Instincts: +3 Vigilance
- ✂ Marathoner: +2 dice to Physicality when running away or running a long distance
- ✂ Team-Oriented: You work well in groups. When making a teamwork test, in addition to adding +1 to the result, add 1d6 to the roll as well.
- ✂ Driven: Gain +1 max Grit.

## ORC

I See [pg 203](#) for more about Orcs

"The Earth and the Wind spawned Desire, Desire spawned Death and Mud and they the germs of life. There the orc burst forth as from an egg. Inspired and nurtured by Taautus, were the first to invent letters and write records in their own manner, and he taught them the deep magic of the spheres."

The Tablets of Creation record the orc peoples among those midwived by Damkina, and historical records of the influence of the orcs as part of the Ghassulian peoples date back to ancient Kemetian records under Thutmose III. Ancient hearsay ascribed many traits to orcs that have never been universal, such as hot-headedness and higher pain tolerance. Orcs, in fact, share more similarities with humans than any people, and have experienced dominance, persecution, and integration in equal measure around the world and throughout history.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** An orc reaches physical maturity around the age of 17, slightly earlier than humans. Orcs are much more sensitive to diet than other peoples with many in poor health living life spans shorter than humans, but those in good health having robust lives in excess of 100 years, while in rare cases orcs have been recorded to exceed 175 years.

**Size:** The average orc is 1.9m tall, but their range is even greater than that of humans.

**Physical Description:** Orcs tend to be taller and bulkier than humans and have more prominent facial bones, but are otherwise similar in appearance except for their elongated and pointed ears, and lower canines that extend into large tusks. Orc skin and hair share human ranges, though greenish tones exist in some lineages.

**Lineage Trait:** Orcs have exceptional senses of smell compared to other peoples, and may be able to identify trace odors or detect changes in the air (such as smoke) before others.

Orc Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✂ Broad Shoulders: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Brawn attribute.
- ✂ Keen: Once attributes have been chosen, add +1 to Awareness attribute.
- ✂ Destiny through passion: +2 Aegis
- ✂ Porcine Snout: Gain +3 to investigation and Observation tests related to smell
- ✂ Thick Skinned: +1 Body Armor even when disrobed (stacks with armor), the skin is rough to the touch

## YETTIN

I See [pg 204](#) for more about Yettin

The yeti in the mountain communities profess that they have lived there since the beginning of time; they did not traditionally believe in creator deities but focused on answerable questions of philosophy and behavior, and how the world works in the present. Ancient Babylonian sources do not explicitly mention the Yettin; one Yettin scholar famously proposed, however, that perhaps Humbaba, the foe defeated by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, was a member of some Yettin group, or that perhaps Lahmu, the strong, hairy god, was a Yettin. Both of these are unlikely, but persist in certain religious circles. Those Yettin who do adhere to the syncretic religion of Neo Babylon mostly venerate Damkina, the lady of the sacred mountain, for guiding their people into the world.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Yettin mature at approximately the same rate as humans, and have a similar lifespan; certain Yettin, for reasons unknown, are able to surpass this limit, living for several hundred years.



**Size:** The smallest Yettin are still over two meters tall, but on average around 2.5 to 2.75 meters is typical. The tallest Yettin ever recorded was almost 4 meters.

**Physical Description:** More than other species, Yettin from various parts of the world differ from each other in various ways. Their commonalities are in size and musculature, and their rough-hewn features with flattened noses; their variety comes in size, variation in the length of their arms, and colours and configuration (or lack) of fur, which for most types covers their bodies all over except for the face, palms, and soles.

**Lineage Trait:** Yettin have a highly advanced vestibular system and thus superior balance to other peoples. They do not lose their footing in slippery conditions or on narrow footholds.

Yettin Lineage Options. Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✘ **Yettin Size:** Before attributes have been assigned, raise Brawn to 3.
- ✘ **Ogre Features:** You have hair, not fur, and it mostly grows only on your head and face. In addition, your people have been around the other peoples for much longer. You have assimilated well and your instincts show it: +1 Vigilance.
- ✘ **Natural Weapons (Claws):** Unarmed attacks do 2d6 damage and have AP 1
- ✘ **Yeti Features:** When in Colder Temperatures, gain +1 grit per session (may exceed grit max). When in Hot temperatures, suffer -1 grit/session. You are white-furred.
- ✘ **Divergent heritage:** Before attributes have been assigned, raise Will to 3. Lifespan is extended to an average of 320 years; PC must be over 100 years.

## STEP 2: ORIGINS

Choose an origin, two origin options, and one origin drawback. Drawbacks may also be chosen from the generic drawback list (see pg 88).

Origin represents a continuing ascription which classifies a person in terms of their most general and inclusive identity; it's based not on possession of a certain cultural inventory, but represents the culture in which you were raised or with which you identify via shared experiences. the PC may not be from the particular city or nation; this origin may be part of their family heritage, even back several generations, or they may live near or within an expatriate community which influenced them. But no matter what, their origin is part of their identity. Each PC chooses **one origin** at character creation.

### CHALDANI (ACAPE ANYA)

See pg 204 for more about the Chaldani and ACAPE Anya.

Originally the Chaldani were a people of mixed North Atlantican and Scandzian heritage, but later dwarven immigration from Iberia and Atlantica informed its evolution. Chaldani culture tends to value large, extended families and hospitality, embellishment in all art forms, and fine living.

### CHALDANI ORIGIN OPTIONS.

Choose 2 from the list below:

- ✘ **Quick Kin:** You make fast friends with most folk. Gain reliable 2 on all influence tests
- ✘ **Magic resistant:** Through bloodline or childhood training you've been rendered resistant to magic effects. +2 Aegis.
- ✘ **Connected:** You have ties with the European Bravia. This gives you options. When paying interest on the debt, you may replace half the interest with a favor.
- ✘ **The Sea Calls:** Your people were coastal dwellers. Gain +1d6 on physicality tests to swim and piloting tests on the water.
- ✘ **Well Rounded Education:** When making a skill test at rank <3, add +1 to the result

### CHALDANI ORIGIN DRAWBACKS.

Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✘ **Piracy:** Many of your ancestors took to piracy long ago and it runs in your veins still. Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves stealing, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✘ **Prone to Embellish:** You tend to speak in such grand and exaggerated terms that, while people may like you, they are less prone to trust you. When making Influence tests, they are always dulled 5 or less.



- ✖ Shame to your House: If your people, city, family, or name are dishonored, and you do not immediately take action to rectify this (by challenge, feat, trial, combat, or dishonoring the source in-kind), lose 1 Fortune (or go into 1 Fortune debt).
- ✖ What was that?: You find yourself distracted by many things, sometimes daydreaming about your fears or desires, even at inappropriate times. Subtract 2 from all Observation tests.

## CHURUQIAN

See [pg 205](#) for more about Churuqians and Churuq.

Churuq was a nation founded on Azore by goblin colonists from South Atlantica. The culture of Churuq places little value on physical prowess, so people of any lineage tend to be less muscular than the average elsewhere.

### CHURUQ ORIGIN OPTIONS.

Choose 2 from the list below:

- ✖ Improvised Paths: You gain +2 on all magical rolls to riff.
- ✖ Analytical Training: You gain Reliable 2 on either Science or Humanities tests (choose once).
- ✖ Went to Churuq Tech: +2 dice when rolling Sciences for mechanical or engineering purposes
- ✖ Try Anything Once: When using a skill with one rank (untrained), your rolls are inspired.
- ✖ Prolific Pen Pal: you correspond with many people around the world about a variety of topics, with GM permission, you can draw knowledge from them to gain a +3 to one of the following skills for a single roll to know something, once per session: Arts, Cybertech, Humanities, Magic Arts, Science.

### CHURUQ ORIGIN DRAWBACKS.

Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✖ Scrawny: -5 Health (minimum 0)
- ✖ Fascination of Flame: You find fire and flames uncontrollably beautiful. You often create fire just to watch it burn. Why are you like this? Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves fire, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✖ Too Much War: When making Ranged Combat tests, they are always dulled 5 or less.

- ✖ Too Big: You are used to small spaces and closed in workshops in the city; -1 dice to all tests when under the open sky.

## GHASSULIAN (TULKO)

See [pg 206](#) for more about the Ghassulians and Tulko.

Long before Babylon grew to its heights, the Ghassulians, an early, orc-dominated, nomadic culture, spanned the Mediterranean as a trading empire, founding colonies and opening new areas of exploration even as they expanded the boundaries of ancient magic.

Though their original homeland was lost to the Shattering, and their colonies either conquered by Alexander or allied to and subsumed into Senekemet, this culture runs deep in many peoples around the world and prevails primarily in the city of Tulko on Azore.

### GHASSULIAN ORIGIN OPTIONS.

Choose 2 from the list below:

- ✖ Arcane Development: Gain +5 Fortune to spend towards Magic Arts Skill or paradigms
- ✖ Analytical Training: You gain Reliable 2 on either Science or Humanities tests (choose once).
- ✖ Bravery: 1/session can ignore one Grit damage related to combat conflicts
- ✖ Passion is Life: May reroll 1 die on a test where success would immediately accomplish a mission, PC goal, or community goal
- ✖ Friend of Animals: +2 to any test for non-combat interactions with creatures.
- ✖ Straight Talk: Lies taste badly on your lips. Gain +1 to influence rolls and -1 to deception rolls.

### GHASSULIAN ORIGIN DRAWBACKS.

Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✖ Over Cautious: When conflict erupts, you have to take a moment to think; in social situations you did not initiate, take -3 dice on the first roll.
- ✖ Legacy of the Fairy War: your family has passed down stories of those tyrants who stole their way of life. Your ancestors bristled under those dictators, fleeing civilizations or choosing wilderness. You've inherited their problem with authority. Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse is somehow Anti-Authoritarian, then gain +1 Grit.



- ✂ Dark Thoughts: There is a certain nihilism that runs through certain parts of Tulkan culture. - 1 to Max Grit.
- ✂ Strong Desires: In a culture that values small joys, there are also those who choose large passion instead! Each session you do not use an impulse, lose 2 Grit.

## BABYLONIAN

See [pg 206](#) for more about Babylonians and Neo Babylon.

The world's first, truly cosmopolitan city, Neo Babylon quickly outgrew its beginnings as a city that would unify many cultures through trade and has become instead the world leader in nearly every area. To many, the dream of Neo Babylon is a worthwhile endeavor, blending all cultures into one, having the best of all worlds, and offering limitless opportunities to rise above the flood of hardship history has offered. For others, however, Neo Babylon and its propaganda are a flattening of beautiful and diverse heritages, the vices and pettiness from every group, and instead of limitless opportunity, they've only found oppression. Dreams and nightmares. That is what Neo Babylon is made of.

### BABYLONIAN ORIGIN OPTIONS.

Neo Babylon's culture is very diverse. Choose a sub-origin and choose 2 options that below:

#### BABYLONIAN (URBAN)

- ✂ Adaptable Bearing: Once per session, gain +1d6 on a roll of your choice.
- ✂ Access to Care: You were raised with adequate access to health and wholeness services. +1 Grit maximum.
- ✂ Community Head Start: You've invested in your community for some time. Upgrade one community resource in your community.
- ✂ Imperial Mindset: Diplomacy is the name of the game. Gain Reliable 2 on all deception rolls
- ✂ Sacred Ancestry: You and your ancestors have always served the gods. Gain Reliable 2 on all sacred magic rolls
- ✂ School of Hard Knocks: Your first lesson was to guard your face. Gain Reliable 2 on all unarmed melee combat rolls

#### BABYLONIAN (UNDERCITY)

- ✂ Adaptable Bearing: Once per session, gain +1d6 on a roll of your choice.
- ✂ Gang History: You got out of the life, but it left its mark on you.

- ✂ Ganger: You are affiliated with an Undercity gang. Choose the gang, and gain 5 fortune towards creating a relation from that Gang.
- ✂ Better Toughen Up: You've seen some hard things. Now, there's not a lot that rattles you. Gain +1 Adamant.
- ✂ Downtrodden Diplomat: You managed to somehow never get in any gang's shadow by skirting the lines between them. You're a master of the social nuance of the undercity. Gain +2 to social tests with folks from Undercity or Impoverished origins. School of Hard Knocks: Your first lesson was to guard your face. Gain Reliable 2 on all unarmed melee combat rolls

#### BABYLONIAN (WEALTHY)

- ✂ Gravitas: You know how to speak to the rich and powerful. Gain reliable 2 on all Influence and Deception rolls with members of Upper or Elite castes.
- ✂ Access to Care: You were raised with adequate access to health and wholeness services. +1 Grit maximum.
- ✂ Community Head Start: You've invested in your community for some time. Upgrade one community resource in your community.
- ✂ Dominate Hearts and Minds: You don't ask, you demand. Gain Reliable 2 on all deception or influence rolls with everyone who isn't Upper or Elite Caste.
- ✂ Sacred Ancestry: You and your ancestors have always served the gods. Gain Reliable 2 on all sacred magic rolls

#### BABYLONIAN (IMPOVERISHED)

- ✂ Adaptable Bearing: Once per session, gain +1d6 on a roll of your choice.
- ✂ Survivor: You didn't always get what you wanted, but you took what you needed. Gain reliable 2 when making a test to steal, lie, or coerce.
- ✂ No Choice But To Accept It: You've been living with a Haunt because you had no means to pay an exorcist. Gain +1 Adamant: (Haunts, Spirits, Demons). If the Haunt is ever dealt with, Still keep the bonus.
- ✂ Downtrodden Diplomat: You managed to somehow never get in any gang's shadow by skirting the lines between them. You're a master of the social nuance of the undercity. Gain +2 to social tests with folks from Undercity or Impoverished origins.
- ✂ Sacred Ancestry: You and your ancestors have always served the gods. Gain Reliable 2 on all sacred magic rolls



- ✂ School of Hard Knocks: Your first lesson was to guard your face. Gain Reliable 2 on all unarmed melee combat rolls

## BABYLONIAN ORIGIN DRAWBACKS.

Neo Babylon's culture is very diverse. Choose 1 drawback from the same sub-origin you chose above:

Choose 1 from the list below:

### BABYLONIAN (URBAN)

- ✂ Punchable Arrogance: Folks who aren't from Neo Babylon don't trust you. -1 Dice to Social interactions with everyone who doesn't have the Neo Babylonian origin.
- ✂ Monolingual: Most folk worldwide speak at least two languages. You only speak one. Odd. Only choose One language at character creation.
- ✂ Consummate Consumer: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves buying something, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✂ Tired of Fighting: When making Melee Combat tests, they are always dulled 5 or less.
- ✂ Authoritarian: Apply -2 to the result of any test when directly challenging or attacking an authority figure.

### BABYLONIAN (UNDERCITY)

- ✂ Unbelonging: People in the uppers don't trust Undercity folks. They're taught not to. -1 Dice to Social interactions with folks who have Urban or Wealthy origins.
- ✂ Monolingual: Most folk worldwide speak at least two languages. You only speak one. Odd. Only choose One language at character creation.
- ✂ Survival Mode: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves lying, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✂ Today Might Be My Last: In a culture that values small joys, there are also those who choose large passion instead! Each session you do not use an impulse, lose 4 animity.
- ✂ Authoritarian: Apply -2 to the result of any test when directly challenging or attacking an authority figure.

### BABYLONIAN (WEALTHY)

- ✂ Punchable Arrogance: Folks who aren't from Neo Babylon don't trust you. -2 Dice to Social interactions with everyone who doesn't have the Neo Babylonian origin.

- ✂ Monolingual: Most folk worldwide speak at least two languages. You only speak one. Odd. Only choose One language at character creation.
- ✂ Consummate Consumer: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves buying something, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✂ Gaudy Tastes: You have awful taste in art, but no one has every told you so. When making Arts tests, they are always dulled 5 or less.
- ✂ It's How I Was Raised - You were raised to despise and disregard those who the gods haven't blessed with wealth. -1 Dice to social interactions with anyone without the Wealthy origin.

### BABYLONIAN (IMPOVERISHED)

- ✂ You Sold It: You had to eat so you sold whatever you could whenever you needed to. -10 fortune during character generation.
- ✂ Monolingual: Most folk worldwide speak at least two languages. You only speak one. Odd. Only choose One language at character creation.
- ✂ Survival Mode: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves lying, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✂ Today Might Be My Last: In a culture that values small joys, there are also those who choose large passion instead! Each session you do not use an impulse, lose 4 animity.
- ✂ Authoritarian: Apply -2 to the result of any test when directly challenging or attacking an authority figure.

## ALTAIPHERAN

See [pg 207](#) for more about the Altaipherans and the United Yettin Conference.

The physically largest of the common species on the planet, Yettin have commonly been most comfortable in their own communities, and they had, for much of history, integrated less with the surrounding cultures. This has led to a stereotype of Yettin antisocial behavior, while in truth they are as drawn to community as anyone, as evidenced by the formation of the UYC, the United Yettin Conference.

The UYC may have rebelled against the more warlike Altaipheran Yettin, but they share a common culture.

## ALTAIPHERAN ORIGIN OPTIONS

Choose 2 from the list below:



- ✘ Ogre Training: +1 Dice on tests to repair or build using the science skill.
- ✘ Good Image: +2 dice on charisma based skill tests with orcs, goblins, and yettin
- ✘ Yettin Cowfolk: +2 dice to any test for interacting with or piloting creatures
- ✘ Stealthy Hunter: +2 to Observation when listening; +1 to physicality tests to be sneaky in non-urban settings
- ✘ Legacy of the Autumnal Rebellion: +5 damage on attacks with Ranged Combat
- ✘ Community Education: Gain Reliable 2 on Humanities rolls

## ALTAIPHERAN ORIGIN DRAWBACKS

Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✘ Not Made for me (Yettin only): Unless otherwise noted, tech and equipment are simply not made with Yettin sizes in mind. -1 Dice on all tests using normal-sized/fitted equipment.
- ✘ Social Timidity: -2 to test results when you initiate a social interaction.
- ✘ Legacy of the Bloody Claw: -2 dice during any social tests with non-Yettin.
- ✘ Spooks easily: You prefer to fight only when you know you'll win. -2 Dice to all tests if in combat and outnumbered.
- ✘ Large Portions: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves over-eating, then gain +1 Grit.

## DEBROCELIANDE

See [pg 207](#) for more about the DeBroceliande and Val Broceliande.

To outsiders, people of this origin can seem dour and humorless. While capable of jokes, we are told, the culture typified insular existence, and there is an innate hesitancy pervading their interactions; folk from Val Broceliande do not give the benefit of the doubt, they wait for proof to trust.

Inherited from the elven founders, the DeBroceliande have a sense of the simple and the brutalist. Art, food, and language are all performed without adornment or enhancement that is seen as superfluous to function.

## VAL BROC ORIGIN OPTIONS.

Choose 2 from the list below:

- ✘ Pretty, Hollow Words: Gain Reliable 2 on Deception Tests
- ✘ I Escaped: Gain +2 on all Grit Tests
- ✘ Inheritance of Deeper Arcana: Gain reliable 2 on Arcane Arts Test
- ✘ Forest Dweller: When in a forest, all your rolls are inspired
- ✘ Mandatory Service: Gain reliable 2 on tests with Ranged Combat

## VAL BROC ORIGIN DRAWBACKS

Choose 1 from the list below:

- ✘ It Burns Us: you have a cultural opposition to metallic weapons and gear -4 on tests where you are forced to use them
- ✘ Cardio is better: -1 Brawn
- ✘ Enkeura (elf only): Your community still talks of the Fairy Wars (The Satyawae), and are bitter they weren't able to crush their enemies. You have picked up bad habits from them. Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves arrogance towards others, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✘ Insular (non-elf only): -1 die to any interaction with non-elf people with a different origin

## GENERIC DRAWBACKS

Any Origin may choose from this list:

- ✘ Outsider: Start with -2 Base Regard with your own community.
- ✘ History of Violence: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves violence to people, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✘ Prone to Offense: -5 Animity.
- ✘ Struggles: You struggle to find the peace you're looking for. -1 Grit.
- ✘ Your Chemical Relationship: Whenever you use an impulse, gain 1 less Grit, unless that impulse involves drugs, then gain +1 Grit.
- ✘ Aversion to Violence: When threatened with physical violence, increase the effects of frightened by 5, even for things that usually don't have frightening values, such as unarmed and stun baton threats.



# STEP 3: BACKGROUND

The final component of your PC's identity is their background, describing the specific conditions they encountered in life so far, and what they learned along the way. While lineage describes what they are, and origins tell some of who they are, backgrounds explain how they have lived. Each PC chooses **one background**. You can choose a background similar to your community's background or completely different. Backgrounds are purely narrative, so you can explain your character's journey however you like.

## AGRICULTURIST

You are, or have been, in touch with nature or the earth is some way. You may have been a farmer, or lived off the land, or have been part of a group that worships, protects, or venerates the earth or growing things. Are you still farming? Have you lost the farm? Has some place you loved been despoiled? Are you trying to stop it? Environmentalist? Just have a green thumb?

## APPRENTICE CASTER

You trained under official Babylonian mages. Whether it was at one of the Arcane Colleges or directly under a mentor mage, you made friends and gained mentors during your time who you can still call-in favors with.

## ARTIST

You have a talent for creation. Whether it is music, visual art, dance, etc., you've lived by being good at some creative expression. Maybe you've made some money from your art, maybe not, but the true treasure is the friends you've made along the way.

## BARU (OR BARUBORN)

As a Baru priest (or someone who served at a temple when they were young), you are intimately familiar with the inner workings of Neo Babylonian religion. You may even be authorized to conduct religious services.

## BOOTED OUT

You are a former Lawjack (or were in training to be). Your attitude, mistakes, insubordination or other indiscretions have got you kicked out. You cannot use any of your former assets or authority.

## CRIMINAL

No one gets to live long as a criminal without building a network. When it comes to criminal activity or criminal knowledge you will likely know someone with the right knowledge, and you can contact them for information, or even help. Beware the price, however.

## DOWNTRODDEN/ REFUGEE

You've lived your life under the heel of a person, group, or system that has not allowed you to gain a single foothold in life. As such, you've had to rely on your community (new or old) even more than most.

## EXPLORER

You've spent a lot of your life going where others haven't been, where people haven't been in a long time, or where people like you don't go often. Visiting lost cultures, discovering dark secrets, and living dangerously.

## INFLUENTIAL

You have a charmed life. People look up to you. Whether it is because of your high caste, a public incident where you became a well-liked public figure, or because you have money or the Ukkim's favor, civilization has been kind to you.

## MERCENARY OR SOLDIER

You are a veteran of a former war or are a soldier-for-hire, with no employment prospects in your future. You are acquainted with warfare



## REBEL

It has been a long road, sometimes lonely, but you've learned that fighting the system alone isn't just deadly, it doesn't work. Now, you have a network, a network of like-minded friends, family, and groups that are willing to help.

## WAGE SLAVE

You put in a lot of work for someone else, slaving away so they could profit off of your labor. While you didn't make much more than you needed to live (if that), you did pick up some contacts and skills along the way. Define the job you hold or held.

## WILD CARD

Use the Wild Card background if none of the other backgrounds fit with your idea for where your character came from. Perhaps they've always lived in the community and have kept to themselves, leading a very mundane life. Perhaps they have been a traveler, seeing far more than what these options could represent. Either way, add the flavor you want.

## YOJIN APPRENTICE

Whether you became a Yojin yourself or not, you studied under a Master. You are familiar with Yojin teachings and especially familiar with one of the five Yojin elemental ways. Choose the element your monastery was aligned with.

# STEP 4: CHOOSE CASTE

Choose your caste. By default this is the caste of your community, but you may decide to be above or below that if it fits your character concept—you might be a particularly down on their luck member of your community, or have some unique form of privilege. See Caste ([pg 74](#)) for more detailed descriptions of the different castes.

Caste affects your starting fortune as follows:

- ✂ Undercity Caste: +10 Bonus Fortune
- ✂ Lower Caste: +5 Bonus Fortune
- ✂ Lower-Middle Caste: Normal starting Fortune
- ✂ Upper-Middle Caste: -10 starting Fortune
- ✂ Upper Caste: -25 starting Fortune
- ✂ Elite Caste: -125 starting Fortune

As part of picking caste, take a brief moment to describe where you live and what it's like there.

### Castes and Bonus Fortune

Subversion assumes that all characters bring an equal amount to the table, regardless of their background. Higher Caste provides a number of bonuses to characters that makes their life easier and allows them to use money and status to solve problems. To balance this out, lower caste characters get bonus starting fortune. This represents that in order to get as far as their higher caste compatriots, they needed to work harder and be more capable.

# STEP 5: CHOOSE IMPULSE

Choose 1 impulse.



When a PC or community chooses to deal with the complications of life in unhealthy ways, it can cause collateral damage. An impulse is a coping method for dealing with health, animity, or grit loss which may be helpful in the short term, but may cause or reflect deeper harm. Impulses aren't always debilitating, perhaps they are even mild and manageable. But each time an impulse is triggered or activated it causes dissonance in the characters' lives. In addition, for each impulse a PC has above 1, their max grit is reduced by 1.

The impulses listed below are general in nature. When a player chooses an impulse for their PC, they decide the particular form that impulse takes.

Each impulse has one or more triggers, a response, and a downtime action. See Impulses ([see pg 25](#)) for more details.

## STEP 6. CHOOSE IDEOLOGY AND VALUES

Ideology and Values are the fundamental beliefs of the PC. They guide the PC's behavior and frame how the PC decides right and wrong. Ideology and values CAN be contradictory, whether slightly or directly. Ideology and values influence what decisions a character makes as well as providing a drive to the character—a character that consistently lives up to their beliefs gain grit, while those that betray them lose grit ([see "Values" on pg 27](#)). First, choose an ideology, then choose values.

### IDEOLOGY

Every Envoy brings with them their own set of beliefs and opinions about the world (and how it might be made better). Among the Envoy movement, these (often competing) core beliefs have settled into a number of Ideological blocs which push towards a slightly different aim. Most Envoys are aligned with one of these Envoy ideologies, representing the values and approach they're most aligned with. Ideologies serve both as a personal value, but also as a network Envoys may rely on for help if need be. Each Ideology has an associated value and faction.

#### NEO-ANARCHIST

No one should be coerced into following or providing aid to any person or organization against their will, and society should be constructed based on voluntary contributions. Often called nomastics because of their "no masters" rallying cry.

**Value:** I will strive to give everyone the ability to choose their own life absent of any external edicts or expectations.

#### NEO-ANARCHIST FACTION

The Neo-Anarchist Faction doesn't provide any organized services—instead it focusses on making sure that requests for help go to it's members, who can then choose to come to the aid of other Neo-Anarchists.

| Who            | Archetype            | Inf | Reg | Primary Skill |
|----------------|----------------------|-----|-----|---------------|
| Neo-Anarchists | Connection (Faction) | 5   | 2   | Influence     |

#### AIDERS

We will provide the aid we can to the people who need it most.

**Value:** I will always provide the aid I can to the people who need it most.

#### AIDER FACTION

The Aider faction centers around networks of care, and a large porportion of the Aiders are medical professionals in some manner or another ready to provide medical or humanitarian care to whoever needs it, though there are also a decent minority of civil engineers, emergency responders and more.

| Who    | Archetype      | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|--------|----------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Aiders | Care (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Science       |



## DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONIST

All laws must be derived from democratically elected bodies. We will seek the overthrow or reform of all non-democratic governments and corporations and build truly democratic entities responsible to their communities and stakeholders.

**Value:** I will always seek to empower the will of the majority over the interests of the few.

### DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONIST FACTION

The democratic revolutionist faction is united by their common goal, and focus on recruiting as many people as possible. Unlike most factions, the Democratic Revolutionists don't center their organization around Envoys, but rather try to pull in anyone sympathetic, regardless of if they can commit time, effort or talent. In practice, this gives the Democratic Revolutionist a deep pool of people who can contribute actions, though aid is far more often to come from ordinary people than talented specialists.

| Who                      | Archetype             | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Democratic Revolutionist | Melting Pot (Faction) | 5         | 2      |               |

## SUNLIGHTERS

Corruption, backroom dealing, and propaganda are the biggest impediment to a better society. We'll uncover and disseminate evidence of corruption and make sure the truth is available to everyone.

**Value:** I will always expose corruption and exemplify transparency when wielding power.

### SUNLIGHTER FACTION

If you weren't an investigative journalist before joining the sunlighters, you are after, at least in spirit. Sunlighters develop deep networks of contacts, sources, and allied breachers to uncover information and share it with the world.

| Who         | Archetype                       | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Sunlighters | Information: Politics (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Humanities    |

## CONSECRATED

We should seek divine wisdom and follow the teachings of sacred beings. Only by forging a connection to the gods and embodying their teachings will we make our world a better place.

**Value:** I will always seek to better understand the wisdom of the gods and act according to their teachings

### CONSECRATED FACTION

The Consecrated Faction is primarily composed of Baru and other chosen, though other devout individuals often are members of the group. Altogether, this makes the faction a font of information about magic and religion, as well as a source for those needing sacred magic.

| Who         | Archetype                       | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Consecrated | Information: Religion (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Magic Arts    |

## TECHNOLOGIST

Society must sever all dependencies on magic. Magic is inherently unequal, and only by building a society where all needs can be met without magic can we make a society where everyone can be equal.

**Value:** I will always seek to provide people with the technology they need to survive and thrive.

### TECHNOLOGIST FACTION

Technologists are at their heart techno-optimists, and as such find their ranks full of engineers, breachers, and jumpers. The Technologists are always ready to help each other out with a technical problem.

| Who          | Archetype         | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Technologist | Service (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Cybertech     |

## ENLIGHTENED

Society is no more than the sum of its parts... so to improve society we need to start with giving people the tools to achieve mental and spiritual strength and knowledge to enable them to reach their potential.

**Value:** I will always seek to better myself and aid others in becoming the best versions of their selves.

### ENLIGHTENED FACTION

The enlightened faction focusses on self improvement and inspiring others. Among it's ranks are a wide range of artists, Yojin, philosophers, and teachers—all ready to help anyone else learn something.



| Who   | Archetype                                | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|---|--|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Enlightened   | Teacher: Inspire* (see pg 134) (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Arts*         |
| * Enlightened members self organize into small groups of similar skills, as such, each member may pick a primary skill and paradigm ability when they join the enlightened. This may be changed any time Regard with the enlightened is improved. |  |           |        |               |

## UNBOUND

Any laws that exist except to protect the life and property of others are unjust, and we must enable a society where everyone is free of external impositions on them and are empowered to support themselves.

**Value:** I will never respect any unjust law and fight any attempts to restrict the rights of people to do as they choose.

### UNBOUND FACTION

The Unbound are openly hostile to most laws and restrictions, and as such host a wide range of illegal goods and services (as long as they don't directly harm a nonconsenting party). This manifests most directly in an easy network of drugs, though it's not hard to find Unbound willing to deal in weapons, criminal tools, and more.

| Who     | Archetype               | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|---------|-------------------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Unbound | Dealer: Drugs (Faction) | 5         | 2      | Science       |

## GREASER

Greasers (though many prefer to call themselves institutionalists) get their name because they believe that Envoys exist just to help make the system work a little more smoothly. A greaser believes the system usually works, and that working with (or for) the government, corporations, and other authorities is the best path to a better world. Many other Envoys are suspicious of greasers, viewing them (often correctly) as paid plants by the powers that be.

**Value:** I will always seek to make the system work better.

### GREASER FACTION

Greasers don't directly band together, instead focussing on representing the government, corporations, or whoever else exerts the most power on the community. This gives them inroads into that authority, and makes it easier to smooth over issues and try and make win-win compromises that solves the issue while keeping the status-quo intact.

| Who   | Archetype | Influence | Regard | Primary Skill |
|---|-----------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Authority*  | *         | *         | +5     | *             |
| * Pick one authority Faction for your community that you are affiliated—gain +5 Regard with that faction. |           |           |        |               |

## INDEPENDENT

The world is complicated, and all of the blocs are a little bit right and a little bit wrong. The only thing to do is whatever I think is right in a given circumstance. Alternatively, you may be beholden to another group, authority, or person in your life, and the Envoy movement isn't your primary concern. Independent Envoys pick one additional personal value (See below). An Independent Envoy gains 10 fortune they may spend on relations.

## CYNIC

You may be an Envoy, but you don't believe anyone that tells you that the Envoys can change the world. You were asked, appointed, or told to be an Envoy, and you'll do your job, but you may have ulterior motives, serve another cause, or simply not care. Cynic Envoys pick one additional personal value (See below). Your cynicism makes it harder to trick you: a cynic gains +1 vigilance.

## VALUES

In addition to the beliefs that line up with their ideology, each Envoy has three additional personal beliefs.

PCs may choose Values from the examples below or create their own.

Values should include "I will" statements. They can be whatever you want, but they should have an actionable quality to them so it is clear when they are being followed or broken. There is usually a belief behind the action-oriented value, and a player is encouraged to explore that! But all that is necessary for character creation is the "I will" value itself.



## CORRUPTED VALUES

Sometimes, a value becomes disruptive to the character and those around them. A corrupted value may be inherently antisocial (I will never give respect to those beneath me), or simply another value taken to an extreme (Picking “I will never pass up an opportunity to make money” instead of “I will make sure my family is financially secure”). Corrupted values have two effects: each corrupted value reduces your max grit by one, and the GM gains 1 grit whenever you live up to your corrupted value to the detriment of others. Players may pick one corrupted value instead of a normal value at character creation—doing so gives them 5 bonus fortune. Corrupted values may be redeemed: see Betrayal and Redemption (pg 27).

### Example Values

I will serve the teachings of my faith before any other person, place or thing, even family.

I will not waste anything.

I will not put my life in someone's hands or believe what they say unless they earn it.

I will survive.

I will not concern myself with others who are weak or need help.

I will accept whatever happens and not try to change it.

I will do whatever I feel like in the moment

I will act to create a verdant environment and oppose environmental harm.

I will always put my community/people first.

I will always help those in need.

I will never kill someone.

I will do everything I can to help a child or children, even at risk of me and my community.

I will never steal, and oppose those who do.

I will always get paid for my work.

I will show devotion to those who act with kindness towards me

I will not go back to purgatorium

## STEP 7. DRAMATIC HOOKS

Each PC picks two Dramatic **Hooks** for their characters – motivations and people particular to them that drive their story. These hooks can take the form of missions they are on, recurring problems they are seeking to overcome, or even a tragic flaws that drive the story arcs of their character. Hooks serve as a signal to the GM, letting them know what sort of stories you're most interested in playing when events focus on your PC—be creative, and choose whatever you think will make the story you're most excited about!

Whenever your dramatic hooks becomes relevant in a game, both you and the GM gain 3 grit.

Dramatic hooks can come in a wide range of forms. Below are some examples:

- ✂ I want to find out what happened to my missing sister

- ✂ I want to become a master Yojin
- ✂ I need to find a way to get an expensive medical treatment for my son
- ✂ My granddaughter has gotten in trouble with her involvement in the Bravia crime family and I need to bail her out
- ✂ I keep making horrible romantic decisions and leaving a trail of ex's that are causing me problems
- ✂ I want to find the lost city that my mother never could
- ✂ I want to prove that Dynacorp was responsible for the dam breaking and make them pay
- ✂ My character wants to get paid (but I want them to realize they actually care about stuff)
- ✂ My character is determined to take down the system or die trying (and if they do go, I want them to do so dramatically)



## CHANGING DRAMATIC HOOKS

During reflection or downtime, if it feels like your character has grown or changed in such a way that their dramatic hooks no longer make sense (or you just are no longer enjoying it!), talk with the group or GM and change it. Sometimes, achieving a mission is the catalyst for this kind of reflection and change!

## STEP 8. CHOOSE RELATIONS

Here, players determine their connections to other NPCs in the world. (see ["Relation Paradigms" on pg 125](#)), which also act as dramatic hooks. This is broken into three categories: Personal Relations, Factions, and Community. Remember, these relations are allies for the PC, but are also hooks for the GM to tell stories centered on your PC and their world. These choices allow players to quickly choose relations and get into the game quickly, but if desired, players can spend 30 fortune and use the rules for building relations in [Chapter 7: Relations and Resources \(pg 45\)](#). (This fortune cannot be spent on other resources, though additional fortune may be added to upgrade or add additional relations).

Each relation has 5 key details: Who they are, what archetype they have ([pg 47](#)), their influence (how competent they are or how much power they have, [pg 45](#)) their base regard (measuring how much they like you ([pg 41](#)), and their primary skill (what they're best at).

Once a player has selected a relation package, they should jot down a few specific details about each relation to make clear who the relation is and how they connect to the player character. As part of this process, players should feel free to tweak who they are and what their primary skill and archetype are. A player has the option to leave the details of a relation blank at character creation

Relation costs are relative to your community's Influence and Regard—each package assumes the default Influence and Regard of 4, however if you start with a higher or lower Influence or regard than that, increase the Influence of all of your relations up or down by the same amount.

## STEP 9. CHOOSE DEBT

Characters may take up to 2 debts. When you gain a debt, you must choose a relation you are indebted to—this must be a relation that you have a positive base regard with, and must be of an influence appropriate to your class (see table below).

Upon taking a debt, you immediately gain fortune corresponding to the fortune gain for your caste.

At the end of each downtime, you must pick one of the following options for each debt you have:

- ✧ Pay fortune equal to the fortune gain for your current caste plus interest and remove the debt
- ✧ Pay the interest for your current caste (in fortune)
- ✧ Decrease the benefits of your caste by one step (Lower Caste or above). This may only be done once per downtime

- ✧ Decrease the Base Regard of your debt holder by 5 and give the GM 5 grit. You may not do this if it would bring their base regard to below -15. This will likely cause the debt holder to contact you and cause problems in your life
- ✧ Take an additional point of debt, if you have 2 or fewer points of debt.
- ✧ Permanently decrease your caste by one. This decreases the maintenance and fortune required to pay off your fortune.



| Caste              | Minimum Influence of Debt Holder | Fortune Gain upon taking Debt | Interest per downtime |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Undercity          | 2                                | 1                             | 1                     |
| Lower Caste        | 3                                | 2                             | 1                     |
| Lower-Middle Caste | 4                                | 5                             | 2                     |
| Upper-Middle Caste | 5                                | 10                            | 3                     |
| Upper Caste        | 6                                | 20                            | 5                     |
| Elite Caste        | 7                                | 50                            | 10                    |

## STEP 10. CHOOSE ATTRIBUTE SCORES

The average attribute score of peoples in Subversion is 0 and all PCs start with 0 in all attributes (unless their identity choices raised them). Anything slightly higher than 0 (+/- 2) is still considered average. Scores of 3 or above represent those who have trained their body and mind purposefully. The highest attribute a PC can have in Subversion is 7. When making skill rolls, the relevant attribute value will give a bonus equal to the attribute rank to the result. No Attributes can be higher than 4 at character creation, regardless of lineage or origin options.

Each character has the following attributes, which serve as a measure of their general abilities and add to the results of tests.

**Brawn (BRW)** is an abstraction of physical strength and toughness.

**Agility (AGI)** represents a character's reflexes and quickness.

**Wit (WIT)** Wit can represent intelligence, education, street smarts, or critical thinking.

**Awareness (AWA)** is a PC's ability to observe and process the world around them and make connections and responses.

**Will (WIL)** represents the ability to resist temptation and persevere under non-physical threats and temptations.

**Charisma (CHA)** contains, but isn't limited to, the ability to look good, persuade others, and otherwise socially affect the world.



## Attribute Arrays

The following arrays are examples of how a player can spend 35 fortune in a variety of ways. Simply chose an option and assign the various attribute ranks to any of the 6 attributes. Note that some lineage or origin options may bump an attribute over the cap of 4 for character creation. If that is the case, note that lineage/origin options are applied FIRST, and refund your character either 1 fortune for a +1 in an attribute or 5 fortune for a +2, and spend those fortune points elsewhere or save them for later.

|           | Attribute 1 | Attribute 2 | Attribute 3 | Attribute 4 | Attribute 5 | Attribute 6 |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Option 1: | 3           | 2           | 2           | 2           | 2           | 1           |
| Option 2: | 3           | 3           | 2           | 1           | 1           | 0           |
| Option 3: | 4           | 1           | 1           | 1           | 1           | 1           |
| Option 4: | 4           | 2           | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0           |

## Raising Attribute Ranks

Attributes must be purchased 1 rank at a time. The fortune cost of moving up a rank is presented below.

|                    |                     |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 0 to 1 = 1 Fortune | 3 to 4 = 16 Fortune | 6 to 7 = 49 Fortune |
| 1 to 2 = 4 Fortune | 4 to 5 = 25 Fortune | 7 to 8 = 64 Fortune |
| 2 to 3 = 9 Fortune | 5 to 6 = 36 Fortune | 8 to 9 = 81 Fortune |

# STEP 11. CHOOSE SKILLS

Skills represent training and knowledge a PC may possess and apply to resolve specific problems. Skills are intentionally broad. They allow the creation of competent PCs with the skills needed to navigate the world. It is generally assumed that your PC has the basic tools needed to accomplish tasks that fall under one of their skills and that they have the general knowledge of how to accomplish those tasks as needed.

All PCs start with 1 in every skill. This represents the basic knowledge that anyone gets growing up in the world. With a skill of one, you can assume your PCs has the general life skills and knowledge required to live and move in a society—a character with piloting 1 can be assumed to be able to drive to work without needing to make any rolls. Some characters may find themselves particularly inept at specific skills—a character may decrease up to three skills to rank zero in exchange for gaining 5 fortune each. A PC is generally considered to be proficient at a skill when they have 3 ranks. Rank zero means a true ineptitude at a skill—a character with 0 ranks in piloting doesn't know how to drive!

Given the default amount to spend on skills (165 fortune), you can choose 11 ranks of skills to distribute (with all skills starting at 1). **We recommend raising 4 skills to rank 3 (120 Fortune), and 3 other skills to rank 2 (45 fortune).**

## SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

See Skills ([see pg 15](#)) for more detailed descriptions of each of the skills:

- ✦ **Arts:** The ability to create art and other creative and inspirational endeavours
- ✦ **Cybertech:** The ability to build and operate cybertech devices
- ✦ **Deception:** The ability to convince others of things that are untrue
- ✦ **Humanities:** The understanding of history, social sciences, law, and current events
- ✦ **Influence:** The ability to persuade and inspire others
- ✦ **Magic Arts:** The ability to understand (and possibly use) magic



- ✘ **Melee Combat:** The ability to fight in close quarters
- ✘ **Observation:** The ability to notice details, lies, and other hidden things
- ✘ **Physicality:** The ability to perform physical actions such as sneaking, climbing, sleight of hand, or acrobatics
- ✘ **Piloting:** The ability to control a vehicle or ride a creature
- ✘ **Ranged Combat:** Skill with firearms, bows, and thrown weapons
- ✘ **Sciences:** Understanding of science, medicine, and non-cybertech engineering

### Gaining Skill Ranks

Skill ranks must be bought one Rank at a time. Each rank in a skill cost 15 fortune.

Skills start at Rank 1. Up to three skills may be downgraded to skill 0 for 5 fortune each.

Maximum Skill Rank for starting PCs is 4.

### Skill Ranks Explained

For most of the world's people, their skill ranks would fall between 0 and 5, but with dedication, characters may push their skill higher. PCs, as those who've proven themselves capable, start with all skills at 1. The guidelines for skill ranges are as follows:

|                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| 0 (Unskilled)       | 5 (great)  |
| 1 (basic knowledge) | 6 (Best)   |
| 2 (apprentice)      | 7 (Hero)   |
| 3 (competent)       | 8 (Master) |
| 4 (good)            | 9 (Legend) |

## STEP 12. CHOOSE PARADIGMS

Paradigms represent archetypes, professions, or thematic groups of abilities that PCs have. Beyond skills and attributes, they are more particular and may enhance skills or add new abilities. By default, players have 60 fortune to spend on Paradigms at character generation.

A full list of Paradigms can be found in [Chapter 17: Paradigms \(pg 123\)](#).

## STEP 13: PURCHASE GEAR

The next step is to purchase gear. The default allocation gives players 10 fortune to spend on gear. See [Chapter 15: Gear \(pg 101\)](#) for more details.

## STEP 14. FINISHING TOUCHES

There are some special attributes, such as defenses and condition, that are derived from previous steps. Here, we wrap them all up into a presentable package.



## DEFENSES

Defenses measure how your PC manages to avoid or absorb imminent danger or distress.

Defenses are calculated by adding two linked Attributes together, then adding 6 to each.

**Guard (physical) (Agility x 2 +6):** This Defense takes into account your awareness and presence of mind to get out of the way of oncoming attacks. You get out of the opponent's way.

**Vigilance (Mental) (Wit x 2 +6):** This is the mental Defense; Quick thinking and quick acting. When you're alert you anticipate and plan. You outsmart the opponents or refuse to be tricked. This is also your ability to notice the hard to see - perceive the world around you

**Aegis (Spiritual/Magic) (Awareness x 2 +6):** The soul/magic Defense; mystic attacks and soul-damaging attacks are resisted with this. Your connection to yourself protects you.

## INITIATIVE

Your initiative score is equal to Agility x 3 + Awareness x 2 + Wit

## CONDITION

Health, animity, and Grit all represent your characters current condition (physical and non-physical) to face different types of adversity.

**Health:** Health represents how much physical harm your body can take before giving out. Your maximum Health is equal to **BRW** x 4 +12.

**Animity:** Animity represents how much mental stress and effort your psyche can take before giving out. Your maximum Animity is equal to **CHA** x 4 + 12.

**Grit:** Grit represents that hard to define quality that makes people able to remain resolute even through the toughest of times. It is heart, determination, anger, resolve, and a bit of emotional health all rolled up into one. PCs start with a grit of Will +6.

## LANGUAGES

Choose 2 (CommonUr, NobleUr, Chaldani, La-Churuq, Ghassulian, Altaipheran, Fae, other).

# BEFORE YOUR FIRST SESSION

Before your first session we recommend that you take a moment to briefly discuss your character with the other members of your group. In particular, we recommend briefly talking about the following points

- ✧ How (if they do already), do the characters know each other
- ✧ Do they have any mutual relations or other connections
- ✧ What goals, values, and dramatic hooks do they have (and how might these mesh or lead to interesting conflicts)
- ✧ How do each characters abilities and weaknesses interact, and are there any important skills or abilities that can't be covered by any character or their relations

This discussion might inspire you to make some small tweaks—feel free to do so!



## Sample Connections

The party's connections determine what makes them a group—and crucially what keeps them as a group. Each player should have at least one connection to other members of the group, possibly many more! Before moving on to the next step, make sure that everyone is connected to each other, either directly or indirectly.

**Assigned:** Sometimes you don't have a choice who you work with, and many communities will select the best Envoys for the job regardless of their relation to each other. You're expected to work together for the goal of the group that organized the group, not because of any other relationship you have with other members of the party (that's not to say that you don't have other relations!)

**Debt:** You owe them, either by society's reckoning or just your own. You help out another member of the team because you feel the obligation to repay a debt to them or their family.

**Family:** Blood is thicker than water—that's what you believe at least. You work together because you've got your families back, and you're not about to let them do things alone.

**Friendship:** You stick with each other because you've stuck with each other so far, and you have each other's back—or at least you like hanging out and working together.

**Shared Purpose:** You might not know each other well, but you know that you're working towards the same goal, and you'll welcome any help towards that end.

## ADVANCEMENT

After each session, PCs will earn a certain amount of fortune. This fortune can be spent on Attributes, Skills, Gear, and Paradigms, just as it can be spent during character generation.



# Chapter 15: Gear

Gear represents the unique tools and equipment that makes you stand out. Most of your possession are assumed based on your Caste (pg 74), but gear represents unique or important items that give a benefit to your character.

The default allocation gives each character 10 fortune to spend on gear.

## CASTE GEAR

Each character starts with the following basic gear based on their Caste. Additionally, they possess any mundane objects of quantities and qualities consistent with their caste.

### UNDERCITY

- ✂ Communal/neighborhood C-link. This is how most communication with outsiders happens.
- ✂ Backpack of Clothing (may be ill-fitting, torn, patchwork)

### LOWER CASTE

- ✂ Paylo
- ✂ Transit Pass (Mass Transit)
- ✂ Small closet of Clothing (may be in disrepair)

### LOWER-MIDDLE

- ✂ Personal Halo
- ✂ Transit Pass (Rideshare)

- ✂ Rented Commuter Bike
- ✂ Small closet of Clothing (decent)

### UPPER-MIDDLE

- ✂ Personal Halo
- ✂ Transit Pass (Driver Service)
- ✂ Basic Car (lease)
- ✂ Many options of clothing

### UPPER

- ✂ Halogram
- ✂ Leased Luxury Car (Car or Truck <=30 fortune)
- ✂ Transit Pass (Flying Taxi)

### ELITE

- ✂ Halogram
- ✂ Leased VTOL
- ✂ Transit Pass (Jet)
- ✂ Vehicle Service

## ELECTRONICS AND SOFTWARE

### HALOS

The Halo (Handheld Link Organizers) is the all in one computer, communication device, media player and wallet. Several varieties exist, largely stratified by caste. Most halos are roughly hand sized.



## PAYLO

I 1 Fortune

Low end halos, colloquially known as “Paylos” for their dirt cheap prices, can be bought at every store or C-link. Interacting with them relies on low-resolution touch-screens, speakers, and microphones. Sold at a loss, they make it up by steering the user towards buying certain products and selling their information. Notoriously cheap and insecure, they’re nonetheless the mainstay of those who can’t afford better. Security Rating 7, Firewall 0.

## PERSONAL HALO

I 2 Fortune

Personal Halos are the broad category of halos marketed to the average user. Personal halos can be used via touching the screen, but are far more commonly used via connections to smart glasses and earbuds to provide Augmented Reality interfaces and overlays, though they can also be used via cybertech implants. Personal halos advertise greater security to those who have a digital life valuable enough to attract rogue breachers. Security Rating 10, Firewall 5.

## HALOGRAM

I 3 Fortune

Halograms, named for their lack of physical interface and presence only in augmented reality, are the category of high-end halos used by those who can spare no expense for the smoothest experience possible, require the utmost security in protecting their digital life and identity, or merely wish to prove that they’re rich enough to buy the most recent halogram. Halograms are frequently designed as jewelry, glasses, watches, or directly implanted as cybertech, and rarely interacted with directly as a physical object. Security Rating 15, Firewall 10.

## GRAYLO

I 3 Fortune

Designed less for everyday use, these grey-market halos are optimized for anonymity. Of similar form factor to normal personal halos, graylos are loaded with a single fake identity, complete with supporting identification, records, and history. You automatically can pass yourself off as that identity to any automated system, and gain a +4 on any other Deception tests to pass yourself off as that alternative identity. Security Rating 12, Firewall 10.

## HARDWARE

### LONG DISTANCE RELAY

I 1 Fortune

The average halo can communicate to other devices with a range of 5000m. Long Distance Relays are connected to wired connections or satellite links to allow connections anywhere in the globe. Most urban areas have a number of public Long Distance Relays, usable by anyone, however those heading out into sparsely populated areas may find it useful to bring their own satellite enabled Long Distance Relay.

### REMOTE SERVER

I 4 Fortune

You have a connection to a remote system capable of complicated data analysis and simulation. You gain +2 on all Science rolls in Dramatic or Downtime scenes, and such tasks take half the time. Additionally, you may use the server as a private Virtual Reality place for digital meetings. Security Rating 12, Firewall 15.

## SOFTWARE

### UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

I 2 Fortune

This software provides a serviceable translation for any common language. You may understand and make yourself understood in any common language, however you are at a -2 on any social rolls relying on the software for communication.

### DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

I 4 Fortune

You have the equipment to widely distribute digital copies of your art and make buzz. Gain +2 on all Arts rolls to influence people not in your immediate vicinity.

### ARTISTS’ AIDS

I 2 Fortune

You have sophisticated software that allows you to quickly lay down the basics of your art. Your Art rolls gain **Reliable 2** and any compositions take half as long to create.



## REFERENCE LIBRARY

I 4 Fortune

You have access to well annotated library of resources you can use to help answer questions, provided you have the time to use it. Gain +1 dice on all Humanities rolls done in Dramatic or Downtime scenes.

## CATALOG OF THINGS

I 3 Fortune

This AR software identifies man-made objects and provides information about where they are made, sold, how they are used, and any cultural connotations of them. Gain **Reliable 3** on all humanities rolls to identify objects.

## SPECIES IDENTIFIER

I 3 Fortune

This AR software identifies species and provides helpful information about them. Gain **Reliable 3** on all science rolls to identify living creatures.

## DIGIT-ALTER

I 2 Fortune

This grey-market software is common among forgers, and contains copies of official documents and their security measures as well as the tools to rapidly make convincing forgeries. Gain +2 on all Deception tests to make forgeries.

## DIGITAL PRESENCE

I 2 Fortune

You've invested heavily in your communications gear, and are **inspired** on all influence rolls done remotely.

# TOOLS, SCIENCE, AND MEDICINE

## MASTERPIECE IMPLEMENT

I 2 Fortune

You have a tool, instrument or other piece of gear that is a work of art on its own right. When using this implement, your arts rolls are **inspired** (Gain +1 for each six you roll).

## PORTABLE LABORATORY

I 2 Fortune

You have a collection of sensors, microscopes, reference materials and more that you can whip out whenever a scientific question arises. Gain +1 on all science rolls to analyze something the character can directly inspect.

## MEDKIT

I 2 Fortune

A quick-acting cybertech kit that diagnoses and heals injury on the spot. One use only. Target regains 2D6 health. Characters with at least 3 ranks in Science or Cybertech may spend 1 Grit to increase health regained by 2D6.

## SALVE OF LIFE

I 2 Fortune

A magic salve that heals wounds instantly. One use only. Target regains 2D6 health. Characters with at least 3 ranks in a Magic Art skill may spend 1 Grit to increase health regained by 2D6.

# DRUGS

The knowledge of advanced pharmaceuticals was developed over millenia by mages of the alchemical colleges, however widespread drug use only emerged with the ability of pharmaceutical companies to replicate these formulas and mass produce the relevant compounds. Nominally tightly controlled, drugs with legitimate medical uses and useful performance enhancing qualities are readily available to those with the right licenses, and alchemical mages can synthesize many of the most common compounds.



## ADDICTION TESTS

Most drugs are addictive. And the beginning of each downtime phase, make an **Addiction Test** by rolling a number of dice equal to the number or doses of the drug you've taken since the start of the last downtime phase (keeping the highest three as per normal). If the result is higher than your vigilance, you gain an [Indulgence \(pg 25\)](#) impulse for that drug. If you fail and you're already addicted to the drug, the character instead takes 5 animity damage. Each drug provides guidance for triggers specific to that drug. Some drugs modify the test, making it easier or harder to become addicted.

## DRUG PROPERTIES

Drugs have two properties:

- ✂ **Onset:** How long it takes a drug to kick in
- ✂ **Duration:** How long the drug lasts

## COMMON DRUGS

### FLOW

1 Fortune (Covers all doses taken until the next downtime). Onset: 1 minute. Duration: 12 Hours

Perhaps the most common drug, at least among corporate enclaves and the upper class, Flow induces a hyperfocussed state, enabling the user to focus on a task to the exclusion of any distractions such as food, rest, or bathrooms (it's understandably important to set alarms for scheduled bodily function breaks).

While under the effects of Flow, characters gain Reliable 3 on all tests requiring concerted focus, however they gain Dulled 2 on all Observation tests on things they aren't focussing on. While under the effect of flow, a character cannot sleep, however, time under the influence of flow does not count towards time awake for the purposes of needing sleep.

Longerm use of flow can be destabilizing. Each dose (6 hours) causes 2 animity damage.

A character who uses flow during the downtime phase gains an extra downtime action if they forgo rest ([see "Downtime Actions" on pg 25](#)).

A character who uses flow to gain an extra downtime action takes an additional 3 animity damage (this counts as 3 doses for the purpose of addiction tests).

### FLOW ADDICTION

Addicts to flow find it harder to focus without Flow and find it hard to maintain a normal sleep schedule. Flow addiction is often triggered when a character is tired or needs to focus on smething. If the character does not partake of Flow, they gain two instances of Dulled on all tasks requiring concentration (as per Distraction Response).

## GOD TEARS

1 Cost 1 Fortune. Onset: Immediate. Duration 1 hour

Originally part of the sacred practice of some Northern Yettin, God tears come from a rare mushroom traditionally dissolved in sea water. Applied to the eyes, God Tears make Shinesight ([see "Shine Perception" on pg 63](#)) easier, giving the character Reliable 3 on all Shinesight rolls, and gain inspired on all Magic Arts tests. The character, however, may not stop looking at the shine for the duration of the high.

God Tears have no effect on characters with cyber eyes.

### GOD TEAR ADDICTION

While not particularly addictive per se, characters who abuse God Tears find it harder and harder to ignore the patterns of magic and focus on the real world. Whenever there are magical effects, or the character is tired or stressed, God Tear addiction may be triggered to force the character to engage in Shinesight for the rest of the scene.

Whenever a character fails an addiction roll against God Tears, their shinesight becomes stronger. They gain an additional instance of Dulled for all mundane observation tests while engaged in Shinesight, but gain a cumulative +1 bonus on all shinesight rolls.

## KING MUD

2 Fortune. Illicit 2. Onset: Immediate. Duration 1 Hour

A brown injected liquid, King Mud has it's origins as an alchemically created combat stimulant, though synthetic formulations are also available. Named for the sense of grandiosity it promotes, those on King Mud gain strength, speed, and a reckless sense of self confidence.



While under the effect of King Mud, a character gains +5 Initiative, Augment 3 on all melee attacks, +1 Armor, and Adamant 3. However, the confidence of King Mud makes it difficult for the character to recognize when they're outmatched. A character under the effect of King Mud must spend 5 grit to retreat or otherwise concede defeat. Another character may attempt to talk them down by succeeding on an Influence Check against their vigilance as an action.

### **KING MUD ADDICTION**

Those who abuse King Mud become obsessed with their own importance—treat this gaining the Pride Impulse ([see pg 77](#)). Long term use of King Mud is dangerous, whenever a character addicted to King Mud fails an addiction test against King Mud they take 3 health damage.

## **NONCHALANCE**

| 1 Fortune. Onset: 5 minutes. Duration: Special

Originally developed as a treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Nonchalance removes the emotional valence of recent memories while keeping the factual component of the memories intact. Taken shortly after a traumatic event, Nonchalance can eliminate the psychological effect of trauma.

When a character takes a dose of Nonchalance, they heal up to 5 Animity damage they've taken from traumatic or stressful events since the last time they slept. Multiple doses of Nonchalance stack for the purposes of determining how much Animity damage is healed.

### **NONCHALANCE ADDICTION**

Repeated use of Nonchalance reduces the characters ability to cope with stressful situations. Nonchalance addiction is triggered when a character takes animity damage, in which case they take an additional 5 animity damage.

## **REMEMBRANCE**

| Cost 1 Fortune. Illicit 1. Onset 1 Round. Duration 20 minutes.

Originally developed as a memory enhancing drug for technical workers, Remembrance was only a partial success. When under the effects of Remembrance, a character appears to have perfect episodic recall, able to remember anything that's happened to them in vivid detail, as if they were reliving it. However, while Remembrance can help dig up temporarily forgotten or suppressed memories, truly forgotten details are replaced by plausible hallucinations. These false memories make it of limited use in cases where accuracy is important. While under the effect of Remembrance, a character gains +2 on all Wit linked skill tests, however, all failures count as dynamic failures. The vivid memory hallucinations interfere with other tasks, however, and the character gains an instance of Dulled for all other tasks.

Where Remembrance gained in popularity, however, is as a recreational drug for the nostalgiac. Under the effects of Remembrance, you can relive in seemingly perfect detail your first kiss, happy moments with a deceased love one, what it was like to be young again, or whatever else you might desire. If you spend the duration of the high reminiscing, you can heal 1d6 animity damage.

### **REMEMBRANCE ADDICTION**

Remembrance addiction is insidious, driven as much by loss and nostalgia as by the chemical component. Remembrance can be triggered whenever a character is reminded of something positive from their past. Repeated use of remembrance makes it hard to recall the emotional component of memories without its use—when a character fails an addiction test against Remembrance while they are already addicted, they take an additional 1d6 animity damage.

## **SACRED BLUE**

| Cost 1 Fortune. Illicit 1. Onset 1 minute. Duration 1 hour

Derived from the Blue Lotus plant and traditionally distilled into a tea, Sacred Blue triggers a dissociative high, frequently described as a sense of serene calm, enlightenment, or being one with the universe. A character under the effects of Sacred Blue gains Adamant 10, but gains an instance of dulled on all tests while under the effect of Sacred Blue.



### **SACRED BLUE ADDICTION**

Sacred Blue addicts struggle to put importance on mundane things, instead preferring to seek enlightenment at the bottom of a cup of tea. Sacred Blue Addiction can be alternatively triggered by difficult or stressful situations in the real world—or boredom!

## **MAGICAL GEAR**

### **SHALMU**

| 1 Fortune

An item made to look like the image of one of the great powers. It can bring comfort and support to a faithful person, as it is said that a part of the divine dwells in their image. What is done to the image is done to the divine power itself. If the image is mistreated, this may result in a curse. However, it may also be used a single time to channel a sacred spell. As a main action, the chosen may use a Shalmu to remove all dissonance from a spell. After its use in this way, it crumbles apart into its base components.

### **TSERU**

| 1 Fortune

A Tseru is an enchanted container holding contained arcane mana aligned to a certain type of energy. The specific type of mana must be specified when purchased, and may not always be available in every store. A mage may use a Tseru to harmonize a bar of mana matching the type of energy as a free action once per round, after which the Tseru is spent.

## **ESPIONAGE AND SECURITY**

### **AUTO-INTRUDER**

| 3 Fortune

This device, commonly appearing as a large marker or pen, is a combination toolkit, lockpicks, and automatic breaching device specialized in locks and alarms. Gain Reliable 3 on all Physicality or Cybertech rolls to bypass locks or other similar security if the character can physically touch them with the auto-intruder. Furthermore, the auto-intruder may be used as a specialized cyberkit, allowing its user to make a cybertech roll to breach security systems it's touching (treat this as granting the character a breach damage of 5).

### **BUG-SWEEPER**

| 2 Fortune

This device, roughly the size of a link, is designed for those paranoid about surveillance. When used as a scanner, it provides a +2 Bonus on all cybertech or observation rolls to detect bugs. It can additionally be used as a jammer, blocking all devices within 100m from transmitting unless you allow them or their user succeeds on a TN 14 Cybertech roll. Finally, this device can use a miniaturized EMP to destroy any small electronics it comes in contact with.

### **DISGUISE KIT**

| 2 Fortune

You have a set of cosmetics, clothing, uniforms, wigs, and more to help you disguise yourself. Gain +1 dice on all deception rolls made as part of passing yourself off as a particular person you've spend time disguising yourself as, or to hide your identity from anyone trying to recognize you.

### **ELABORATE WARDROBE**

| 2 Fortune

You have an outfit for every occasion, and then some. Whenever you have time to change outfits to fit a situation, you gain a +1 on all influence rolls, and you never suffer penalties for looking out of place.

### **MICRO-LINKS**

| 2 Fortune

The utmost in discreet surveillance, micro-links are multipurpose cameras and microphones roughly 5mm in diameter. This kit comes with 20 microlinks, as well as an included low-profile contacts, earbuds, and subvocal microphone. These gear require a TN 15 Observation Test or Cybertech Test to detect.



## STEALTH SUIT

| 2 Fortune

This sound dampening bodysuit includes a mask and hood covering the face, as well as smart clothing fabric and cameras able to match the rough colors behind it. While not an invisibility suit by any means, it provides a +2 bonus on all physicality tests to be stealthy.

## MULTIMODAL BINOCULARS

| 4 Fortune

These binoculars are equipped with wide spectrum sensors allowing them to see in the dark, as well as into the IR and UV spectrum. They additionally include integrated laser microphones and directional microphones, enabling you to hear from far away. You gain +2 on all observation rolls against a target that you're aware of and actively surveilling, and ignore any penalties based on range as long as you can see your target.

# SURVIVAL AND EXPLORATION GEAR

## ADVANCED CLIMBING GEAR

| 2 Fortune

This gear includes smart adhesive gloves, knee-pads, and shoes, a grappling hook with smart adhesive hooks, a climbing harness, a number of adhesive pitons, and 300 meters of ultrastrong cord capable of supporting up to 1000 kg of weight. Together, these provide a +4 on all physicality tests related to climbing.

## HAZMAT SUIT

| 2 Fortune

This suit provides protection from a wide range of chemical, biological, and radiation hazards. It provides 12 hours of internal oxygen, protection from inhaled toxins, and radiation. Integrated into the suit are Geiger counters and chemical sensors that detect hazards. 2 Fortune

## DIVING GEAR

| 2 Fortune

This diving suit provides protection from the elements, up to 10 hours of oxygen for breathing with adaptive reclamation of exhaled air and adjustable mixes for diving at depth, illumination, buoyancy control. It enables the wearer to dive up to 300m below water, and provides Reliable 3 on all Physicality Tests to swim.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER

| 2 Fortune

This small pack, roughly 10 cm long and weighing 5kg, can automatically inflate to provide protection from the elements. When inflated, the shelter can fit 4 people (2 comfortably, or 1 yettin). The emergency shelter can float in water, has an integrated climate control system that protects against extreme temperatures, up to and including wildfires. It also includes its own air filtration and oxygen scrubber, as well as water reclamation kit. Finally, The Emergency shelter is equipped with bright signal lights to improve visibility for search and rescue as well as an electronic signal beacon. All features function for a week before needing to be recharged. 2 fortune



# VEHICLES AND TRANSPORTATION

## TRANSIT PASS

In Neo Babylon, most people don't use their own vehicles, instead relying on services of various degrees of amenities, convenience, and speed. All characters possess a transit pass, however the level of service depends on caste. Anyone can use transit of a lower caste.

### MASS TRANSIT (LOW CASTE)

You rely on buses, ferries, trains, subways, and other fixed route mass transportation to get somewhere. Depending on location, routes may be infrequent, unreliable, or totally absent—which might involve a lot of walking as well.

### RIDE SHARE (LOWER-MIDDLE CASTE)

You rely on multi-passenger taxi services that route you to different locations. Depending on location and luck, getting a ride may take a while, and travel times are unpredictable and depend on other passenger's destinations

### DRIVER SERVICE (UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS)

Driver services provide prompt single-customer service direct to their destination in upscale vehicles, and are promptly available on request.

### AIR TAXI SERVICE (UPPER CLASS)

The favorite in the spires of Neo Babylon, Air Taxis are flying vehicles that provide fast point to point travel anywhere.

### JET SERVICE (ELITE)

For those who want to blur the line between travel and luxury, jet services provide fully featured luxury cabins to those desiring to travel anywhere.

## VEHICLE SERVICE

For those who prefer to pilot themselves, a number of services catering to the rich allow them to change vehicles as suits their mood, need, or the most recent trend. For more details on vehicles, see the vehicle rules in [Chapter 16: Vehicles \(pg 111\)](#). This comes in four levels:

### BIKE RENTAL (LOWER-MIDDLE)

Small electric commuter bikes, many denizens use these small bikes to move around from place to place independently. Gain access to a bike with the commuter option ([pg 116](#)).

### USED CARS (UPPER-MIDDLE)

At this level, older or budget cars (or in some communities, boats) are leased to customers on a month to month level. Gain access to a car ([pg 117](#)), truck([pg 117](#)), or small boat ([pg 119](#)) (with no options). This may be changed once each downtime.

### CAR SERVICE (UPPER CLASS)

At this level, customers can request new cars and vehicles, and change them with a click of a button. Gain access to any vehicle with a total fortune cost of 60 fortune or less. Vehicles can be changed at any time (given proximity to the appropriate infrastructure and vehicle stocks).

### AIR SERVICE (ELITE)

At this level, in addition to ground vehicles, customers can request aircraft for recreational use. Gain access to any vehicle costing 140 fortune or less. Vehicles can be changed at any time (given proximity to the appropriate infrastructure and vehicle stocks).



# COMBAT GEAR

These pieces of gear are used with combat skills or to provide some other bonus in combat.

| Weapon Name                | Skill         | Range   | Damage | AP | Other Abilities   | Fortune Cost |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------|--------|----|---|--------------|
| Unarmed                    | Melee Combat  | H       | 1D6    | -  | Add Brawn to Damage                                       | 0            |
| Knife                      | Melee Combat  | H       | 2D6    | 2  | Frightening 5   | 1            |
| Club                       | Melee Combat  | H       | 2D6    | -  | Add Brawn to Damage, Conspicuous                          | 0            |
| Sword                      | Melee Combat  | H       | 2D6    | 2  | Add Brawn +3 to Damage, Conspicuous, Frightening 5        | 2            |
| Stun Baton                 | Melee Combat  | H       | 3D6    | -  | Nonlethal, Illicit 1                                      | 2            |
| Taser                      | Ranged Combat | H, S    | 2D6    | -  | Nonlethal   | 2            |
| Pistol                     | Ranged Combat | H, S    | 3D6    | -  | Illicit 2, Frightening 6                                  | 2            |
| Rifle                      | Ranged Combat | S, M, L | 4D6    | -  | Conspicuous, Illicit 2, Frightening 8                     | 2            |
| Machine Gun                | Ranged Combat | S, M, L | 5D6*   | -  | Conspicuous, Multitarget, Illicit 4, Frightening 9        | 4            |
| Single Use Rocket Launcher | Ranged Combat | M, L    | 6D6    | 5  | Conspicuous, Blast, Single Use, Illicit 4, Frightening 10 | 4            |

## ARMOR

| Name                  | Armor Value | Other Notes                      | Fortune Cost |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Synthleather Clothing | 2 Body      | -                                | 1            |
| Armored Clothing      | 5 Body      | Disguised                        | 2            |
| Body Armor            | 10 Body     | Conspicuous, -1 guard, Illicit 2 | 4            |
| Apotropaic Amulet     | 10 Aegis*   | Interrupt. 1 Use Only            | 2            |



## GEAR KEYWORDS

### BLAST

This weapon does half damage to any target within 5m of its target

### CONSPICUOUS

This item is obvious and impossible to conceal on your person. In most situations, carrying this item will give penalties to Regard and concealment tests to fit in, and may make some tests impossible (You can't fit in a fancy ball carrying a rocket launcher, and the bodyguards of a VIP lounge are going to immediately react to someone carrying a rifle).

### DISGUISED

This piece of gear appears on first glance to be a mundane item. Determining its true purpose requires a TN 13 Observation Test.

### HEAVY

Weapons with this keyword use Brawn instead of Agility to wield. In addition, using a heavy weapon against an NPC is considered a deadly attack, whether it ends up being lethal or not.

### MULTITARGET

On a dynamic success, this weapon makes an additional attack against a target in range who's guard it beats (this can be the same target). On a critical success, make a third attack against a valid target in range.

### NONLETHAL

This weapon never risks fatally injuring its target, and targets incapacitated it do not need medical attention to recover.

### SINGLE USE

This item may only be used once

### ILLICIT (X)

This item is illegal in Neo Babylon. You must have a relation to purchase this whose influence is double the Illicit value of the item (rounded down).

## CURRENCY

In Neo Babylon, the **Silver Standard Shekel** is the local currency. It is often referred to as silver standards, standards, or most commonly, **stanz**. While most purchases are covered by your Caste's lifestyle, extra Stanz can be spent on expenses beyond your lifestyle, or for abnormal expenditures like bribes or hiring someone to do a significant task. Fortune represents stanz, but also the time, energy, and commitment PCs have put into managing their life. The exchange rate for stanz is 1 Fortune for 1,000 Stanz, and they may be exchanged back and forth at any C-link. In narrative terms, PCs can think of this as an abstraction for exchanging favors, purchasing or selling good, or otherwise swapping bits of their fortune around.



# Chapter 16: Vehicles

In Neo Babylon, there's no single most common type of vehicle. Bikes, cars, and vans vie for the streets, while helicopters and VTOLs carry the elites above them. Massive shipping vessels feed the Neo Babylon economy, while fishing boats and yachts dance around them. Hypersonic jets let corporate executives cross the planet in hours, while cargo planes ensure perishable goods are available anywhere.

## VEHICLE ATTRIBUTES

All vehicles have four key attributes:

- ✂ Speed: Representing how fast a vehicle is
- ✂ Size: Representing how big it is
- ✂ Health: Representing how much damage it can take
- ✂ Seating/Payload: Representing how many people or cargo it can carry
- ✂ Autonomy Index (AI): Representing how capable the vehicle is without a pilot.

Additionally, vehicles may have a number of other traits representing their specific abilities—these are covered later and will be listed with the vehicle description.

### SPEED

Speed indicates the top speed of a vehicle. While Speed is usually an abstract value, sometimes (particularly for long distance travel) it's useful to know the actual speed:

### SIZE

The size value of a vehicle represents how large it is, which restricts where it can go and helps determine how many people or how much cargo it can carry. Size also limits the number of modifications a vehicle can take—a vehicle has a number of Option points equal to its Size plus one.

Size applies as a negative modifier to Guard for all attacks targeting a vehicle, as well as any stealth rolls made to avoid detection.

### CAPACITY

Capacity represents how much the vehicle can carry. Each point of capacity corresponds to seating for one person or equivalent cargo space (~200kg), and is represented by two numbers, corresponding to the number of seats and the amount of cargo space (e.g. 5s/2c represents a sedan with space for 5 people and a trunk that can fit 2 people's worth of supply).

In a pinch, people can fit in cargo space and vice versa: however each passenger space can only fit half as much cargo as designated cargo capacity and passengers in cargo space are uncomfortable and suffer increased consequences in cases of a crash.

### HEALTH

The Health Attribute of a vehicle determines how much damage it can take and remain functional.

### AUTONOMY INDEX (AI)

The Autonomy Index represents the ability of the vehicle to pilot on its own. When operating independently, vehicles are treated as having a number of dice equal to half their AI (round up), with a bonus equal to their AI. A vehicle's guard, vigilance, and aegis are equal to 5 + (AI times 3). (Remember, vehicles have a penalty to guard equal to their size).



## OTHER TRAITS

The following traits are common on many vehicles, but not mandatory.

### ACCELERATION X

Vehicles with an Acceleration value may increase their speed by an ammount equal to their Acceleration whenever they take the accelerate backup action.

### ARMOR

Some vehicle have armor—this functions like worn armor for characters

### HANDLING X

Some vehicles are particularly easy or difficult to pilot. Add the value of Handling to all Piloting rolls to control the vehicle.

| Speed Value | Top Speed in mph (kph)         | Examples                               |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 0           | 10 mph                         | Human walking or jogging               |
| 1           | 15 mph                         | Human Running                          |
| 2           | 20 mph (30 kph)                | Human Sprinting                        |
| 3           | 30 mph (50 kph)                | Large Ships,, Industrial Equipment     |
| 4           | 45 mph (70 kph)                | Electric Bikes, Horse, Mushushu        |
| 5           | 70 mph (110 kph)               | Gryphons Flying & Running              |
| 6           | 100 mph (160 kph)              | Speed Boats, Most Cars and motorcycles |
| 7           | 150 mph (245 kph)              | Helicopters                            |
| 8           | 230 mph (365 kph)              | Super Cars                             |
| 9           | 340 mph (550 kph)              | Tilt Rotor VTOLS                       |
| 10          | 510 mph (825 kph)              | Commercial Jets                        |
| 11          | 770 mph (1240 kph) (Mach 1)    | Vectored Thrust VTOLs                  |
| 12          | 1200 mph (1900 kph)            | -                                      |
| 13          | 1700 mph (2800 kph) (Mach 2)   | Fighter Jet                            |
| 14          | 2600 mph (4200 kph)            | -                                      |
| 15          | 3900 mph (6300 kph) (Mach 5)   | -                                      |
| 16          | 5800 mph (9400 kph)            | -                                      |
| 17          | 8800 mph (14000 kph) (Mach 11) | State of the Art Hypersonic Jets       |
| +1          | Increase top speed by 50%      | -                                      |



# PILOTING VEHICLES

Any modern vehicle (and some retrofitted non-modern ones) are controlled by complicated cybertech and covered with a suite of sensors and a basic computer capable of performing basic tasks autonomously. Furthermore, the vast majority of vehicles are designed to be piloted remotely by Jumpers. Like any other cybertech device, vehicles have a Range that determines how far away a user can be and issue them commands. Anyone with a Halo or other device capable of interacting wirelessly with cybertech within range can issue commands and observe the sensors of a vehicle as an authorized action. The vehicle will attempt to obey any commands to the best of its ability (see AI, above). Any character with a datajack may remotely operate a vehicle if they are within its range, using their own piloting skill. Furthermore, a character with a datajack may make simultaneous observations out of any number of vehicles within ranged that they have access to, though they take a -1 penalty on Observation checks for each vehicle observing a different area.

Most vehicles (except drones) also have manual controls, allowing the vehicle to be operated when it's range is set to T. Manual controls remain popular among those concerned about rogue breachers, who prefer the personal touch (or simply are going on a long voyage that would bring the vehicle out of range of a stationary operator)

## AUTONOMOUS OPERATION AND CINEMATICS

Vehicles in Subversion are capable of autonomous operation, though their abilities are considerably worse than those of people. In a cinematic, the abilities of autonomous drones and vehicles are assumed to provide a bonus to their operator, providing a bonus to the roll equal to the number of drones or vehicles participating, with a maximum bonus equal to the lowest AI of an assisting drone (you may ignore the assistance of a drone for this purpose if desired). A player may choose to have an autonomous vehicle or drone act instead of them in initiative (e.g. if a drone has necessarily equipment and they do not, or a player is worse at piloting than the vehicle). In this case they are assumed to be supervising and assisting the drone as per the rules for teamwork tests.

### Autonomous Vehicles Offscreen

The rules for autonomous vehicles assume that the narrative focus will always be on the PC, not their vehicles or drones. Sometimes, however, an autonomous vehicle might do something important completely independently of the PC. For most cases, the GM is encouraged to handle this purely narratively, deciding what happens without spending time resolving it with rolls. Of course, if it serves the purposes of fun or narrative tension to play out a lone drone sent out to try and get help while the PCs are all unconscious, then do it!

# VEHICLE CHASSIS

Vehicles in subversion are divided into a number of broad categories, representing different sizes and modes of movement. Each vehicle category has a base set of attributes, these can be modified by choosing options. A vehicle can have a number of **option points (OP)** equal to its Size.

## UNIVERSAL MODIFICATIONS

These modifications are available to all vehicles



## AUTONOMOUS CONVERSION

| +2 fortune

Sacrificing passenger space for improved sensors and computing, the vehicle becomes better capable of operating independently and remotely, in exchange for losing a drivers seat. Gain -1p, but gain +2 AI and +2 on all Observation checks made using this vehicles sensors.

## INCREASED CARGO CAPACITY

| +1 fortune

By converting space from seating to cargo, the vehicle becomes better at transporting cargo. Lose any number of seats (to a minimum of zero), gain +1 c for each seat lost.

## INCREASED SEATING

| +1 fortune

By adding seats, additional space for passengers is gained at the cost of cargo capacity. Gain +1s and -1c. This may be done as many times as desired.

## SMUGGLING COMPARTMENT

| +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This vehicle has secret compartments designed to hide goods or people from detection. Gain +1c, and any attempts to locate the cargo hidden in that compartment gain a -2 to find them. This may be taken multiple times, costing two fortune and 1 OP each time.

# OTHER TRAITS

The following traits are common on many vehicles, but not mandatory.

## ACCELERATION X

Vehicles with an Acceleration value may increase their speed by a number of speed steps equal to their acceleration value when they take the Change Speed backup action they take ([see pg 36](#)).

## ARMOR

Some vehicle have armor—this functions like worn armor for characters

## HANDLING X

Some vehicles are particularly easy or difficult to pilot. Add the value of Handling to all Piloting rolls to control the vehicle.



# | GROUND DRONE



| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 3     | 0    | 1C       | 8      | 4  | 2            | -              |

Ground drones cover a huge range of different forms, ranging from small wheeled delivery drones to armored security drones designed to automatically patrol for intruders.

## GROUND DRONE OPTIONS

### IMPROVED PAYLOAD

I +1 Fortune, 1 OP

Gain +1C

### ATTACK DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

You may mount a weapon to the drone. All attacks using the weapon gain Reliable 3

### ARMORED DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This drone gains 5 Armor

### EFFICIENT CHASSIS

I +4 Fortune

This drone use top of the line components to maximize space for modifications. Gain 1 OP.

### BULKY DRONE

I +2 Fortune

The drone gains +1 size and +4 Health

### BOOSTED POWERTRAIN

I +2 Fortune

Gain +1 Speed and +1 Acceleration

### ADHESIVE GRIPS

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This drone can climb on most surfaces without needing to make a test, and gains reliable 3 on all tests to navigate difficult terrain

## BIKES

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 6     | 2    | 1S / 1C  | 16     | 1  | 2            | Acceleration 2 |

Bikes are any small vehicle, usually with an exposed driver.

## BIKE OPTIONS

### COMMUTER

I -1 Fortune, 0 OP

Designed for city operations, these bikes (sometimes appearing more as scooters) take up less space, in exchange for a lower top speed. Decrease Speed and Size by 1.

### SOUPED UP ENGINE

I +3 Fortune, 1 OP

This vehicle is designed for speed, with an oversized engine and aerodynamic shape. Gain Acceleration 3 and +1 Speed

### SUPER BIKE

I +20 Fortune, 2 OP

This bike is all engine, and its top speed is frankly unsafe., with an oversized engine and aerodynamic shape. Gain Acceleration 3 and +2 Speed



## OFFROAD

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This bike is designed for navigating tough terrain. Decrease Speed by 1, but increase the Obstacle Rating of terrain it's in by 1.

## COMBAT BIKE

I +4 Fortune, 1 OP

This bike is designed for combat, and comes with armor to protect it from incidental damage as well as a mount for weapons with integrated stabilizers. The vehicle gains +4 armor, and the rider gains +1 armor. Additionally, any weapon attached to the bike gains Reliable 3.

# CAR

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 6     | 4    | 5s / 2c  | 32     | 1  | 5            | -              |

## CAR OPTIONS

### ARMORED

I +2 Fortune, 2 OP

This car is designed to protect it's occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.

### OFFROAD

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This car is designed for navigating tough terrain. Decrease Speed by 1, but increase the Obstacle Rating of terrain it's in by 1.

### SOUPED UP ENGINE

I +3 Fortune, 2 OP

This vehicle is designed for speed, with an oversized engine and aerodynamic shape. Gain Acceleration 2 and +1 Speed

### SUPER CAR

I +40 Fortune, 4 OP

This car is all engine, and its top speed is frankly unsafe., with an oversized engine and aerodynamic shape. Gain Acceleration 3 and +2 Speed

# TRUCKS

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 5     | 6    | 2s / 10c | 48     | 1  | 8            | -              |

Trucks in Subversion cover any vehicle larger than a five seat passenger sedan.

## TRUCK OPTIONS

### SOUPED UP ENGINE

I +3 Fortune, 2 OP

This vehicle is designed for speed, with an oversized engine and aerodynamic shape. Gain Acceleration 2 and +1 Speed



## OFFROAD

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This car is designed for navigating tough terrain. Increase the Obstacle Rating of terrain it's in by 1.

## HAULER

I +20 Fortune

This truck is bigger, and carries a lot more. Increase the size of the vehicle by 2, the capacity of the vehicle by 10c, and the health by 32.

## ARMORED

I +2 Fortune, 2 OP

This truck is designed to protect its occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants fully enclosed inside of it gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.

# AQUATIC DRONE

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 3     | 0    | 2c       | 10     | 4  | 2            | -              |

Aquatic drones are commonly used to patrol harbors, though they also find use by fishing crews, shipping companies, and scientists

## AQUATIC DRONE OPTIONS

### IMPROVED PAYLOAD

I +1 Fortune, 1 OP

Gain +1c

### ATTACK DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

You may mount a weapon to the drone. All attacks using the weapon gain Reliable 3

### ARMORED DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This drone gains 5 Armor

### EFFICIENT CHASSIS

I +4 Fortune

This drone use top of the line components to maximize space for modifications. Gain 1 OP.

### BULKY DRONE

I +2 Fortune

The drone gains +1 size and +4 Health

### BOOSTED POWERTRAIN

I +2 Fortune

Gain +1 Speed and +1 Acceleration

### SUBMERSIBLE

I +4 Fortune

This drone can travel underwater to a depth of 300m. -1 Speed



# SMALL BOAT

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 4     | 8    | 4S / 20C | 64     | 1  | 10           | -              |

A vast category of boats less than 10 meters long, small boats are generally limited to a small enclosed area, and tend to be best suited for short trips.

## SMALL BOAT OPTIONS

### SPEED BOAT

I +5 Fortune, 3 OP

This vehicle is designed for speed, trading speed for cargo. Gain +1 Speed, and -5 c.

### SUBMERSIBLE

I +10 Fortune, 5 OP

This vehicle can travel underwater to a depth of 300m. -1 Speed

### ARMORED

I +2 Fortune, 2 OP

This vehicle is designed to protect it's occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.

### BOOSTED POWERTRAIN

I +7 Fortune, 4 OP

Gain +1 Speed and Reliable 3 on any tests related to pulling, pushing or other situations where increased power would be useful

# LARGE BOAT

| Speed | Size | Capacity   | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|------------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 3     | 20   | 20S / 100C | 160    | 1  | 50           | -              |

Covering Boats larger than 10-50 meters long, Large boats have substantially more space for living, cargo, or supplies, and can serve as a base of operations and easily handle long distance trips

## LARGE BOAT OPTIONS

### SUBMERSIBLE

I +25 Fortune, 10 OP

This vehicle can travel underwater to a depth of 1000m. -1 Speed

### BOOSTED POWERTRAIN

I +8 Fortune, 10 OP

Gain +1 Speed and Reliable 3 on any tests related to pulling, pushing or other situations where increased power would be useful

### ARMORED

I +4 Fortune, 2 OP

This vehicle is designed to protect it's occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.



# AERIAL DRONE

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 6     | 0    | 1c       | 6      | 4  | 4            | Acceleration 2 |

Aerial drones are omnipresent in Neo Babylon as delivery drones, and mobile billboards.

## AERIAL DRONE OPTIONS

### IMPROVED PAYLOAD

I +1 Fortune, 1 OP

Gain +1c

### ATTACK DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

You may mount a weapon to the drone. All attacks using the weapon gain Reliable 3

### ARMORED DRONE

I +2 Fortune, 1 OP

This drone gains 3 Armor

### EFFICIENT CHASSIS

I +4 Fortune

This drone use top of the line components to maximize space for modifications. Gain 1 OP.

### BULKY DRONE

I +2 Fortune

The drone gains +1 size and +4 Health

### BOOSTED POWERTRAIN

I +2 Fortune

Gain +1 Speed and +1 Acceleration

# VTOL

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 7     | 8    | 4s / 4c  | 64     | 2  | 70           | Acceleration 2 |

A catch all term for helicopters, multicopters, tilt rotor aircraft, and vectored thrust jets, VTOLs (Vertical take-off and landing) are aircraft that can hover in the air and take off without a lengthy runway. This makes them a common sight among cities (at least among the rich) or for emergency responders, news rooms, or anyone else who wants to quickly descend on a situation.

## VTOL OPTIONS

### TILT ROTOR

I +40 Fortune, 2 OP

Tilt rotor aircraft (and similar designs) use their propellers for lift at low speeds (acting like a helicopter) and as propulsion at high speeds (acting like a plane). This provides them with a greater top speed than a helicopter, at the cost of compactness (as they need wings for high speed flight). Gain +2 Speed, +1 Acceleration, and +2 Size



## VECTORED THRUST JET

I +200 Fortune, 6 OP

Most VTOLs rely on propellers for lift for good reason—jet engines are inefficient at low speeds, requiring massive engines just to keep aloft. There's an upside to this approach though—once you have engines with enough thrust to keep you aloft, you also have engines that give you performance characteristics on par with many jet fighters. Originally developed for military craft, commercial vectored thrust jets combine the maneuverability of a helicopter, the speed of a jet, and the pricetag of a small private island. Gain +4 speed, +3 Acceleration, and +1 Size.

## QUIET OPERATION

I +20 Fortune, 2 OP

Usually marketed as quality of life and to meet restrictive city ordinances, these craft are also the favorites of smugglers and others who try and move around unnoticed. Gain +3 on all piloting tests to avoid notice with this vehicle.

# PLANE

| Speed | Size | Capacity | Health | AI | Fortune Cost | Default Traits |
|-------|------|----------|--------|----|--------------|----------------|
| 9     | 10   | 25 / 10c | 80     | 1  | 60           | Acceleration 2 |

Ditching hoverability lets aircraft go faster, further, and more efficiently, traditional planes (also known as Conventional Take off and landing or CTOL aircraft) form the backbone of long distance air travel. Requiring a large clear area to take off (usually an airport), traditional planes can be much larger than VTOLs. At the pinnacle of modern technologies, hypersonic rocket planes can travel at speeds above Mach 8, capable of reaching anywhere in the world a few hours.

## HAULER

I +20 Fortune, 5 OP

Designed to carry extra weight and with more space, these VTOLs can deliver goods and people to remote places difficult to access by any other method. Gain +12c capacity and +1 Size

## ARMORED

I +10 Fortune, 4 OP

This vehicle is designed to protect it's occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.

## PLANE OPTIONS

### QUIET OPERATION

I +20 Fortune, 2 OP

Usually marketed as quality of life and to meet restrictive city ordinances, these craft are also the favorites of smugglers and others who try and move around unnoticed. Gain +3 on all piloting tests to avoid notice with this vehicle.

### JET

+40 Fortune, 4 OP

This vehicle relies on high performance jet engines, enabling it to go at extremely high speeds. Gain +2 Speed and Acceleration 3



## HAULER

I +40 Fortune, 4 OP

Mid-sized planes like this form the backbone of long distance transportation for people and light goods. Gain +100c, and +2 Size.

## SUPER-HAULER

I +200 Fortune, 4 OP

These large planes can carry everything from commercial goods to cars. Gain +400c, and +6 Size.

## ARMORED

I +8 Fortune, 4 OP

This vehicle is designed to protect it's occupants from attack, and it can take a beating. Attacks on the vehicle or any of its occupants gain +5 armor. This may be taken multiple times.



# Chapter 17: Paradigms

Paradigms represent abilities gained by specific experiences, training, or lifestyles and go beyond simple uses of skills. Some paradigms require skills at a certain level before taking.

Paradigms represent the edges and abilities that set your PC apart. Paradigms are an investment of Fortune, through stanz, time, luck, and favors, and are an integral part of your PC. They cover things you can do with skills, as well as ways of enhancing, expanding, or specializing those skills. They consist of magical abilities and cybernetic enhancements, but also represent extraordinary training as well as unique gear or experiences that assist the PC. All paradigms have the same basic structure and design, but requirements may vary. **We recommend starting characters spend 60 fortune on paradigms (in addition to the 30 free fortune they gain for the Personal Relations Paradigm).**

Investing in a paradigm may require the PC to meet certain prerequisites first, as listed in the paradigm's description.

## LIST OF PARADIGMS

### RELATION PARADIGMS

The [Community Paradigm \(pg 125\)](#) represents the resources and people available to the characters community, as well as the efforts to improve it.

[Personal Relations \(pg 128\)](#) represents the people characters know that are important in their life and/or can help them out.

### TRAINED PARADIGMS

The [Brawler \(pg 131\)](#) is an expert in melee combat and taking damage and keeping on ticking

The [Face \(pg 132\)](#) is an expert at manipulating social situations.

The [Artist \(pg 134\)](#) specializes in creation, inspiring people and moving them to action.

The [Delver \(pg 135\)](#) is an expert in exploring the sparsely populated parts of the world and uncovering ancient ruins and magical artifacts.

The [Magic Hunter \(pg 137\)](#) is a expert on magical practitioners and beings, and how to stop them.

The [Researcher \(pg 139\)](#) is a master of a field of knowledge and an expert in uncovering information from libraries and applying that knowledge to the world.

The [Mastermind \(pg 140\)](#) is an expert planner and manipulator.

The [Rouser \(pg 141\)](#) is a leader and head instigator of a movement.

The [Militaire \(pg 143\)](#) brings military training and expertise to a problem (or a fight.)

The [Watchdog \(pg 144\)](#) is an investigator specializing in uncovering secrets and solving crimes.

The [Scoundrel \(pg 146\)](#) is an expert in thievery, sneaking, and the underworld.

### CYBER PARADIGMS

The [Breach \(pg 148\)](#) is an expert at circumventing security on cybertech and manipulating computers and other high tech devices.

The [Jumper \(pg 150\)](#) is an expert at remotely operating drones and vehicles.

[Cyberware \(pg 151\)](#)

### ARCANE MAGIC

Arcane casters can take abilities from paradigms corresponding to each of the six major colleges of arcane magic, each teaching how to manipulate a specific category of energy.

[The College of Mana \(pg 157\)](#)

[The College of Force \(Kinetic Energy\) \(pg 158\)](#)

[The College of Light \(Light\) \(pg 159\)](#)

[The Alchemical College \(Chemical\) \(pg 160\)](#)

[The College of Storm \(Electricity\) \(pg 164\)](#)[The College of Fire \(Thermal\) \(pg 165\)](#)

### SACRED MAGIC

Each chosen begins with the paradigm corresponding to one mantle embodying an ideal of their chosen power, though they may choose additional mantles as their connection to their power grows.

The [Mantle of Authority \(pg 167\)](#) empowers leaders and compels followers.



The [Mantle of Cultivation \(pg 168\)](#) strengthens and heals those around the chosen and their community.

The [Mantle of Death \(pg 169\)](#) enables the chosen to aid allies in combat and bring (and sometimes forestall) death.

The [Mantle of Passion \(pg 171\)](#) strengthens (and occasionally manipulates) the values, close relations, and impulses of the chosen and those around them.

The [Mantle of Justice \(pg 172\)](#) empowers the chosen to divine, punish, and redeem the guilty, and empower their victims.

The [Mantle of Knowledge \(pg 173\)](#) enables the chosen to learn about their world and the beings around them and exploit that knowledge to their ends.

The [Mantle of Nature \(pg 175\)](#) enables the chosen to survive and manipulate the powers of nature.

The [Mantle of Secrets \(pg 176\)](#) enables the chosen to find secrets and guard those secrets (and themselves) from attention.

## SUBLIME MAGIC

Each Sublime Magic paradigm corresponds to a particular Yojin monastery, devoted to aspecting the practioner to that element.

Yojin following the [Way of Earth \(pg 178\)](#) are tough and resistent to forces attempting to wear them down.

Yojin following the [Way of Water \(pg 179\)](#) are flexible and adapt to the world around them.

Yojin following the [Way of Fire \(pg 180\)](#) are impulsive, dangerous, and unparalled fighters.

Yojin following the [Way of Air \(pg 180\)](#) are quick and mobile, soaring through the air with supernatural speed.

Yojin following the [Way of the Void \(pg 181\)](#) are masters of their inner self as well as controlling the space around them.



# Chapter 18: Relation Paradigms

Relation Paradigms are divided into two categories: community and personal relations. The Community paradigm is built together as a group (see "Creating a Community" on pg 73). Personal relations are chosen as part of character creation (see "Step 8. Choose Relations" on pg 95).

## COMMUNITY PARADIGM

The Community Paradigm is unique in that it belongs to the group as a whole rather than any single character. The group gains 40 fortune to collectively spend as part of community creation.

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The following relations are options for each community. Community relations are tied to the Influence and Regard of the community (by default Influence 4, Regard 5 (see pg 74). This is indicated If a characters regard with their community is increased or decreased, the regard of all members in that community decrease as well. Similarly, if the Influence of a community Increases, the influence of all characters tied to the community increases as well (as they gain the benefits of better infrastructure and resources).

#### ARTIST

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who    | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Artist | Service   | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Arts          |

Your community has a prominent artist capable of crafting a wide range of goods and works that capture the attention of those that hear, see, or otherwise consume them. With a good cause, you can convince them to make something for you, or at least influence their next masterpiece.

#### BARU

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who  | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Baru | Service   | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Magic Arts    |

Your community is home to a congregation led by a prominent Baru who is willing to use their sacred magic (of whatever flavor they might possess), to aid the community and its Envoys.

#### DOCTOR

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who    | Archetype        | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Doctor | Care (see pg 47) | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Science       |

You have a someone skilled in providing medical care, whether they're a Doctor, Medic, Traditional Healer, Vetrinarian or anyone else with practical hands on experience treating a variety of illnesses. They're willing to provide basic care to whoever needs it, and waiving costs to those you can't afford it.

#### EMPLOYER

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who      | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Employer | Employer  | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Influence     |



Maybe they run the biggest business in town, or maybe they're an extra creative entrepreneur, but this character always has room for another set of hands and stanz to hand out for those willing to do some work.

## MAKER

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who  | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Doctor   | Swag*     | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Science       |
| *Pick a specialty as appropriate to their roll and community |           |           |         |               |

Your community is home to a talented maker with a well equipped machine shop and a willingness to create things on commission, or loan out some of their inventory.

## SCIENTIST

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who  | Archetype    | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Doctor   | Information* | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Science       |
| *Pick a specialty as appropriate to their role and community |              |           |         |               |

Someone in your community is an expert in a field of science. Perhaps they're a crop scientist helping out the local farmers, a geologist who's an expert on the local caves, or simply a retired professor or member of a nearby lab. In any case, when it comes to their specialty, they're always willing to lend their expertise.

## TEACHER

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who  | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Teacher  | Teacher*  | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | *             |
| *Pick a primary skill relevant to your community |           |           |         |               |

Your community has a well regarded teacher who has helped and trained anyone in the community who seeks their knowledge. Who the teacher is depends on their specialty and your community—options range from a Baru School teacher teaching about Gods and Magic, a piloting instructor training new jumpers, an old yojin teaching self defense, a thief training protegies for a share of the cut, or anyone else happy to share their skills with others.

## ARTIST

**Cost:** 10 Fortune

| Who    | Archetype | Influence | Regard  | Primary Skill |
|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Doctor | Service   | +0 (4)    | +5 (10) | Arts          |

Your community has a prominent artist capable of crafting a wide range of goods and works that capture the attention of those that hear, see, or otherwise consume them. With a good cause, you can convince them to make something for you, or at least influence their next masterpiece.

## COMMUNITY RELATION TEMPLATES

The following templates serve as the basis for the other options. Add a primary skill ([see pg 46](#)), archetype ([see pg 47](#)), and maybe an aspect ([see pg 49](#)), and you can customize them for whatever notable characters you want

## PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

10 Fortune

Influence: +0 (4)

Regard: +5 (10)

This character is a notable helpful member of the community, happy to lend a hand to most people in the community a well beloved for it.

## PATRON

10 Fortune

Influence: +2 (6)

Regard: +0 (5)

This character is particularly notable in the community, with a remarkable amount of influence or skill. While they're usually willing to make small favors for the Envoys, they are busy or otherwise distracted from helping out.



## EAGER ASSISTANT

10 Fortune  
Influence: -2 (2)  
Regard: +10 (15)

This character is utterly devoted to the community and its Envoys, and willing to help out however they can, despite their limited abilities.

### Customizing Relations

For simplicity and speed of creation, each relation is given a standardized cost, Influence, and Regard, however, players may increase or decrease the cost of relations by +1 Influence for each 5 fortune of cost, and +1 Regard for each 2 points of regard. Each relation costs at least one fortune, and starting relations may not cost more than 20 fortune.

## RESOURCES

Some assets are not people, but things, places, traditions, or even ideas. Resources are available to any member of the community that has a positive Regard with the community. Resources always count as having the same regard with PCs as the community and cannot have their regard changed apart from the community. Available resources are listed below:

### LAND TRUST

10 Fortune  
The community has communal housing that it can provide to their Envoys or other who need it. For every 5 regard you have with your community, you decrease the cost of lifestyle maintenance by 1, to a minimum of 0. ([see "Maintain Lifestyle" on pg. 33](#)).

## PERFORMANCE SPACE

10 Fortune  
This is a resource where PCs and NPCs alike can promote, indulge, train, and share their artistic abilities and passions. Characters may spend 1 downtime action to make an Arts test while performing here. Characters may also spend 1 downtime action to attend a performance. If a PC is performing, the TN for the arts test is 13. If they succeed, those performing and attending gain 3 animity or 1 Grit (which can be increased by a dynamic or critical success). On a failure, no grit or animity is gained, and on a dynamic failure, all PCs involved lose 3 animity or 1 grit.

### ELLU ESHIRTU

10 Fortune  
Sacred Shrine – A place of pilgrimage where the gods are said to move more often and more clearly. Communities benefit from these shrines due to pilgrims, but also spiritually. Pilgrims say the shrine grounds them and gives them courage to face the world.

Spend 1 downtime action to visit the Ellu and gain 3 Adamant until the next downtime.

## EQUIPMENT

10 Fortune  
Your community has a communal supply of gear. This might represent an armory, a motor pool, special communications equipment, or any material object you can think of. The gear is available based on the table below:

| Gear Cost     | Availability   |
|---------------|--|
| <5 Fortune    | Available to everyone in the community.                      |
| 5-10 Fortune  | Readily available for one person at a time                   |
| 11-20 Fortune | Available most of the time.                                  |
| 21+ Fortune   | Available for exceptionally important uses to the community. |



## SPECTACLE/WONDER

1 10 Fortune

Some things in life are so beautiful, so awe-inspiring, that they demand recognition. This is such a place, and it is in your community. Players and GM should describe what this spectacle or wonder is and why it is so fascinating. Players can spend time showing others around, increasing their love for it, and helping others fall in love with it as well.

Spend 1 Downtime action to recover 1 grit and 2 animity, and add 2 fortune to the community.

## DEN OF INIQUITY

1 10 Fortune

If your community has a den of iniquity, choose 1 type of indulgence and describe the Den of Iniquity.

When you take the indulge impulse downtime action ([see "Indulge Impulse" on pg 32](#)) for an indulgence that matches the Den of Iniquity, you may spend a fortune. If you do you gain 5 grit and the GM gains 3 grit.

## COMMUNITY GARDEN

1 10 Fortune

You have a vegetable garden, small farm, or other source of food capable of covering some of your community's food needs. For every 5 regard you have with your community, you decrease the cost of lifestyle maintenance by 1, to a minimum of zero ([see "Maintain Lifestyle" on pg 33](#)).

# COMMUNITY UPGRADES

The following options are available to upgrade the community

## UPGRADE INFLUENCE

20 Fortune, Requires 100 fortune spent on community paradigm total (excluding starting fortune)

Bit by bit, you've made your community stronger and more notable. You increase the influence of your community by one. This increases the influence of all relations (both community relations and personal relations) tied to your community. This may be taken multiple times, each time requires 100 additional fortune spent on the community paradigm.

## UPGRADE CASTE

20 Fortune, Requires 100 fortune spent on community paradigm total (excluding starting fortune)

You've build up the wealth, infrastructure, prevailing wages and connections to slowly increase the standard of living in your community. Each player may choose to increase their caste by one level (either now or in the future) by taking a debt ([see pg 95](#)) (gaining no fortune from it, as the fortune instead goes to increasing their standard of living). A given character may only benefit from this once.

This may be taken multiple times, each time requires 100 additional fortune spent on the community paradigm and allows each character to take advantage of the caste increase on additional time.

# PERSONAL RELATIONS

Each character begins with 30 fortune to spend on this category, this may be augmented with additional fortune from character creation.

Each relation requires picking one option, which gives their Influence, a measure of how capable they are ([see "Influence" on pg 45](#)), their Regard, a measure of how much a relation likes you ([see "Regard" on pg 41](#)). Additionally for each relation pick a primary skill (representing which skill they are best at), and an archetype representing the primary way in which they aid you ([see "Relation Archetypes" on pg 47](#)). Optionally, you may choose an aspect to modify how you interact with them ([see "Relation Aspects" on pg 49](#)).

Example relations created with these rules can be found below ([see "Example Relations" on pg 130](#)).

## LINKING RELATIONS WITH FACTIONS

Personal Relations characters gain from the Personal Relations Paradigm reflect people they know from any of their walks of life. Because of this, many (but not all) of their relations may part of their community, or a relevant faction (either one created in [5. Factions \(pg 78\)](#), from an ideology ([see pg 91](#)), or chosen from the Minor or Major Faction abilities below.



Doing so links the relation with the faction or community: whenever (after character creation) the regard or influence of that faction or community go up, all linked characters also go up. This can be a useful (and effective) way to boost a bunch of relations at once as you build your relation with a group—but it also means that if anything bad happens you might find that suddenly none of your relations are willing to help you out...

Relations linked to a Faction are generally listed with a modifier for their Influence and Regard, indicating how much lower or higher their values are than the underlying faction or community (e.g. Regard +5 (10) indicates that the regard is 5 higher than the corresponding faction, for a total value of 10).

## MINOR RELATION

I 2 Fortune

You have a relationship with someone that is either only marginally stronger than your overall relation with the community, or with someone who is less able to help you than the typical aid you can find in the community. Pick one of the following options:

- ✘ Bigshot: Influence 6 Regard 1. You know someone who can do a lot, and they take your calls—but not much more than that without convincing
- ✘ Personal Connection: Influence 4 Regard 6. You know a typical member of the community on a first name basis, which makes them easier to find and gives you a slight edge in asking for favors
- ✘ Little Guy: Influence 2, Regard 11. You have a strong relationship with someone of relatively modest skills, but they're still willing to help you out from time to time
- ✘ Dependent: Influence 1, Regard 15. You have someone only marginally able to help you out, but nonetheless who has a deep relationship with you.

You may take this option as many times as you want, each time gaining a different minor relation.

## NORMAL RELATION

I 10 Fortune

You have a substantial relationship with someone that can provide you with substantial benefits in your work. Pick one of the following options:

- ✘ Sponsor: Influence 6 Regard 5. You know someone more competent than you who's willing to do you some favors from time to time.
- ✘ Friend: Influence 4, Regard 10. You have a strong, capable friend you can rely on.

- ✘ Sidekick: Influence 2, Regard 15. You have a best friend, family member, or other who is willing to back you up against anything, even if their backing is only worth so much.

You may take this option as many times as you want, each time gaining a different normal relation.

## MAJOR RELATION

I 20 Fortune

You have a substantial relationship with someone that can provide you with substantial benefits in your work. Pick one of the following options:

- ✘ Friend in High Places: Influence 8 Regard 5. You have a VIP willing to extend minor favors to you.
- ✘ Patron: Influence 6 Regard 10. You have a mentor, family member, or other relation more influential or powerful than you but nonetheless solidly in your corner.
- ✘ Ally: Influence 4, Regard +15. You have a competent friend or family member willing to help you however they can (as long as you don't take advantage of them).

You may take this option as many times as you want, each time gaining a different major relation.

## MINOR FACTION

I 10 Fortune

You have a connection to an additional faction that is either less powerful than your community or that you have a substantially weaker connection too. You gain one of the following options:

- ✘ Indifferent Institution: Gain the faction as a an Influence 4 Regard 0 relation
- ✘ Friendly Group: Gain the Faction as an Influence 3, Regard 5 relation
- ✘ Devoted Club: Gain the Faction as an Influence 2, Regard 10 Relation

## MAJOR FACTION

I 20 Fortune

You have a connection to an additional faction that is either less powerful than your community or that you have a substantially weaker connection too. You gain one of the following options:

- ✘ Indifferent Institution: Gain the faction as a an Influence 6 Regard 0 relation
- ✘ Friendly Group: Gain the Faction as an Influence 4, Regard 5 relation
- ✘ Devoted Club: Gain the Faction as an Influence 3, Regard 10 Relation



## UPGRADE COMMUNITY RELATION

I 10 Fortune

You have an especially strong relation with a community relation. Increase your Base Regard with them by 5 (to a maximum of 15). You may take this ability multiple times, applying it to either the same or different relations.

## UPGRADE FACTION RELATION

I 20 Fortune

You have an especially strong relation with a faction relation. Increase your Base Regard with them by 5 (to a maximum of 15). You may take this ability multiple times, applying it to either the same or different relations.

### Example Relations

| Who                           | Community/<br>Faction                | Description  | Archetype/<br>Aspect   | Primary Skill                  | Influence | Regard        | Fortune |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Little Sibling                | Community                            | You're close to a young sibling who you are generally protective of, but will do anything for you and has a remarkable knowledge of current pop culture.   | Information:<br>Pop Culture  | Humanities                     | 1         | 15            | 2       |
| Old Friend                    | Community                            | You have an old friend who never developed a particular knack, but they own an old beater of a truck and are willing to help you move stuff with it whenever you ask   | Transporter  | Piloting                       | 2         | 11            | 2       |
| Baru                          | Consecrated<br>(Ideology<br>Faction) | You're a devout believer in the wisdom of the gods, and show up to prayers often enough that the local Baru knows who you are and is willing to provide you with advice and a bit of help if you ask                                   | Service  | Magic Arts                     | 4         | 6             | 2       |
| Former Employer               | Community                            | You did a small job a while back for an important member of your community, and while they won't give you a handout, they'll at least listen to you.   | Employer   | Influence                      | 6         | 1             | 2       |
| Confidante                    | Community                            | You have a friend who is always willing to listen to you and help cheer you up when you've run into a rough spot and need to clear up some animity damage.   | Care/Supportive  | Arts                           | 2         | 15            | 10(+15) |
| Obnoxiously Competent Sibling | Corporation                          | You love your sibling (and they love you), but that doesn't stop a little bit of a rivalry as they seem to excel at everything they do and have gotten an important position in the legal department of a nearby prominent corporation | Connection,<br>Service, Inform-<br>ation: Law/<br>Multitalented +2,<br>Paternalistic | Humanities,<br>Influence, Arts | 4         | 10<br>(5/15*) | 20†     |
| Crime Boss                    | Crime<br>Syndicate                   | You've gotten in the good graces of an influential crime boss, who might be willing to do some things for you—if you'll do some things for them...   | Connection/<br>Transactional   | Influence                      | 6         | 5             | 10      |
| Rock Star                     | None                                 | Long ago, you were friends, but they made it big. They promise you that next time they're around they'll hang out... but until then they're happy to hook you up with the various people in their orbit.                               | Connection/<br>Unreliable  | Arts                           | 8         | 5             | 20      |
| VIP (Very Important Parent)   | Community                            | One of your parents was busy changing the world, and less busy in your life. They never have had time for little favors or the things that mattered to you—but if push came to shove they would do whatever they could to save you.    | Connection/<br>Paternalistic   | Science                        | 6         | 10<br>(5/15*) | 20      |
| Best Friend                   | Community                            | Your Best Friend has been with you every step of the way, and is a competent breacher you can rely on whenever you need technical assistance (and vice versa).   | Service  | Cybertech                      | 4         | 15            | 20      |

\*Reflects Modifier from Paternalistic †Reflects Cost from Multi-talented



# Chapter 19: Trained Paradigms

Trained paradigms represent specific and intense training in the totally mundane; the ways in which what your PC has experienced and worked at sets them apart. They cover specialized training in professions, like the Researcher paradigm, as well as more innate or generally applicable paradigms like Brawler and Face. Often, these paradigms represent roles that people play in society and how they are described by others they encounter.

## BRAWLER

*The only honest way to fight is up close and personal. There's no hiding exactly what you mean to do, no way to avoid looking them in their eyes.*

— Samu Enlimar, Heavyweight Boxing Champion

### REFLEXIVE COMBAT

| 10 Fortune

For good or ill, you're always ready for a fight.

In the first round of any cinematic, you may add +1d6 to combat rolls while suffering -2 Guard.

### MARTIAL ARTS

| 10 Fortune

You know how to use your body as a weapon. Your unarmed attacks do 2d6 damage instead of 1d6.

### GRAPPLER

| 10 Fortune

You've trained in wrestling and grappling, and are able to immobilize and pin an opponent. If you wanna shut down a fight, you don't need to be strong. You just need to know where to apply the pressure.

You may use Melee Combat instead of Physicality for all grapple-related rolls. A target grappled by you has an additional consequence.

These paradigms primarily focus on growing and enhancing skills, and are used in conjunction with them; paradigms of this type are often gated behind an appropriate skill rank. Knowledge and abilities don't come freely after all.

### DISARM

| 10 Fortune

As a main action, make a melee combat check against the guard of a target in T range. On a success, you may knock a held item (such as a tool or weapon) from their hands onto the ground. On a dynamic success you may instead take the item into your possession. On a critical success, you may take an additional main action to immediately use the stolen item.

### BLOCK

| 10 Fortune, Interrupt

When you are targeted by a melee attack roll, you may spend 1 grit to activate this ability. Roll a melee combat test and replace your guard with the result of the roll.

### RIPOSTE

| 10 Fortune, Interrupt. Requires Block and two other brawler paradigm abilities

When you use the Block ability, if your roll is greater than the attackers guard you may spend 3 grit to treat your roll as a melee attack against them, doing damage as normal.

### GRUNT

| 10 Fortune

You are one of many that work towards one purpose and toughen yourself as the front-line fodder commanded forward.



When you spend grit to block health damage, each point of grit blocks 2 points of health damage.

## GRUNT 2

| 20 Fortune, requires Grunt 1 and two other brawler paradigm abilities

You're even tougher than the tough guys.

When you spend grit to block health damage, each point of grit blocks 4 points of health damage.

## STREET TOUGH

| 10 Fortune

You've learned many lessons the hardest way.

1/session, you may reduce incoming health damage by 5.

## STREET TOUGH 2

| 15 Fortune, Requires: Street Tough.

You've taught yourself to be immune to many forms of pain.

Increase benefit from Street Tough to: 2/session, you may reduce incoming health damage by 10.

## BLOODED ENFORCER

| 20 Fortune. Requires: Street Tough, Street Tough 2, & at least 1 other Brawler choice.

You can dish it out as well as take it when you have to, hitting below the belt.

Increase benefit from Street Tough to: 2/session, you may reduce incoming health damage by 15 and 1/session, add 2 to a successful melee attack.

# FACE

*You win 100% of fights that don't happen.*  
— Davina of House Harra, Envoy

Some options in this paradigm give pressure points. Pressure points can be spent, on a 1 to 1 basis, to lower the Vigilance of a target before a particular action. Pressure points are lost when used or when a cinematic ends.

## KNEECAP

| 10 Fortune

You attack with a weapon, not wanting to kill, but to cripple.

Main Action. A successful attack with this strike only does 1 health damage, but on a Dynamic success, applies a consequence (one instance of dulled) to the target until healed. On a critical success, 2 consequences are applied.

## THUG

| 20 Fortune. Requires: At least three other Brawler choices

You give no thought to consequences, only respect. Take 3 health damage, and make a melee attack as normal. If successful, this attack does 6 extra damage.

## PUNCH IT

| 10 Fortune. Requires: At least three other Brawler choices

Who needs to pick a lock when you can break down the door?

Where possible, probable, or dramatically appropriate, and at GM's discretion, you may take 5 health damage and make a melee attack in place of any other skill roll.

## TAKE THE HIT

| 10 Fortune, Interrupt

No, this isn't the most fun or enjoyable use of this skill. But... it may keep your pals alive. And for some, that's the most important thing.

When an ally within T range is targeted by an attack, you may spend 1 grit to use this ability and make a Physicality test. If your result greater than the attack roll, the attack instead targets you. You gain 3 additional armor against this attack.

## DON'T GIVE UP

| 10 Fortune. Main Action

Spend 1 grit. Target Ally gains +2D6 and is inspired on their next roll.



## THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED!

I 10 Fortune

During each Downtime, you may reset a single relations regard to their base regard once for free.

## BACK OFF!

I Interrupt. 10 Fortune

When an ally would take animity damage from an attack, you may take it instead. Gain 1 pressure point.

## I CAN SEE THROUGH YOU

I 10 Fortune. Interrupt.

Use when you've rolled a critical success against an opponent's vigilance. Ask one of the following questions about the target. The GM must answer honestly. Gain 1 pressure point.

- ✂ What is their current mood/Regard?
- ✂ How could I help them?
- ✂ What is their motivation?
- ✂ How can they be hurt?

## LOOK OVER THERE!

I 10 Fortune, Main Action

You know how to grab attention. Roll deception versus target's Vigilance. On a success, the target takes a -5 penalty on any tests targeting someone other than you as long as you use a backup action each turn to continue distracting the target.

## LANGUAGE IS THE BRUSH OF THE SOUL

10 Fortune

Understanding a language is caring about a person, their history, their soul.

Gain 1 language for every rank in Humanities you have above 3. This applies to ranks earned before and after taking this ability.

## I KNOW A GAL

I 10 Fortune

Doing work for others may not seem to pay off, but build up enough favors and everyone's in your debt. You may spend 2 fortune or 5 grit at any time to reveal a previously undescribed minor relation (see "Personal Relations" on pg 128), you gain that relation.

## WARNINGS AND RUMORS OF WARNINGS

I 10 Fortune

During downtime, you may ask the GM if there are any rumors (see p.XX). The GM will give you rumors earlier than the normal passive rumors. (GMs usually tell rumors when their action progress is at half. When a PC uses this ability, reveal rumors at one quarter progress, or reveal imminent actions. You may even reveal more than normal)

## CHARM

I 10 Fortune

Main action. You attempt to smooth talk an NPC with your smile, friendliness, looks, or agreeable chatter.

You gain 1 pressure point whenever you take the **Charm** action (pg 42) all such rolls are **Inspired**.

## CALM

I 10 Fortune

Main Action. You've been in this situation before. If you don't say something quick to diffuse the tension, somebody's gonna get hurt.

This ability functions just like deescalate, but gain roll 1 additional dice and gain 1 pressure point.

## THREAT

I 10 Fortune

When you successfully use the **Threaten** action (pg 43), you decrease their vigilance by 3 for the rest of the scene. If you inflict Animity damage as part of a threat, increase the damage by 2.

## I'LL GET US IN

Requires: At least three other Face choices, 10 Fortune.

I don't need to be smart, strong, or rich. I know what people want.

Where possible, probable, or dramatically appropriate, and at GM's discretion, you may take 5 animity damage and make an influence or deception roll in place of any other skill roll.

## LOOK AT THESE EYES

I 10 Fortune

On a successful first impressions roll you gain 2 pressure points.



## SHAKE IT OFF

I 10 Fortune

Everyone talks, but if you try to listen to everyone, you'll ruin yourself.

Gain Adamant +2: Social Actions

## NETWORKING

I 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other Face Choices.

You know lots of people. Gain 40 fortune worth of relations ([see "Personal Relations" on pg 128](#)), and whenever you use Boost Relationship ([see "Interact With Relation" on pg 32](#)), you may boost base regard by up to three points (spending fortune as normal).

# ARTIST

*We are the sum of our tears*  
—Graffiti on the Breach Wall, author unknown

While often underrated, it is the Artists who can make a society succeed or fail, even while being difficult to quantify. While there are many facets to creation, this paradigm encompasses many: from visual works, to the movement arts, and the performing arts as well. Many of the Fine Arts enjoyed in Neo Babylon society are rooted in archetypes: the stock characters of commedia dell'arte, the Kashimogo markings of Noh theatre, and more all use familiar symbols and dominate the artistic space of high society. In the Undercity and elsewhere, however, the iconoclastic arts of a new generation clash with the establishment in ways that exemplify that creativity, while sometimes threatened, has yet to be extinguished in the world of Subversion.

Taking any abilities from the Artist paradigm requires Arts 3.

## FINE ARTS

I 10 Fortune

You've been trained in the "fine arts" of society and have a knowledge of their structure, intent, and traditions that undergird civil society.

**Passive:** Gain +1d6 to Influence tests with individuals from Upper-Middle Caste or higher.

## THE LONG GAME

I Requires: Charm, 20 Fortune

You can get anyone on board, if you have enough time.

This ability can only be used outside of a cinematic, and can only be used once per scene. Roll an influence test versus target's vigilance. On a success, you gain a special pressure point that isn't lost until used and can only be used on this same target.

## GIFTED

I 10 Fortune

You imbue your work with remarkable emotional content tapping into the feelings and emotions that every person shares. Channeling your emotions that way helps others find their own way.

**Ability:** 1/episode, spend 1 Grit, you may undertake an artistic endeavor that restores 3 Grit to an ally.

## INSPIRE

I 10 Fortune

You can inspire people to help restore their Animity. As part of resting, you can tell a story, perform, or just make something beautiful to help bring people back to functioning.

Make a TN 10 Arts role, on a success, restore 5 animity damage. A character can only benefit from Inspire once per Session.

## POPULAR CULTURE

I 10 Fortune

You've kept your finger on the pulse of the art forms and memes making their way through society.

**Passive:** Gain +1d6 to Influence tests with individuals from Lower-Middle Class Caste or lower.

## POINT OF INTEREST

I 10 Fortune

You've created something that others love to appreciate. As a result, your community has become known for your work.



1/downtime, you can use a downtime action to give a tour, discuss art with fans, or teach others the basics of your art. You gain 1 Fortune and the fortune cost for an community paradigms is decreased by 2 until the start of the next downtime.

## CHOSEN FAMILY

I 10 Fortune

While many see artists as singularly reclusive and anti-social, the truth is many find solace in collectives or practice art together in a troupe or community. Your Community gains a Spectacle Resource.

## QUICK CHANGE

I 10 Fortune

Costuming is an art, and every time you don a new one, you get better at the illusion. You may use either Arts or Deception when making a test to deceive someone else with a disguise.

## CATHARSIS

I 20 Fortune, Requires: Gifted.

Art of all forms does not just inspire and distract, but brings itself to a place where the audience comes away relieved and refreshed. You help people through that emotional journey.

You may use the gifted ability twice per session, and using it does not require grit.

# DELVER

*If you're not going to go off the well traveled paths, you might as well just curl up with a good book and read about the people who did the travelling.*

— Hiomaris Chemico, Delver and Travel Writer

Delvers are the people who have specialized in going out to the areas still unknown or at least outside the watchful eyes of the Baru. The Delver paradigm reflects not only the wilderness and exploratory nature of the Delvers as a whole, but also how their training and habits become the ways of a street urchin or city rat left to explore and survive an urban landscape as Delvers will so often in the wilderness. Combining learned knowledge with a quick wit and physical fortitude, and near preternatural recognition of dangers, Delvers are universally sought after.

## ICONIC TOOL

I 20 Fortune

You have an iconic tool you use in your performances to create your art, be it a mask, an instrument, a costume, or other item.

Gain +2 DP to Arts tests when using your iconic tool.

## SCRIPT INTO PERFORMANCE

I 20 Fortune

In learning how intent and inspiration become finished work, you have gained insight into the common peoples' condition and how people think. Your authorship or directorial abilities allow you to see what the public is doing.

Gain +1D6 to any tests using Awareness where a crowd or audience is involved and +1D6 to Influence tests.

## CREATE A SHALMU

20 Fortune\*

You use your incredible skill to attempt to create a shalmu, or an image, of one of the divine powers. In order to create a shalmu, you must have a sacred mantle or join with someone who does. If you have a sacred mantle yourself, you must spend a downtime action and succeed on a TN 13 Arts test. If you do not have a sacred mantle, you and someone who does have a sacred mantle may both give up a downtime action, and you must succeed in a TN 13 Arts test, and the other person must succeed in a TN 13 Magic Arts test.

## DELVER'S AWARENESS

I 10 Fortune

You function best when off the beaten trail, and you look to learn instead of just following someone else's path. Sometimes, seeing is as simple as watching the weather.

You have +2D6 to Observation rolls when not in your community. You cannot naturally lose track of true north, you can tell what the weather will be within 24 hours, and you can sense when weather patterns are unnatural.



## READY FOR ANYTHING

I 10 Fortune

Proper Prior Planning is part of your daily routine. You have drilled what to do in the case of an emergency.

**Ability:** At any time outside a cinematic, you may spend 1 Grit to reroll any number of dice on your last roll.

**Ability:** At any time outside a cinematic, you may spend 3 Grit to force a reroll of any number of dice on the last roll by an opponent.

## LET ME HELP YOU WITH THAT

I 10 Fortune

Others may not know what to look for, but you do. Mysterious, ancient, or just different, you have a sense for how not to mess things up.

Whenever you succeed on a group test, all allies gain Reliable 3 on that test.

## DANGER SENSE

I 10 Fortune

It is almost impossible to catch you with your guard down. A near constant state of alertness permeates through your being.

**Passive:** Choose urban or wild. When in that environment, you have +4 Vigilance (or +2D6 to Observation tests depending on the context) when detecting a danger, threat, or surprise to yourself or your allies. This includes traps. May be taken twice to gain other choice.

## BY WHIP OR SHOVEL

I 10 Fortune

You and your more mundane implement have been through a lot together. You can use it in ways most would find... unwieldy.

**Passive:** Choose a non-weapon object. Object. You may use that object in combat as if it were a melee weapon dealing 2d6 damage in T range with the nonlethal quality. Additionally, choose one of the following: A) On a dynamic or Critical success, target is grappled. Or B) add Brawn to Damage.

## KEEP UP

I 10 Fortune

You are skilled at leading a caravan or group of people through treacherous or dangerous parts of the world.

**Passive:** Every one following your lead has +1d6 on all observation rolls to stay safe while you are leading.

## WATCH IT!

I 10 Fortune

You can spot hidden ambushes, animals, traps, and other harms even when you aren't looking for them. As a result, you can spend your focus on others

**Ability:** Spend 1 Grit to replace an ally's defense or roll with one of your own when avoiding a hidden attack or trap.

## SCOUTING AHEAD

10 Fortune

Taking your place at the vanguard, you run ahead and back often, making sure your team is not walking into certain death.

When you're not in a city, you can scout the unknown ahead of your team. Make an observation test vs. a TN set by the GM, and if you succeed, each member of the team gains 1 Grit for use when at a location you scouted or using information you gathered. This grit can be doubled or tripled by dynamic or critical successes. If you fail the test, however, the any concealment will start at -5 at that location.

## READY FOR ANYTHING

I 20 Fortune, 3 other Delver abilities

Proper Prior Planning is part of your daily routine. You have drilled what to do in the case of an emergency.

**Ability:** At any time outside a cinematic, you may spend 1 Grit to reroll any number of dice on your last roll. Gain reliable 2 on all dice rerolled this way.

**Ability:** At any time outside a cinematic, you may spend 3 Grit to force a reroll of any number of dice on the last roll by an opponent.

## YOU CAN'T SURPRISE A DELVER

I 20 Fortune. Requires: Danger Sense, 3 other Delver choices

**Upgrade:** If a roll against your vigilance would still succeed after using Danger Sense, spend 1 grit to add 5 to your vigilance.

## MYSTERIOUS ENCOUNTER

I 20 Fortune. Requires: 3 Delver choices

You touched something once, or saw a strange creature... and it left something behind; intuition. You have an innate sense for obscure artifacts and treasures.



You gain inspired and reliable 3 on all tests dealing with any magical artefacts or ruins more than 100 years old.

## MAGIC HUNTER

*Do not cower before a war mage, for it gives them the time they need to cast. A blade is faster than a spell—attack quickly then retreat before they have time to retort. If they ward against arrows, strike them with fire, if they ward against fire, choke them with poison.*

— Alexander the Unifier's address to his troops before the defeat of the Babylonian army at Byzantium

Magical abilities are rare among the population (though less so among the elite of society). Most people lacking any innate magical ability ignore the workings on of magic, leaving it to those with the ability to practically interact with it—a tendency supported by the elites of Neo Babylon which seek to keep a tight control over magical knowledge. Magic hunters are those without magical ability who nonetheless become experts in how magic works—either out of curiosity in the metaphysics of the universe, or more practically, in how to deal with magical creatures and practitioners.

Taking any abilities in the Magic Hunter paradigm requires Magic Arts 2. A character who takes the Magic Hunter paradigm generally may not take any sublime, sacred, or arcane paradigms (and the magic hunter paradigm is generally unavailable to any characters who have already taken such abilities), see sidebar below.

### MAGIC, IN THEORY

I 10 Fortune

Gain a bonus equal to your ranks in Magic Arts on all Magic Arts checks related to identifying a magical creature, spell, or effect, or on any checks to know anything about the theoretical basis of magic.

### MUNDANE COUNTERMEASURES

I 10 Fortune

You understand how magic works, and crucially, how to prevent it from working well. Gain a bonus to aegis equal to your ranks in Magic Arts.

## GO LEFT FOR TREASURE

I 20 Fortune

Requires: 3 Delver choices

You have a sense for the patterns of places. +2D6 and Reliable 3 on all Science and Observation Rolls related to architecture or structures.

## UNDERSTAND THE PATTERNS OF MAGIC

I 10 Fortune

You gain reliable 3 on all Shine Perception rolls. Reduce the TN to spot magical effects with an Observation roll by your ranks in Magic Arts.

## BREAK THE FLOW OF MAGIC

I 10 Fortune

Through careful study, you've learned the process others use to channel magic, and have learned how to distract and disrupt casters when to take actions against them in a way to disrupt their magical abilities. When you inflict damage (either health or animity) on magical character, you may spend one grit for one of the following effects, as appropriate to their magical type:

- ✂ Increase any dissonance from a recently cast spell by one
- ✂ Negate one bar of harmonized mana
- ✂ Negate the effects of all meditations until the end of your next turn
- ✂ Give a temporary consequence to a spirit or magical creature that last for one hour

## UNDERSTAND CREATURES OF MAGIC

I 10 Fortune

You gain Reliable 3 on all Influence and Deception Checks against spirits or other magical creatures

## A MIND APART FROM MAGIC

I 10 Fortune

You gain Adamant 4 against all magical effects.



## MANA BREAKER

20 Fortune, Break the Flow of magic and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

On a dynamic or critical success when you use Break the Flow of magic, you may additionally pick the following effect, as appropriate to their magical type:

- ✂ All unattuned dissonance is immediately taken as animity damage
- ✂ All bars of harmonized mana are lost, the caster takes 1 health damage per harmonized bar of mana
- ✂ One meditation is ended
- ✂ Give a consequence to a spirit or magical creature (this consequence is healed normally)

## ELUDE MAGIC

20 Fortune, Mundane Countermeasures and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

After learning the result of a roll that targets your aegis, you may spend 5 grit to increase your Aegis by 5.

## NEGATE MAGICAL EFFECT

20 Fortune, Mundane Countermeasures and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

You have learned a number of techniques to allow yourself and others another chance to resist magical effects, either by taking advantage of the limitations of magic or helping others directly resist its effects through mundane means. You may make a Magic Arts check against any ongoing effect that targeted Aegis as a main action. If your roll is greater than the roll of the original effect, any ongoing effects from that ability end (this does not apply to damage the effect has already done).

## DISRUPT MAGICAL SOUL

30 Fortune, Mana Breaker and 5 other abilities from this paradigm

Your studies of how magical practitioners and creatures use magic has progressed to the degree that you have learned how to inflict wounds that disrupt their ability to channel mana until they have the chance to recover. On a critical success when you use Break the flow of magic, you may make a Magic Arts roll against the aegis of your target. If you succeed, they lose the ability to use any magical abilities (such as from a magical paradigm or the special abilities of a spirit or magical creature). for the next hour. On a dynamic success on this roll, the effect lasts until they next take the rest up action. On a critical success, the target instead gains a downtime progress track with 20 progress on it. The character is unable to use magic until the progress track is reduced to zero.

### Magical Magic Hunters

Most magic hunters do not practice magic, as the effort required to understand magic from an outsiders perspective requires a completely different perspective than those of an actual magic user. Those with the potential for using magic find that the detailed study of magic as a Magic Hunter is difficult to mesh with the magical intuition required to use it—the mental processes to channel magic seem almost completely distinct from how it appears to work from the outside. Nonetheless, some rare individuals have been rumored to reconcile the two mindsets, or at least learn both and switch between them as need be. With GM permission, a character with magic paradigm abilities may also take abilities from the Magic Hunter paradigm. To reflect the difficulty, the fortune cost to improve Magic Arts skill is doubled, as are abilities in the Magic Hunter paradigm. Similarly a Magic Hunter who discovers and wishes to use their magical abilities also pays double for Magic Arts skill improvement, and must pay again the cost of any existing Mage hunter paradigm abilities they have before they can take a magical paradigm abilities.



# RESEARCHER

*"Time after time the river has risen and flooded. The insect leaves the cocoon to live but a moment. How long can the eye behold the sun? From the start, nothing at all has truly lasted."*

— Gavash Adagin, Archivist

A mystery ready to be solved and a story waiting to be told. Researchers are the textual counterparts to investigators. Got a mass of documents that need to be sifted through? Call a researcher. Want to find the blueprints to that building you're going to hit later this week? Your researcher knows the right archivist and the right questions to ask. Want to put together the story of your community and tell it to the people who can help? The local researcher is your go-to. All they had to do to get to this point was read all the books. Yes. All of them.

## WELL VERSED

1 10 Fortune

The study of people includes the study of how different forces will affect the world.

You gain +2D6 to Humanities rolls when trying to understand a language, background, or custom of a people, place, or community that isn't your own.

## LINGUISTIC PRACTICE

1 10 Fortune

You gain one extra language for each rank in humanities you have.

## METHODICAL RESEARCH

1 10 Fortune

When you prepare for trouble ([see pg 33](#)) using Humanities or Science, you reduce the GM Grit by an additional 1 point and shift a progress track by an additional 3 points.

## RELIABLE SOURCES

1 10 Fortune

It's easy to figure out where to listen or look if you know what you are doing.

Spend a downtime action. Immediately hear a rumor you hadn't heard this downtime.

## KEPT MY NOTES

1 10 Fortune

Choose either Humanities or Sciences. Gain Reliable 3 when using that skill during downtime or in the Action when there is no time pressure.

## STUDY THE MYSTERIES

1 20 Fortune. Requires: 3 Researcher Choices

You get +2D6 when using Magic Arts skill for knowledge rather than spells or abilities.

## PROPAGANDA COMES IN ONE SIZE

1 20 Fortune

You know how to filter the wheat from the chaff, informationally speaking. You gain a +5 on all observation tests to determine the intent of messages disseminated to a broad audience (e.g. advertisements, news stories, speeches).

## FATED CYCLES

1 20 Fortune

It isn't just that you have studied these things, but you can also see patterns based on past events.

When you gain a dynamic or critical success on a humanities check to learn something about a target, you gain an insight into their actions or weaknesses that you may use later. Once before the next downtime, you may spend 1 grit to add or subtract 5 to a test they make or test targeting them.

## ARCHIVE SPHINX

1 20 Fortune. Requires: Grinding it Out

Your time working in Archives has helped you not only make connections but build one of your own, no matter how modest. Your Community gains an Archive resource.



# MASTERMIND

*"The strings of unjust power are pulled by those it is a crime to denounce."*

— The Greystar

The Mastermind is usually behind it all. This paradigm represents planners, plotters, spymasters, and involuted jokers of the Subversion world. Those who invest their Fortune in being a Mastermind not only suss out what is likely to happen, but set plans in motion to ensure that it will happen, and to their benefit. Tactical plans, long cons, and web of intrigue are all the stock in trade of a Mastermind.

## AWARE OF THE SITUATION

| 10 Fortune

You are practiced at taking in every observable detail and using that information to guide your choices. You never spend grit to act in the surprise round.

## PLAN B

| 10 Fortune

You always have a backup plan for when things go wrong.

After you or an ally fails a skill test, you may spend 1 Grit to ignore any complication preventing them from trying again. If you do so, you may suggest another way to handle the situation as a main action. Specify a skill and a course of action. The next PC that attempts to use the specified skill to work towards the specified course of action gains Reliable 3 on the roll.

## COMMUNITY PLANNER

| 10 Fortune

You are particularly skilled at helping your community improve through careful planning and guidance. Whenever you spend Fortune towards upgrading your community, you must pay only half of the actual Fortune that is added towards the upgrade progress. Once per downtime, spending Fortune to upgrade your community does not take up a downtime action.

## TWO MOVES AHEAD

| 10 Fortune, Interrupt

You may spend 1 Grit to increase your initiative score by +5 for one round.

## THREE MOVES AHEAD

| 20 Fortune, Interrupt. Requires Two Moves ahead and two other paradigm abilities.

On the first round of a cinematic, you may spend 5 Grit to take an additional main action as a backup action.

## BELONGING EVERYWHERE

| 10 Fortune

When you encounter an NPC for the first time, their Regard is improved by one. You start concealment tracks directed at you (including as part of a group you're in) at +3 concealment when attempting to blend in using disguise or social infiltration.

## CAREFUL MANEUVERING

| 10 Fortune

You always plan your moves with great care, for the greatest effect or efficiency. Whenever you take an action to move (main or backup action), you may take the Defend action as a Free Action. This does not allow you to take another Defend action, even if you have extra backup actions available.

## TEAM PLAYER

| 10 Fortune

Whenever you take a main action to assist an ally (either by using teamwork or taking a beneficial action that targets them), your action gains the Quick keyword. You may use the Focus or Aim backup action to provide a bonus to an ally's skill test instead of your own.

## THEY NEVER SEE IT COMING

| 20 Fortune

Your careful planning and talent for misdirection makes it easy to blindside someone. It costs twice as much grit for enemies to act in a surprise round you initiated. At the beginning of a stealth encounter, you may spend Grit to increase your initial concealment at a cost of 1 Grit per concealment.



## INFORMANTS

I 20 Fortune Requires 3 or more Mastermind Abilities

You have cultivated a network of local informants who gather gossip and spy on people for you. Once per session you may spend 1 Grit or 1 Fortune to gain the benefits of your informants. The GM will provide you with one clue or piece of information on a topic of your choice. If the information would not be likely for your local informants to possess, the GM will inform you of this. You must then either choose a different piece of information or pay 5 additional Fortune to acquire it. The GM may still decide that the information is unavailable, however, in which case you are not required to pay any Fortune or Grit.

If you also have the That's Always Been the Plan paradigm ability, once per session you may use the Reinforcements benefit for zero Grit or Fortune cost.

## THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN THE PLAN

I 20 Fortune, Requires 3 or more Mastermind Abilities

Once per session, you may use a backup action and spend 1 Grit to benefit from your careful and timely preparations. You must describe a brief flashback scene that reveals how you prepared for this eventuality. The GM will require you to pass a skill test based on your flashback narration and the flashback benefit you select.

**Flashback Benefits:**

## ROUSER

*No Voice? No Work! No Power? No Work!*  
— Protest chant from the Great Strike

Communities often look for leaders and leaders will often arise at a time of conflict. The ability to influence and lead people for a cause and either through or around a system is a skill that few possess. A Rouser is at the front of a movement: literally or by using their abilities to influence how it affects the world around them. These leaders are a wide range, from the rabble rousing types inciting direct action, to methodical community organizers who create and maintain strong structures for change, to politicians who blend charismatic inspiration with a knowledge of the system to create change or to reinforce the status quo. Never forget that this may be the origin of a demagogue as easily as the origin of a revolutionary.

**Acquire an item:** You managed to smuggle in just the right piece of equipment for this situation! Choose an item. That item is now in your possession (and has been all along). If you do not already own the item, you must pay its Fortune cost immediately. If the item has no Fortune cost, you must either pay 1 Fortune or 1 additional Grit for it.

**Skill Test:** Deception TN 10 for small objects (no larger than a pistol). Increase TN to 15 or more for large objects. On a Critical Success, gain 1 Fortune or 1 Grit.

**Make previous arrangements with an individual:**

You made sure to butter up an NPC in a previously undeclared encounter. Improve an NPC's Regard track towards you by five. If you are in a stealth encounter, you may use this to increase your team's current Concealment level by 1d6 (2d6 with a Critical Success).

**Skill Test:** Influence or Deception TN 10. You may spend 1 Fortune to gain +1 to your dice pool on this test.

**Reinforcements:** You made sure you had backup ready, just in case something like this happened. Choose an NPC that has a Favored (or better) Regard towards you. Pay either 1 Grit or 1 Fortune to have that NPC show up immediately and take one main action on your behalf. The NPC will stick around and help until the end of the conflict or scene.

**Skill Test:** Influence or Observation TN 15. Gain a bonus on this test based on the NPC's Regard (+3 for Favored, +6 for Friendly, +10 for Allied). You may spend 1 Fortune to gain +1 to your dice pool on this test. On a Critical Success, gain +1 Fortune or +1 Grit.

## PASSIONATE CONFIDENCE

I 10 Fortune

As a true believer, you often let your mouth get ahead of your thoughts.

In the first round of any cinematic, you may add +1d6 to influence or deception rolls while suffering -3 Vigilance.



## WARNINGS AND RUMORS OF WARNINGS

I 10 Fortune

During downtime, you may ask the GM if there are any rumors. The GM will give you rumors earlier than the normal passive rumors. (GMs usually tell rumors when their action progress is at half. When a PC uses this ability, reveal rumors at one quarter progress, or reveal imminent actions. You may even reveal more than normal)

## SORRY, I DIDN'T HEAR YOU

I 10 Fortune

Sometimes, it is easier to pretend you didn't catch the words than to deal with them.

When you spend grit to block animity damage, each point of grit blocks 2 points of animity damage.

## FRAG YOU

I 10 Fortune

You don't care what everyone says.

1/session, you may reduce incoming animity damage by 5.

## SOOTHE

I 10 Fortune

You can encourage others to help them get by. Outside cinematic time, you can share words of comfort, spend time, or share something helpful with another person.

Make a TN 11 Arts role, on a success, restore 5 animity damage. A character can only benefit from Sooth once per Session.

## ROUSE

I 10 Fortune. Main Action

Roll Arts versus TN 12. If successful, each ally gains 1 dice to their next action. Multiple uses do not stack.

## CONFUSE

I 10 Fortune

You aren't winning with this argument, you're helping them lose.

Main Action. Make an influence or Deception test against a target's vigilance. On a success, deal 1 animity damage. On a Dynamic success, target gains a consequence until the damage is healed or the end of the scene (whichever happens first).. On a critical success, target gains 2 consequences.

## NO SHAME

I 10 Fortune, Interrupt

You aren't in this to make friends. You've got a job to do.

When you make a successful influence or deception roll, you may take 5 animity damage to give that roll Augmented 5.

## STIR SHET UP

I 10 Fortune. Main Action.

Sometimes, it is helpful to push people past their breaking point. And you've spend a lifetime coming up with insults, looks, gestures, and buttons to push.

You may make an influence roll against a targets vigilance. On Success, lower the target's Regard for one character by 5.

## CLARION CALL

I 10 Fortune

You are used to working crowds, and you're getting pretty good at it.

Spend 1 Grit to make any roll against a target's vigilance into a roll against all targets within 50m. Use the highest Vigilance among the crowd to determine success.

Note: Spending pressure points will lower the vigilance of the entire crowd.



# MILITAIRE

*I'd rather a squad of trained elves than an army of rabble, just as I'd prefer a trained surgeon over a team of butchers. More wars have been lost by incompetence than won by numbers.*

—Adelante, former General of the Valkyrs

Being a trained soldier is more than shooting and running. The Militaire paradigm represents the training and experience instilled in professional and semi-professional soldiers, Lawjacks, bodyguards, militant Envoys, and more. You learn how not only to fight, but fight as a unit, use discipline and tactics to advance your goals, and dedicate yourself to something to help inspire you.

## PUSH ON

I 10 Fortune

It costs one grit instead of four to ignore all Dulled penalties for any roll linked to Agility or Brawn.

## PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

I 10 Fortune

Increase your max speed to 2.

## SQUAD TACTICS

I 10 Fortune

You've learned to work well with small teams of individuals.

You may spend a backup action to coordinate the actions of yourself and a number of allies up to your Wits. This provides a +1 bonus to all skill tests made by any affected character until after your next turn.

If you make an attack against an opponent that one of your allies has previously attacked this round, gain a +1 dice pool bonus on your own attack test.

## MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!

I 10 Fortune

Once per round you may spend 1 grit to take the minor move action as a free action. You gain +1d6 on physicality rolls in chases.

## NO GUTS, NO GLORY!

I 10 Fortune

You can gain an offensive advantage at the expense of exposing yourself to greater risk. When you spend a backup action to use Focus or Aim, you may increase the bonus by +1 for every -1 that is applied to all of your defenses (up to your maximum bonus from Focus or Aim).

## WELL-MAINTAINED EQUIPMENT

I 10 Fortune

Your meticulous attention towards maintaining your equipment ensures that it won't fail you when you need it.

Once per session, when one of your items (including weapons, armor, even cybertech) would fail due to wear, damage, or harsh conditions, it does not fail.

The TN for any test made to sabotage or damage your equipment is increased by 5.

## COMMANDING PRESENCE

I 10 Fortune

You are a natural leader, and your instincts have been honed by your military experience. When you give an order, people listen.

Gain +1 to your dice pool on Influence tests when you clearly and directly tell someone to do something. You also gain this bonus when using Influence to make a good first impression.

Gain a +2 bonus to Deception tests made against guards, law enforcement, and military personnel.

## PHARMACEUTICAL ADVANTAGE

I 10 Fortune

You were trained to go into combat under the influence of combat stimulants such as [King Mud \(pg. 104\)](#). You gain +5 Vigilance on all addiction tests against combat stimulants, and you may spend 1 grit to ignore any behavioral triggers from such drug (Such as King Mud's trigger to avoid retreat).



## PHARMACEUTICAL HONING

20 Fortune, Requires Pharmaceutical Advantage and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

You not only are trained to resist the psychological effects of combat drugs, but also to take advantage of their physiological effects to the utmost. Whenever you're under the influence of a combat drug (e.g. King Mud), you gain +2 Guard and all combat rolls you make are inspired.

## TAKE THE HIT

10 Fortune

You are always watching out for your allies, ready to protect them when they are unable to protect themselves.

When an ally within 10m of you is hit by an attack, you may attempt to take the hit instead. This requires an AGI + Physicality skill test with a TN equal to the result of the attacker's skill test for the attack. Success: You take the hit instead of your ally. Dynamic Success: You take the hit, but you only suffer half of the damage. Critical Success: You manage to pull your ally out of harm's way without getting hit yourself.

## COMBAT REFLEXES

10 Fortune

You are always ready for combat. Avoiding incoming attacks has become a practiced reflex.

# WATCHDOG

*Never trust people, they're fallible and always lie. Trust the evidence. If the evidence doesn't make sense, the problem is that you're a person.*

— Consulting Detective Sappira Tulkas

Watchdogs investigate, find things out, solve crimes, and uncover secret affairs. Unlike the Lawjacks, who focus on enforcement and the use of sanctioned violence, a Watchdog might be the one to find out where to point the Lawjacks. The term has come to refer to anyone who undertakes investigative work for public, semipublic, or private employers from the Gang Lieutenant in La Sanctuaire to the Consulting Detectives employed by the Ukkim Houses. The Watchdog paradigm covers the breadth of abilities needed to uncover a trail or a clue as well as how to cover them up.

Reduce the grit cost to act in the surprise round by 1. +1 Guard

## TAKE COVER!

20 Fortune. Requires Combat Reflexes and 2 other abilities from this paradigm.

When you use a backup action to Defend, the bonus applies to all of your defenses. Additionally, you may still benefit from dynamic and critical successes.

## STRATEGIC RESERVES

20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You're always keeping an eye on the overall strategy, and are careful to set aside some resources for when they'll be needed most.

Once per session, you may spend a backup action to gain 1d6 Grit. If you use this ability, you must spend a downtime action to refresh it before you may use it again.

## I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH

10 Fortune

You've seen a lot. More than anyone should. And it has numbed you.

Gain Adamant +4: Death, Blood, Weapons. If you would still take animity damage from those things after Adamant, the damage is doubled.

## SCAN THE SCENE

10 Fortune

Gain a +1d6 on any Observation skill test you make when looking around a room/scene.

Once per session, during a cinematic, you may use a backup action to make an Observation test with a TN of 10. On a success, increase your defenses by +1 for the remainder of the encounter (+2 on a dynamic success, +3 on a crit).

## PAPER TRAIL

10 Fortune

Gain Reliable 3 on any Observation or Humanities checks to find or interpret information in documents.



## WATCH CLOSELY

| 10 Fortune

Gain +1d6 on any Observation skill test you make when observing a person, situation, or place as well as any Physicality tests to avoid being noticed while you are watching someone.

## RUGGED MIND

| 10 Fortune

You've been through a lot, and have seen things that would shatter most people. Whenever you take animity damage, you may reduce it to zero damage by spending 2 Grit.

## CONSULTING DETECTIVE

| 10 Fortune

Sometimes the authorities come to you when a mystery has stumped them.

When you use the **side gig** downtime action ([pg 33](#)) you may gain a favor with one of your relations or factions involved in law enforcement.

## GOOD LISTENER

| 10 Fortune

People seem to want to open up to you, and are often willing to share things that they might usually keep to themselves.

Gain +1 to your dice pool when making any skill test to gather information by talking to people (usually Influence or Deception).

Once per downtime, you may spend 2 Grit to take the Interact with Relation downtime action ([see pg 32](#)) without using up one of your downtime actions.

## BROWBEAT

| 10 Points

You'd think more people would choose the easy way, but that's just not how it goes sometimes. When it's important or urgent enough to justify it, you know how to make people do what you want.

When you use the **threaten** action ([pg 43](#)), you may choose to double the effect (both the regard penalty and the decreased ask).

## DOGGED

| 10 Points

When you become determined to find something out or see it through, your stubborn nature kicks in and nothing is going to stop you.

Once per session, after failing a skill test you may take 2 Grit damage or 5 animity or 5 health damage to gain a +5 on the roll.

## LINGO

| 10 Points

You've picked up a few phrases from many different languages, and you're exceptionally good at reading facial expressions and body language.

Whenever you attempt to understand someone who is using a language you do not know, you may make a Wits + Observation skill test to comprehend what is being said. This comprehension is surface-level; complex details and jargon will be impossible to grasp, but you get the general idea of what is being spoken about. This does not apply to understanding written text.

The TN for the Observation test is 10 for simple, very general, communication, though the GM may raise the TN for more complex or convoluted exchanges.

## SEARCH PATTERNS

| 10 Fortune

Whenever you take an extended amount of time to search for something (or someone), you may choose to either take half as much time as would normally be required or gain a +5 bonus on any required skill tests. This applies to any search, including scouring a room for clues, wandering the city streets to find someone, asking around for information, and breaching to locate a file. Note that the bonus from this paradigm only applies to skill tests to find the target of the search – not to any tests required to breach security, overcome guards, or avoid hazards.

## POLYGLOT

| 20 Fortune, Lingo and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

Choose two languages: you are now fluent in those languages. Whenever you encounter a language that you do not already know, you may spend 2 Fortune to become fluent in that language. This represents the fact that you've known that language all along, but it hasn't come up yet – not a supernatural ability to instantly know a new language.

## ELEMENTARY DEDUCTIONS

| 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Once per session when making an Observation test, you can change one rolled dice to a 6. For an additional cost of 3 grit/dice, you may change any other number of dice to 6 as well.



# SCOUNDREL

*As a matter of principle, I don't believe in any law that can't be enforced, which is why I take painstaking efforts to stay as far away from Lawjacks as possible.*

—Rori Atleta, Person of Interest in 47 Burglaries, whereabouts unknown

Sometimes, you don't follow the rules and end up in the underside of society. A thug, scoundrel, raconteur, or criminal can be necessary if unsavory at times. It isn't just that you break Neo Babylon's laws, but that you are willing to upset the order of whatever community you are around by taking, breaking, threatening, or weaseling your way to selfish power. Sometimes, a community needs that and sometimes you just need a little more breaking the rules to feel better about not getting to write them yourself. Whether the Bravia inducted you to their ranks, the Ghalassian Secret Orders hold your oath, or a gang kept you safe with its own violence, you are out for yourself by using the power of these other influences.

## BREAKING AND ENTERING

I 10 Fortune

Gain +1d6 to observation or physicality dice pool on any skill test made to observe or bypass any physical form of security (locks, gates, fences, doors, razorwire, security sensors, etc). This does not apply to skill tests made against people or creatures.

## SWEET SPOT

I 10 Fortune

Use a backup action and spend 1 Grit to reduce one of a target's defenses against your actions by 1d6. Their defense returns to normal after your next turn ends. If you use a main action and spend 3 Grit instead, the target's defense is reduced against your allies' actions as well as your own.

## STREETWISE

I 10 Fortune

The first time you encounter an NPC whose caste is Lower or Lower-Middle, you may spend 1 Grit to improve their Regard towards you by 5. Whenever you make a skill test that involves acquiring illegal items or knowledge of illegal activities, gain +1 to your dice pool. If you roll a dynamic failure while attempting to bribe someone, it counts as a regular failure instead.

## LIGHT FINGERS

I 10 Fortune

Gain +1d6 dice to on all tests of sleight of hand, pickpocketing, lockpick, or any other action to do something or steal something without being noticed. If a failure would cause you to lose concealment, you lose only one point of concealment.

## CRIPPLE

I 20 Fortune

If you score a dramatic success when making an attack, your target can only move by taking a main action for a minor move. If you score a critical success on an attack, your target can only move a very short distance for every main action spent moving. This effect lasts either until the target spends 5 Grit, or the end of the scene or encounter (whichever happens first).

## STEALTH MULE

I 10 Fortune

You can hide items no larger than a pistol on your person, so well that any attempts to detect it suffer a penalty of -5 and do not hinder concealment. You may conceal up to three items in this way.

## GAMBLER

I 10 Fortune

Gain +1d6 for any skill tests that are involved in gambling.

Once per session, you may gamble by spending 1d6 Grit as an interrupt. You may add or subtract that amount to any roll. If you are unable to pay the grit cost, you instead spend 1 grit and gain no effect.

## INCONSPICUOUS

I 10 Fortune

Whenever your concealment (or the concealment of a group you are part of) would decrease, you may decrease the amount of concealment lost at a rate of 1 grit per 2 concealment.

## IRREPRESSIBLE

I 10 Fortune

Whenever you take animity or health damage, you may spend 1 Grit to reduce the damage by 2d6, to a minimum of 1 damage.



## SLINKING AROUND

I 10 Fortune

You know the city, and you know how not to get caught snooping. It's easy when people don't want to see you in the first place.

When you use the time to prepare downtime action to increase a concealment track, you also gain 3 temporary grit that can be spent on rolls related to the infiltration.

## I KNOW PEOPLE

I 20 Fortune, 3 abilities from this paradigm

The first time you encounter NPCs with criminal ties (organized crime, gangs, GM discretion), you may spend 2 Fortune to increase their Regard towards you by one step. Gain +1d6 to all Deception and Influence skill tests that target an NPC of Upper or Elite caste.

## NOTHING TO LOSE

I 20 Fortune, 3 abilities from this paradigm

When you've been down so long you can't see a way out, risks don't seem quite as risky anymore.

Spend 7 grit: Add +5 to any one roll after learning the result.

## IMPERCEPTIBLE

I 30 Fortune, Inconspicuous and 4 other abilities from this paradigm

Whenever your concealment (or the concealment of a group you are part of) would decrease, you may decrease the amount of concealment lost at a rate of 1 grit per 5 concealment. In tests related to stealth without a concealment track, you may negate the effects of a normal success (but not a dynamic or critical success) by spending 1 grit (instead of the normal five).



# Chapter 20: Cyber Paradigms

Cyber paradigms are the latest and greatest. The rapid influx of advanced technology has created significant upheaval and supplanted magic across many applications. While the upper echelons of society are still less likely to have adopted cyber enhancements and retained magical traditions, more and more the unique abilities that some of these enhancements provide are drawing in the wealthy and powerful, especially the young. Even as it gains prominence, cybertech is still new, and difficult for most folks to fully understand.

Cyber paradigms represent combinations of enhancements and implants that are used in tandem, connecting and working together across multiple parts of a body. Paradigms containing the keyword **cyberframe** are the epitome of this, combining cyberlimbs, musculature replacement, enhanced nervous systems, and more with a unified result in mind as successive implants and modifications take place. All cyber paradigms require some sort of surgery for the installation of the enhancement, whose cost in Standards and recovery time is already reflected in the Fortune spent on the paradigm. Even the modest (and slowly becoming ubiquitous) datajack requires brain surgery to implement its functions.

Please note that multiple paradigms that impact limited bodily resources (such as limbs) cannot be stacked, and that **cyberframe** bonuses cannot stack with any bonuses of the same type from other cyber paradigms.

## BREACHER

*There's two types of secure systems in the word, systems that don't connect to the rest of the world and systems that I can breach while making coffee.*  
—Mot Ilgi, Breacher

Breaching requires some specialized Cyber. You have to go under the knife to be able to go into the Cybertech space that is the Breachers' playground. Breaching, if you hadn't caught on yet, is a direct cybertech connection to other cybertech – gear, implants, and Clinks primarily. If you want to plug yourself into a vehicle or a drone, check out the Jumper paradigm where more specialized Cybertechnology will let you become part of its physical world; Breachers stay in the mental world. C-Links are the main target of any Breacher providing the gateway to the Cybertech enabled world, but as Cyber paradigms become more common, Breachers are figuring out how to manipulate those implants.

Taking any abilities from this paradigm requires a cyberkit.

### EXPLOITS

Exploits are specific breacher abilities that allow a breacher to target systems whose firewall they haven't breached yet. Unless otherwise specified, an exploit requires a successful cybertech vs security rating of the device targeted. If you've breached the firewall of a target, you may automatically succeed on any exploits targeting them.

### BREACHWALL

10 Fortune. Exploit. Interrupt.

Spend 1 Grit to negate the effect of an opponent's exploit. Roll cybertech, if your roll beats the roll of the opponent's exploit, it has no effect.

### CONTROL

10 Fortune. Exploit.

Target a drone, C-link, or other technology within S range. Roll cybertech vs. target's (or owner's/ controller's) Security Rating. On a success, you give an order to the device that it will follow until the end of its next turn.



## INTERVENE

I 10 Fortune. Exploit. Interrupt.

Spend 1 Grit. Force opponent to re-roll a number of dice on their last roll equal to your cybertech skill or less.

## GAG

I 10 Fortune. Exploit.

You interfere with the communications of a device without directly breaching it. Make a cybertech roll. Any devices of your choice with a security rating less than your result treat their range as **T** for all actions they take until the end of the next round. On a dynamic success, this lasts for the next 10 rounds, on a critical success this lasts as long as the device is within 1000m of you.

## FORCE SHUTDOWN

I 10 Fortune.

When you reduce the firewall of a device to zero, you may cause it to immediately shut down or be rendered inoperable as per the disable device authorized action ([see pg 57](#)).

## TAG

I 10 Fortune.

Once you've caught sight of a device, it will never get away from you.

You gain augmented 3 on all cybertech rolls to reduce the concealment of another device.

## RELAY STATION

I 10 Fortune

You can take a -5 penalty on your cybertech rolls to treat the range of a device you're attacking as one closer. You may not do this on devices with a range of **T**.

## SCAN

I 10 Fortune. Exploit.

Choose a target within line-of-sight. The next ally to attack that target adds 2D6 to their skill test.

## OVERWATCH

I 10 Fortune. Exploit.

Target Ally may use an additional Main action after everyone else has acted this round.

## SWIFT ACCESS

I 10 Fortune

You may spend 2 grit to use an authorized access action as a backup action.

## C-LINK COWBOY

I 10 Fortune

+2d6 on Cybertech rolls to breach C-Links. When you successfully breach a C-Link, you may spend 1 grit to gain 1 fortune.

## RALLY THE TROOPS

I 10 Fortune. Exploit. Interrupt.

Spend 1 Grit. Target ally may use your Vigilance score instead of theirs until the end of your next turn. You may spend Grit to increase your Vigilance for this exploit by 1 for each grit spent.

## SUBVERSIVE BREACH

I 10 Fortune

You gain +2d6 on all deception rolls made to falsify data.

## ACQUIRE TARGET

I 20 Fortune. Exploit.

Main Action: Chose a number of targets within line-of-sight equal to your Cybertech rating. . Allies may re-roll one dice on every roll attacking those targets until the end of combat.

## CONFUSE ORDERS

I 20 Fortune. Exploit. Main Action.

You send a message that appears to be from a different source. If your cybertech roll beats their security rating, you may make a deception roll with a +5 bonus to convince them the message is real.

## HEADS UP DISPLAY

I 10 Fortune. Exploit.

Increase Guard for all allies within 100m by 3 for 2 rounds.

Requires: Confuse Orders



## OCULAR ASSAULT

I 10 Fortune. Exploit. Requires Tag

Target a number of opponents equal to or less than your cybertech skill. Make a cybertech test vs. targets' vigilance. If you succeed, targets have a consequence until the end of your next turn. Note: if targets do not have cybereyes, are not using a link, or if there is no source of electronic light present, this exploit has no effect.

## JUMPER

*All of life should be like jumping—skip the boring parts and focus on the exciting parts.*  
—Davaga Uvagh, Jumper

Pick a vehicle in Neo Babylon, and odds are that it's being remotely controlled by a Jumper: a skilled pilot that uses cyberware to remotely operate a vehicle from afar. Most corporate vehicles (including the omnipresent taxi services, thousands of delivery vans and drones, and even many personally owned cars) rely on a combination of AI and remote monitoring, with the AI handling the drudgework, and a Jumper overseeing a fleet of vehicles and jumping in if the AI seems ready to make a mistake or get in an accident (hence their name). Jumpers maintain their distributed vigilance and the ability to quickly take control of a vehicle through dedicated cyberware that makes taking control of a vehicle they own a matter of a thought.

Taking any ability from this paradigm requires a basic datajack and Piloting 3.

## REMOTE MONITOR

I 10 Fortune

You're accustomed to monitoring the sensor feeds for signs of trouble. Gain Reliable 3 on all Observation checks using remote sensors from a drone or vehicle.

## QUICK REFLEXES

I 10 Fortune

You gain +2 initiative, and you never spend grit to act in a surprise round when controlling a drone or vehicle

## DEFENSIVE POSTURE

I 10 Fortune

Drones and vehicles you control gain +2 Guard, and the pursuit track to catch you is increased by 5.

## OBSCURE TARGET

I 10 Fortune. Exploit. Requires Tag.

You may impose an instance of dulled on any Observation or Ranged combat roll targeting one of your allies using the targeted device. Note: if targets do not have cybereyes, are not using a link, or if there is no source of electronic light present, this exploit has no effect.

## SIGNAL SPLICER

I 10 Fortune

You're an expert of finding a way to get a connection to one of your drones or vehicles, maintaining a wide range of redundant paths. You are never affected by environmental conditions that block signals unless they completely block all connections (GM discretion). Whenever a drone or vehicle that you're an authorized user of would have its range reduced so that you can't access it (for example, through the gag exploit or by someone taking the change range authorized action), you may spend 1 grit to negate that effect.

## COMBAT JUMPER

I 10 Fortune

You gain Augment 2 on all attacks made with a drone or vehicle.

## RACER

I 10 Fortune

You gain Augment 2 on all Piloting checks made in a race.

## MADE FOR SPEED

I 10 Fortune

When you take the Minor Move backup action ([see pg 36](#)) to exceed the maximum speed of a vehicle you own or have spent extensive time modifying (at least one downtime action repairing), you may spend 1 grit or take 1 physical damage to your vehicle (instead of spending 1 grit AND taking 1 physical damage) and gain inspired on all piloting rolls to control a vehicle moving above its top speed.



## MODDER

I 10 Fortune

You may spend 1 downtime action to make a TN 10 Cybertech roll to modify a vehicle or drone. On a success, spend 1 fortune and the vehicle gains +1 OP (multiply both fortune cost and OP on a dynamic or critical success). A given vehicle or drone may only benefit from one instance of Modder at a time.

## QUICK JOCKING

I 10 Fortune

When you take the minor move action in a vehicle, you may also take the focus action as a free action.

## BREACH SPIKES

I 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Increase the Security Rating of you and all your drones by 2. Whenever a breacher fails an exploit or breaching roll targeting you or a drone or vehicle you control, they lose 3 concealment and gain an instance of dulled on cybertech rolls targeting you for the remainder of the scene.

# CYBERWARE

*Props to Marduk for working with what he had, but blood and dirt really aren't the best building materials—we can do way better.*

— Yklunin Kallush, Cyberware Designer

The Cyberware paradigm covers a general range of cyber enhancement and ability modifications to the body, and represent the most common types of cyberware with the broadest adoption across the general public. It is not uncommon to encounter someone in Neo Babylon with one or more of these enhancements.

## BASIC DATAJACK

I 10 Fortune

A cybertech implant wired directly into your brain. Normally implanted on the side of the head, back of the neck, or more rarely, on the hand or arm. They are mostly used by corporate coders, but breachers need them to connect to their cyberkits.

You gain reliable 2 with any connected halo or cyberkit, or to interact with any device you are directly connected to.

## JUNKYARD MAESTRO

I 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

You're an expert at piecing together drones and vehicles from wrecks and spare parts. You gain augment 3 on all Build and Repair Downtime actions. Furthermore, you may decrease the fortune cost of any drone or vehicle you buy or build by 30% (round the final cost up). However, at the end of each act phase where you use a vehicle or drone purchased in this way, it takes 1 physical damage (ignoring armor).

## IMPOSSIBLE STUNT

I 30 Fortune, 6 other abilities from this paradigm

You can pull off a remarkable stunt. After making a piloting roll controlling a vehicle and learning its result, you may spend 5 grit to gain a +5 on the roll. If you do so, you immediately gain another main action with piloted vehicle and it gains +5 guard until the end of your next turn.

## FULL BODY DATAJACK

I 15 Fortune. Requires: Basic Datajack

You've given up pieces of yourself to upgrade that datajack with backup relays, enhancers, and boosters littered through your body. It's efficient and feels a bit more natural all the time.

Gain +1 Slicing and +2 Security rating for any of your devices connected to your datajack.

## CYBERKIT

I 10 Fortune. Requires: Basic Datajack

A cyberkit is the tool that makes a breacher a breacher. Each cyberkit is unique, cobbled together from scavenged, stolen, or purchased parts. They interact with datajacks to make breachers able to manipulate cybertech in various ways. No two have the same form or even functions. They are also called breach kits, breacher kits, breacher rigs, cyber rigs, cyboards, brain boards, tech decks, etc.

You gain a cyberkit (gear) with the following stats:

Security Rating 10, Firewall 4, Breach Damage 5, Slicing +0.



Enhancement Slots: 2

This choice unlocks the Breacher paradigm.

## CYBERKIT EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Cyberkit. 10 Fortune

Your cyberkit gains +2 enhancement slots.

## ELITE CYBERKIT EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Cyberkit Expansion. 20 Fortune

Your cyberkit gains +2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERKIT ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Cyberkit. 10 Fortune

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each option may only be taken once, however.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✂ Security Rating +2
- ✂ Firewall +1
- ✂ Breach Damage +2
- ✂ Slicing +1

## ELITE CYBERKIT ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Cyberkit enhancement. 20 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✂ Security Rating +2 (you must have the Security Rating +2 cyberkit enhancement)
- ✂ Firewall +1 (you must have the Firewall +1 cyberkit enhancement)
- ✂ Breach Damage +2 (you must have the Breach Damage +2 cyberkit enhancement)
- ✂ Slicing +1 (you must have the Slicing +1 cyberkit enhancement)

## WIRED SYNAPSES

| 10 Fortune

All of your main actions gain the Quick keyword.

Enhancement Slots: 2

## WIRED SYNAPSES EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Wired Synapses. 10 Fortune.

Your wired synapses gains +2 enhancement slots.

## WIRED SYNAPSES ELITE ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Wired Synapses. 20 Fortune

This enhancement for wired synapses takes up 2 enhancement slots.

Once per scene or cinematic encounter, you may use a backup action to take a second main action (this action does not benefit from the Quick keyword).

## WIRED SYNAPSES ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Wired Synapses. 10 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✂ +2 Initiative
- ✂ Spend 1 grit to be inspired on a attack action
- ✂ Spend 1 grit to be inspired on a Physicality skill test
- ✂ Spend 1 grit to be inspired on a Piloting skill test
- ✂ +1 Guard
- ✂ +1 Vigilance

## CYBERNETIC EYES

| 10 Fortune.

+1 to your dice pool to visual Observation skill tests

You can take photos and videos using your eyes, and store a virtually unlimited amount of media files.

Enhancement Slots: 2

## CYBERNETIC EYES EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Eyes. 10 Fortune.

Your cybernetic eyes gain +2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERNETIC EYES ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Eyes. 10 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.



Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✖ **Enhanced Spectrum:** Low-light and thermographic vision. You never suffer penalties to visual Observation skill tests due to environmental or lighting conditions.
- ✖ **Eye Flare:** Once per session your eyes emit a bright flash of light. Anyone within 10m that can see you suffers one level of the Dulled consequence until the end of the encounter. You do not suffer the Dulled consequence.
- ✖ **Flare Compensation:** Your eyes automatically compensate for intense or sudden light. You are immune to any attack that uses bright or flashing lights to achieve its effect.
- ✖ **Laser Eyes:** Once per session, you may shoot laser beams from your eyes at a target within a range of 10m. Damage: 5. If you have access to a power source, you may recharge your laser eyes in one minute.
- ✖ **Note:** You may use your laser eyes as a tool to cut through an object or start a fire instead of making an attack.
- ✖ **Microscopic Vision:** Your eyes have a microscopic vision mode, which can only be used up close (within 1 meter). Gain +2d6 to Observation skill tests when searching for details up close, and +1d6 to Sciences skill tests when attempting to analyze something.
- ✖ **Mini-Dart Launcher:** Each eye contains a one-shot dart launcher with a maximum range of 10m. You may load any drug or toxin into the darts.
- ✖ **Target Assist:** If you take an Aim action before making a ranged attack, you also gain +1 dice pool on the attack test.
- ✖ **Visual Threat Detection System:** +1 to Guard and Vigilance against any threat you can see.

## CYBERNETIC EARS

| 10 Fortune.

+1 to your dice pool to auditory Observation skill tests.

You can record audio using your ears, and store a virtually unlimited amount of media files.

Enhancement Slots: 2

## CYBERNETIC EARS EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Ears. 10 Fortune.

Your cybernetic ears gain +2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERNETIC EARS ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Ears. 10 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✖ **Auditory Threat Detection System:** +1 to Guard and Vigilance against any threat that you can hear.
- ✖ **Directional Analyzer:** With a successful auditory Observation skill test, you can precisely tell the exact position of the source of a sound that you heard.
- ✖ **Enhanced Balance:** Once per encounter, when you would be knocked down, fall, or otherwise lose your balance, you remain on your feet and steady instead.
- ✖ **Full-Spectrum Hearing:** You are able to perceive subsonic and ultrasonic sound. You automatically detect ultrasound sensors (which includes motion sensors), and you may make auditory Observation tests to detect the presence of electronics.
- ✖ **Noise Filter:** You are able to selectively filter out background noise and other sounds that you would prefer to ignore. Once per session, you may ignore a failed auditory Observation test, which counts as a dynamic success instead.
- ✖ **Protective Dampening:** Your ears protect you from harmful sound pressure. You are immune to any effect that results from loud or sudden sounds.

## CYBERNETIC ARM

| 10 Fortune.

Not just a prosthetic replacement. Your cyberarm is a technological marvel, and an improvement over the biological limb it replaces.

You gain Augmented 2 on all actions (including melee attacks) that primarily rely on your arms. If you have two cybernetic arms (taking this ability twice), also gain Reliable 3 on all such tests.

Enhancement Slots: 2

## CYBERNETIC ARM EXPANSION

| 10 Fortune. Prerequisite: Cybernetic Arm

Your cyberarm gains +2 enhancement slots.



## CYBERNETIC ARM ENHANCEMENT

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Arm. 10 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once per cyberarm.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✖ Enhanced Stabilizers: +1d6 on Agility based tests using your arms when you take the Focus/Aim actions ([see pg 37](#)).
- ✖ Enhanced Brawn: Increase the Augment from your arms to Augmented 3
- ✖ Cyberweapon: Choose a one-handed close combat or Ranged Combat weapon that is concealed within your cyberarm. Only a cybernetics scanner is capable of detecting the weapon when it is hidden. You must spend a backup action to deploy or conceal your cyberweapon. You must pay the Fortune cost for the weapon in addition to the Fortune for this enhancement choice.
- ✖ Grapple Launcher: You may launch a grapple line from your cyberarm, and retract it with enough force to pull you up.
- ✖ Rugged Design: +1 Health
- ✖ Smuggling Pod: You can conceal an object no larger than a pistol inside a sealed compartment. The item is undetectable, even by scanners.

## CYBERNETIC LEGS

| 20 Fortune.

Enhanced cyberlegs are always sold as a pair.

You gain Augmented 2 and Reliable 3 on all actions that primarily rely on your legs (including physicality tests in chases). If you have two cyber arms and a pair of cyber legs, you instead gain Reliable 3 on all Agility and Brawn tests using your limbs.

Enhancement Slots: 2

## CYBERNETIC LEGS EXPANSION

| Prerequisite: Cybernetic Legs. 10 Fortune

Your cyberlegs gain +2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERNETIC LEGS ENHANCEMENT

| 10 Fortune.

- ✖ Enhanced Agility: +1d6 on Agility linked Physicality tests related to movement, such as stealth or balance.
- ✖ Speed: You gain a maximum speed of 2
- ✖ Enhanced Speed (Requires Speed): You gain a maximum speed of 3 and Acceleration 2.
- ✖ Extendable Legs: You are able to extend your legs to increase your height by up to 1 meter, or reduce their length to make yourself shorter. In addition to never needing a stepladder again, you also gain a +2 bonus on any skill tests to impersonate someone by matching their height.
- ✖ Cyberweapon: Choose a one-handed close combat or Ranged Combat weapon that is concealed within your cyberleg. Only a cybernetics scanner is capable of detecting the weapon when it is hidden. You must spend a backup action to deploy or conceal your cyberweapon. You must pay the Fortune cost for the weapon in addition to the Fortune for this enhancement choice.
- ✖ Magfeet: You can magnetize your feet, allowing you to cling to metal surfaces and objects.
- ✖ Jump Jets: +2 to your dice pool on any skill tests made to jump.
- ✖ Rugged Design: +2 Health
- ✖ Smuggling Pod: You can conceal an object no larger than a pistol inside a sealed compartment. The item is undetectable, even by scanners.

## CYBERTECH LUNGS

| 10 Fortune.

+1 Health. You can hold your breath for up to one hour. You are immune to inhaled toxins.

## CYBERTECH HEART

| 10 Fortune.

+1 Health. Gain Reliable 3 on all Physicality tests related to endurance, and you never take health damage for running above your max speed ([see "Minor Move" on pg 36](#)).

## CYBERTECH LIVER

| 10 Fortune.

+1 Health. You are immune to all injected toxins.



## CYBERTECH STOMACH

| 10 Fortune.

+1 Health. You are immune to all ingested toxins. You process food more efficiently, requiring only half as much food. You are able to go without food for 3 days before suffering any ill effects.

## CYBERSKIN

| 10 Fortune.

Synthetic skin covers and protects your entire body, including (if you choose) your cybernetic limbs.

+1 Armor

Your cyberskin has 2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERSKIN ENHANCEMENTS

| Prerequisite: Cyberskin. 10 Fortune.

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✧ Active Camouflage: You must have the Color Control enhancement in order to take Active Camouflage. Your skin colors can quickly match the colors of the objects in your surroundings. When you are naked and still, you can become nearly invisible. +2 to your dice pool on any skill tests to hide or sneak while you are nearly naked. Gain an additional +1 to your dice pool to hide while you remain perfectly still. This enhancement is incompatible with Armorskin 2.
- ✧ Armorskin 1: +1 Health and +1 Armor.
- ✧ Armorskin 2: You must have the Armorskin 1 enhancement in order to take Armorskin 2. +1 Health and +1 Armor.
- ✧ Color Control: You can change your skin color at will, including detailed and complex patterns. +1 to your dice pool on any Deception skill tests when you are attempting to disguise yourself or impersonate someone else. This enhancement is incompatible with Armorskin 2.
- ✧ Enhanced Tactile Interface: You can cause any area of your skin to become extremely sensitive to the touch. +1 to your dice pool for Cybertech and Science skill tests that require fine manipulation. This enhancement is incompatible with Armorskin 2.

## CYBERTAIL

| 10 Fortune.

A cybernetic prehensile tail. It can grab and hold things, but not perform actions with them.

+1 to Guard.

+1 to your dice pool for any Physicality test that involve careful balance or climbing.

Your cybertail has 2 enhancement slots.

## CYBERTAIL ENHANCEMENTS

| 10 Fortune. Prerequisite: Cybertail

You may take this paradigm multiple times. Each enhancement may only be taken once.

Choose one enhancement, which takes up one enhancement slot:

- ✧ Detachable Tail: You may detach your tail, in which case it operates as a snakelike drone under your control. In order to maintain contact with (and control of) your tail snake, you must remain within 1000m range or less. Your tail snake remains inert when it is out of range, or after being disconnected for longer than two hours.
- ✧ Handy Tail: At the end of your tail is a small hand. Your tail is capable of fine manipulation, not just grabbing and holding things with your tail. This enhancement is incompatible with Stinger or Syringe Stinger.
- ✧ Retractable Tail: You may reduce the length of your cybertail at will, or retract it completely in order to conceal it.
- ✧ Stinger: At the end of your tail is a wicked stinger, which can be retracted into a sheath in order to conceal its presence. Damage: 5, AP: 1. This enhancement is incompatible with Handy Tail or Syringe Stinger.
- ✧ Syringe Stinger: At the end of your tail is a retractable stinger, designed to pierce the skin and inject a drug or toxin. Your tail stores up to three doses of a drug or toxin. This enhancement is incompatible with Handy Tail or Stinger.

## NAVCHIP

| 10 Fortune

Combination of Navigation Chip & Internal Compass.

It is nearly impossible for you to get lost as long as there is a technological presence in the area. You gain Reliable 4 on all tests related to navigation. If you also have Cybereyes you can overlay a map on your vision.



## SUSTAINING CYBERTECH

| 15 Fortune

A combination of autoinjectors and modified stomach, etc. lets you survive for 3 days on internal energy reserves.

Roll 1D6 during downtime. On a 4-6, gain an additional downtime action.

## MNEMONIC ENHANCER

| 20 Fortune Requires: Datajack

You have some saved data or memories stored in cybertech so that you can access it perfectly; you can choose perfect recall of one particular memory at a time. Gain +1D6 to Cybertech, Humanities, and Science rolls.

## REACTION ENHANCERS

| 20 Fortune. Interrupt. Requires: Sustaining Cybertech

Hopped up on synthetic adrenaline, you move with a skittery speed.

You can spend 1 Grit to add +2 to Guard and Vigilance until the start of your next turn.



# Chapter 21: Arcane Magic

## THE SIX COLLEGES OF MAGIC

Each college of Mana corresponds to a specific force in the world. The colleges are named by their ancient names, though they are now understood to correspond to forces, not entities.

The first ability gained in each school unlocks 1 bar of that school for casting spells, which may be used to meet the prerequisite of any spell that requires harmonizing that bar.

## THE COLLEGE OF MANA

*A mage without an understanding of mana is like a sculptor who can only see the shadow of his work.*

—Arcanist Ohzurta Borash, Headmaster of the College of Mana

**Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.**

Taking any choice from this paradigm allows the PC to harmonize up to one Bar of pure mana when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional bar of mana.

### AETHERLIGHT DITTY

I 10 Fortune. Ditty. Sustainable.

You create Aetherlight, an invisible light that causes any magical effects and spirits within 10m range to glow, becoming immediately visible, even to characters not using Shinesight ([see "Shine Perception" on pg 63](#)). You can identify the nature of the magic with a TN 8 Magic Arts Test, with higher results giving more detail.

### DITTY OF AEGIS

I 10 Fortune. Ditty. Sustainable.

You make a touched target more resistant to magic, raising their Aegis by four until the end of the next round.

### ACCELERATED HARMONIES

I 10 Fortune

You may spend 3 grit to harmonize as a backup action.

### ANCHORED DITTIES

I 10 Fortune

You learn to anchor long duration effects in one place. You may roll Arcane Arts vs TN 8 to spend a downtime action to cast a ditty with the sustainable keyword. As long as the target moves no further than 10m, the spell lasts until the end of the next downtime. Dynamic and Critical successes cause the spell to last for additional downtimes. Such effects are always in high demand, and you gain +1 fortune when you successfully use Magic Arts as part of the Side-Gig downtime action.

### DISPEL

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Mana Bar.

You make an arcane arts roll opposed by the casting skill of the opposing caster. On success, you end a spell effect they initiated. The opposing caster gets a +2 for each bar or point of dissonance involved to cast the spell.

**Amp:** For each Mana bar you harmonize on this spell, you get a +3 on your roll.

### ECHOING SPELL

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 0 Mana Bars

You may spend 1 grit to cast a spell as a main action the previous round again. Gain Dulled 5 on any rolls to cast the spell, if you are already Dulled decrease the value of Dulled by 1.



## ENDURING SPELL

1 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Mana Bar. Sustainable.

This spell may be sustained as a free action. While this spell is sustained, the caster may sustain one other spell as a free action.

**Amp:** For each Mana bar you spend on this amp, you may sustain an additional spell as a free action.

## STEAL SPELL

20 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 2 Mana Bars. Requires Dispel, and 2 other abilities from this paradigm

You make an arcane arts roll opposed by the casting skill of the opposing caster. On success, you gain control of a spell effect they initiated. The opposing caster gets a +2 for each bar or point of dissonance involved in casting the spell.

**Amp:** For each Mana bar you harmonize on this spell, you get a +3 on your roll.

## ARTIFICING

20 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 2 Mana Bars. Requires Anchored Ditties and 2 other abilities from this paradigm.

You can sustain spells cast by you or others to create magical items powered by pure mana. As a downtime action, you may create a magical item capturing the effect of any spell you can cast—optionally, you may capture the spell of another character who takes a downtime action with you. Pay 1 fortune, +1 fortune for each bar or dissonance in the spell. You create a single use magical item that can be activated with a TN 10 Magic Arts skill test.

**Amp: 1 Mana Bar.** You may make a spell with the sustainable keyword activate continuously. Once activated, this effect lasts until the beginning of the next downtime.

## MANA MASTERY

1 20 Fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 mana bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.

# THE COLLEGE OF FORCE (KINETIC ENERGY)

*There are many learned arguments for the primacies of other energies over kinetics. I reject them all, because let's be honest, who doesn't want to fly?*  
—Kirsh of House Tamti, Force mage

Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.

A caster who takes any ability from the College of Force may now harmonize one Force Bar when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional bar of force.

## DELICATE TOUCH

1 10 Fortune. Ditty.

The caster can manipulate an object of less than 5 kg within 50m as if they were touching it. If the object is attended, make an Arcane Arts vs Aegis roll to grab it.

## FORCE FIELD

1 10 fortune, Spell. **Cost:** 1 Force Bar. Sustainable.

The caster diminishes all physical impacts with an area. All individuals within 10m of you gain +3 armor.

**Amp:** The caster may spend 1 force bar to only affect targets they choose within range

## ALARM

1 10 fortune. Spell. Sustainable.

You've created a web of invisible strings within 1000m of you to absorb minute amounts of kinetic energy. These spells are not enough to stop anything before being overwhelmed, but you are aware whenever they have been crossed. If you possess the anchored ditties paradigm ability, you may cast this as a downtime action, if you do, subtract 1 from the progress of all faction moves that would be hostile to your community.

## FIVE FINGER FORCE FLICK

1 Spell. **Cost:** 1 Force Bar. 10 Fortune

The caster impacts a target within 50m of you with a force. Roll Arcane arts vs Aegis, on success move the target 20m in a direction of your choice, dealing 2d6 damage to them.

**Amp:** For each additional force bar used casting this spell, do 3D6 damage to target.



## SILENCE

I Spell. **Cost:** 1 Force Bar. Sustainable. 10 Fortune

You or touched object makes no noise. Gain +2 on all physicality tests to avoid being detected in situations where hearing matters.

## KINETIC WHIP

I Spell. **Cost:** 1 Force Bar. Sustainable. 10 Fortune

You use your power to create a levitate a long coil of flexible material around you—traditionally this spell is cast with water, though dirt, debris, or anything else malleable works as well. You can manipulate it to intercept attacks, gaining +2 guard. When you cast or sustain this spell, you may make a Magic Arts roll against the guard of a target in T range, on a success you do 2d6 damage.

## ABSORBING DITTY

I Ditty. Interrupt. Sustainable. 20 fortune, 5 Choices

Spend 1 grit. The caster causes a target to absorb kinetic energy. Gain 3 armor from physical attacks until the end of the next round.

**Amp:** For each force bar used (or added), you may add an additional target.

## LEVITATE

I Spell. **Cost:** 1 Force Bar. Sustainable. 20 fortune, 5 Choices

You or touched object weighing less than 200kg becomes weightless until the end of the next round.

**Amp: 1 Force Bar.** When casting or sustaining this spell, you may move 10m for each force bar spent on this amp **Amp: 1 Force Bar.** You may select a group of people or objects within 10m of each other to affect with this spell, with a total weight not to exceed 500kg per bar used on this amp.

## FORCE MASTERY

I 20 fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 force bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.

# THE COLLEGE OF LIGHT (LIGHT)

*Most mages are bound by physical realities—  
illusionists are bound only by imagination.  
—Nabua of House Elamtu, Light mage and renowned playwright*

Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.

A caster who takes any ability from the College of Light may now harmonize one Light Bar when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional bar of Light.

## DITTY OF LIGHT

I 10 Fortune. Ditty.

The caster can create a bright light of a color of their choice comparable to a bright electric light. Increase your guard by 1 until your next turn.

## DARKNESS

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Light Bar. Sustainable.

The caster dims an area an area up to 50m around them, providing a -4 penalty to all applicable observation tests and rolls targeting guard within the area. Increase your guard by 1 until your next turn.

## TRICK OF THE LIGHT

I Ditty. Sustainable, 10 Fortune

Draining, bending, and breaking the light around you, enemies become distracted and their attention diverted.

Make a Magic Arts test vs. opponent's vigilance. On a success, increase your Concealment to them by 3.

## LIGHT SHOW

I 10 Fortune, Spell, Requires Anchored Ditties.

You create pleasing lights around your community that illuminate the streets and make public spaces safer. You may spend a downtime action to make a TN 8 Arts roll, on a success, everyone in your community regains 2 animity.

## NO DARK ALLEYS

I 10 Fortune, Spell. Requires Light Show.

It is hard to do evil in the shadows if there are fewer shadows. By spending time working the flow of light and using the community's natural reflective surfaces, you've made it so that streets and open spaces are well lit, even at night. Folks just feel safer.



When you use the downtime action from light show, subtract 1 from the progress of all faction moves that would be hostile to your community and all observation tests in your community gain Augmented 1.

## LASER

1 Spell. **Cost:** 1 Light Bar, 10 Fortune

The caster pinpoints a target within 50m with a ray of light. Roll Arcane arts vs Aegis, On a success, deal 4D6 damage, and they gain an instance of Dulled on all attacks targeting you for the next 3 rounds. Amp: For each additional light bar used casting this spell, do +2D6 damage and add another instance of Dulled.

## INVISIBILITY

1 Spell. **Cost:** 2 Light Bars. 10 Fortune, Sustainable.

You or a target with 50m becomes invisible for 5 rounds. This grants a +5 on all physicality tests to be stealthy in situations where vision is important.

## BLINDING FLASH

1 Spell. Ditty. Sustainable. 20 Fortune, 5 Choices

You create a series of blinding flashes. While sustaining this spell, you may take an interrupt action to roll magic arts vs aegis of a target within 50m. On a success the target gains two instances of dulled on all tests involving vision until the end of their turn. Any target with closed eyes gains +5 Aegis on that roll. **Amp:** For each light bar added, you may add one additional dulled.

## MINOR ILLUSION

1 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Light Bar. Sustainable.

You can create an illusion of an object no larger than 2 meters in any direction. This illusion creates no sound, heat, smell, or touch, but otherwise appears real unless the observer succeeds on an observation test against the Arcane Arts result made when using this spell. **Amp: 1 Light Bar.** The illusion can cover an area up to 10 meters in diameter.

## LIGHT MASTERY

1 20 Fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 light bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.

## MAJOR ILLUSION

1 Spell. **Cost:** 1 Light Bar, 1 Force Bar. Sustainable. (20 Fortune, Minor Illusion)

You can create an illusion of an object no larger than 2 meters in any direction. Unlike minor illusion, this also includes sound. The image appears real unless the observer succeeds on an observation test against the Arcane Arts result made when using this spell. This image lasts for as long as the caster spends a backup action each round maintaining the image, during which time it may change as desired by the caster.

**Amp: 1 Thermal Bar.** The illusion also includes heat.

**Amp: 1 Alchemical Bar.** The illusion also includes taste and smell.

**Amp 1 Force Bar:** The illusion includes touch, though it cannot support more than 1 kg of weight or exert or resist a comparable force.

# THE ALCHEMICAL COLLEGE (CHEMICAL)

*It's true, our bodies pump blood and maintain heat.  
Our nerves use electricity, and our eyes use light.  
But at its core, life is chemistry: thus Alchemy is the  
closest a mage can get to a magic of life.*  
—Professor Adara Abumar of the Alchemical College

Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.

A caster who takes any ability from the Alchemical College may now harmonize one Chemical Bar when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional Chemical bar.



This college used to be known as the teaching of the 21 Poultrices, but was systematized later as the alchemical college, as no two groups could ever agree on which 21 Poultrices were the ones given by the divine Enki. The current teachings are based on the ancient “poultrices,” but have been distilled into variants more suitable to modern life, and the alchemical college is now much more than potions and poisons.

## SOMATIC POISON

I Spell, Compound, Cost 1 Chemical Bar. 10 Fortune

You synthesize a dangerous poison from common metabolites in people's bodies, damaging their body. Roll Magic Arts vs Aegis of a target within 10m. On success, the target takes 1d6 physical damage a turn for the next 5 turns. This damage ignores armor

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The spell does 2d6 damage a round.

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The target continues taking damage each hour after the spell effect. If the target succeeds on a physicality roll against the initial result of this spell they take no damage (but the effect continues). A Science roll of someone providing medical care may replace the physicality roll. On a dynamic or critical success, the spell effect ends

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The target takes -3 guard and gains a consequence until the spell effect ends

## PSYCHOTROPIC POISON

I Spell, Compound, Cost 1 Chemical Bar. 10 Fortune

You synthesize a poison targeting people's mind from the metabolites in their bodies. Roll Magic Arts vs Aegis of a target within 10m. On success, the target takes 1d6 animity damage a turn for the next 5 turns.

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The spell does 2d6 damage a round.

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The target continues taking damage each hour after the spell effect. If the target succeeds on a physicality roll against the initial result of this spell they take no damage (but the effect continues). A Science roll of someone providing medical care may replace the physicality roll. On a dynamic or critical success, the spell effect ends

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** The target takes -3 vigilance and gains a consequence until the spell effect ends

## STABLE COMPOUNDS

I 10 Fortune

As a downtime action, you may use the any spell with the compound keyword to synthesize 5 doses of compounds with the effect of the spell (including any amps you can add) and place them in syringes. As a main action, anyone with the syringe may attempt to inject the compound. Roll Melee Combat (+Agility) against the Guard of a target in T range. On a success, target is injected with the compound and suffers its effects as below. If not successful, the compound is not used up. No roll is required to inject it into a willing target, additionally, you or the wielder may spend 1 grit to inject a willing target as an interrupt action. Any unused compounds become inert at the beginning of the next downtime.

## DITTY OF RESTORATION

I Ditty. 10 Fortune

You can fix minor physical or corrosion damage to a touched object, or make an older item appear new. Repair 3 damage to an object in T range. An object affected by the ditty of restoration is immune to its effect until it takes new damage—future castings can only repair damage since the last casting. If a character with this ditty takes the repair downtime action, they decrease the TN for repairs by 5.

## PURIFY METABOLISM

10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar. Sustainable.

You render inert any foreign chemicals in a single living target within 10m, or a collection of living creatures with a total mass of less than 100kg. Any ongoing effects that are due to drugs, poisons or other chemical effects on the targets end.

## ARCANE METABOLISM

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar. Sustainable.

You use magic to power the metabolism of a single living target within 10m. The target gains 2 temporary health and animity (take damage from temporary health and animity first), while this spell is active, and while under the effect of this spell the target does not need to breathe, eat, drink, or sleep. Relying on this spell for long periods of time is dangerous, however—for each day a target skips their basic needs while under this effect, they reduce their max health and animity by one. This penalty can be reset by taking a downtime action to recover (assuming you have access to the necessities you skipped).

**Amp: 1 Chemical bar.** While under the effect of the spell, the target gains Reliable 3 on all Physicality tests



## DETERMINE COMPOSITION

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar. Sustainable.

You've learned to divine the chemical composition of an object by seeing how it reacts to alchemical magic. Choose an object or area within 10m no larger than 1 meter in any dimension. Make a TN 8 Science test, on a success you know the basic chemical composition of the object or area. Higher results reveal more information about trace components or rare compounds (such as poisons or pharmaceuticals).

## CORROSIVE DEFENSE

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar. Sustainable.

You cover yourself in a protective layer of acid, punishing anyone or anything that touches you.

Anyone who does damage to you at range T, or anyone you do damage to with a melee attack takes 2D6 points of chemical damage.

**Amp: 1 Chemical bar.** Reduce all incoming chemical or poison damage by five.

**Amp: 1 fire bar.** Attackers take an additional 1D6 chemical/fire damage per turn until the end of the scene.

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** You can choose a target in T range other than yourself as the benefit of your fire shield.

## ARCANE REFINEMENT

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar. Sustainable.

You process up to 10kg of material in T range, removing any impurities in the material and increasing strength. Using this spell gives +3 on any rolls to build an object

**Amp: 1 Chemical bar.** Objects created with this spell become extra durable, gaining 3 armor on any attacks directly targeting them. If the target would already have 3 or more armor normally, it instead gains +1 armor. This does not apply to armor an object grants to its wearer or occupants.

**Amp: 1 Force bar.** You can separate trace material from a large quantity of impure material. You may target up to 1000kg of raw material, and extract up to 10kg of target material from it. If the material is not readily separable (e.g. extracting metal from ore, ore wiring from a complicated device), this spell instead does 1 point of damage per round until the target is destroyed enough to separate the material from it.

## ALCHEMICAL PHARMACIST

I 10 Fortune. Requires Stable Compounds.

You can synthesize drugs that people need. Using a downtime action, you may make a science roll vs TN 8. On success, everyone in the community regains 2 health.

You may instead use this ability to gain up to 2 fortune worth of drugs ([see "Drugs" on pg 103](#)).

## ACIDIFY

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Alchemical Bar

You turn two liters of liquid within 50m into a powerful acid. Anyone who comes in contact with it takes 6d6 acid damage and reduces their physical armor by 3 until it is repaired.

**Amp: 1 Force bar.** You spray the acid through the air. You may split the damage dice across any number of targets within 50m by making a Magic Arts roll vs Aegis (split the dice before rolling Magic Arts). Anyone who takes damage takes the armor penalty.

**Amp:** For each additional chemical bar used casting this spell, increase damage by 2d6 and reduce physical armor by an additional 2 points.

## AUGMENT FUEL

I Spell. **Cost:** 2 Chemical Bars. Sustainable.

Main Action. You increase the energy released from fuel, increasing it's potency. Any gun or Rocket Fired within 50m of you, or any fire or explosion that occurs within 50m of you, has its damage increased by one. Any vehicle has its top speed increased by one, however it takes 1 physical damage each round this is in effect.

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** Increase all damage by 3 instead.

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** You may select what sources are affected by this spell.

**Amp 1 Fire Bar.** Increase damage from fire and explosions by 3.

## SYNTHESIZE STIMULANTS

I Spell. Cost 1 Chemical Bar. Compound. 20 Fortune, 3 Choices

You can synthesize a variety of stimulants from common metabolites in people's bodies. Roll Magic Arts vs TN 10 (or Aegis if they're unwilling) of a target within 10m. On a success, the target gains +5 initiative and +3 Guard and Vigilance for the next 5 rounds.



**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** The target gains armor +1 while this spell is in effect. If this is the first time the character has been affected by this spell this act phase, the character heals 2d6 health and animity damage

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** The character gains Augment 2 on all progress rolls while this spell is in effect

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** This spell can affect a number of targets within 10m equal to your ranks in Magic Arts

**Amp: 1 Mana Bar.** This spell becomes sustainable. The effects of this spell last for 5 rounds after the spell stops being sustained. For every hour a character is under this effect each day (cumulative across multiple castings), they take 1d6 health and animity damage.

## DITTY OF CORROSION

10 Fortune, Ditty

You cause corrosion or damage to the touched target. If used in combat this does 2 damage and reduces physical armor by one.

## DISINTEGRATE

Spell, Cost 2 Chemical Bars. 20 Fortune, Requires 3 other choices from this paradigm

You dissolve the chemical bonds holding a piece of matter together, turning it into dust and gas. Roll Magic Arts vs Aegis for a target within 10m, on success, you do 8d6 damage. If this reduces the target to zero health, they gain an immediate additional consequence. If this reduces a nonliving object to zero health, the object is destroyed.

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** For each additional bar spent on this amp, do +3d6 damage.

## ALCHEMISTS STONE

Spell. Sustainable. Cost 2 Chemical Bars. 20 Fortune, Requires 3 other choices from this paradigm

Successfully casting this spell requires a TN 10 Magic Arts test. Upon casting or sustaining this spell, you can precipitate carbon from the air around you into 2 kg of graphite. This can be in any shape you desire. While this spell is sustained, this can be used to create cover, granting +3 Guard to a target of the casters choice within 10m as an interrupt action. The graphite created in this way is real and nonmagical, and can be used to make structures, sculptures or more.

**Amp: 1 Fire Bar.** You may ignite the excess oxygen produced by this spell, creating small explosions. When casting or sustaining this spell, you may do 2 fire health damage to a target within T range of the alchemists stone you're creating. Anyone making a melee attack against a target you're providing cover for also takes 2 fire damage each time they make an attack.

**Amp: 1 Force Bar.** You levitate the created stone in the air, providing a more substantial block of attacks. When you use this spell to give a bonus to guard, the target also receives +2 Physical Armor

**Amp: 2 Chemical Bars, 1 Force Bar, 1 Fire Bar.** Instead of creating graphite, you create diamond, albeit flawed. Anyone protected by this spell gains and additional +3 guard and +4 physical armor

## THE MYSTIC POULTICES

Spell, Cost 1 Chemical Bar, 1 mana bar. Compound. 20 Fortune, 3 other choices from this paradigm.

By tinkering with the innate magic in everything, the poulitces created this spell blend mana and chemistry to provide powerful boons. This sort of magic is dangerous, and on a dynamic failure this spell may draw negative attention from spirits (and sometimes even the gods). Roll Magic Arts vs TN 10 (or Aegis if they're unwilling) of a target within T range as you annoint them with the poultice as part of the casting. On success, the target gains the following effect based on their magical tradition:

- ✧ Arcane—The next harmonize action the character takes within the next 5 rounds is a free action
- ✧ Sublime—The character may immediately gain the effect of another meditation they know for the next 5 rounds (this does not count to their limit of meditations)
- ✧ Divine—The next spell the target casts has its dissonance reduced by 1.
- ✧ No Magic Tradition—The target ignores the effect of dulled for the next 5 rounds. If this is the first time this act mode they have been targeted by this spell, they regain 2 grit.

**Amp: 1 Mana Bar.** Instead of the normal effect, the target instead loses the ability to use magic for 5 rounds.

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar.** The effect lasts until used, or when 1 hour elapses (whichever happens first).



## ALCHEMICAL MASTERY

I 20 Fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 Chemical bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.

# THE COLLEGE OF STORM (ELECTRICITY)

*While it's theoretically true that all magic converts mana to energy with equal efficiency, the fact that cybertech, your brain, and all the mightiest gods of myth use electricity to get stuff done gives us a hint that maybe not all energy is created equal.*

—Nabua of House Elamtu, Mage Electric

Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.

A caster who takes any ability from the College of Storm may now harmonize one Storm Bar when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional Storm bar.

## SHOCKING DITTY

I 10 Fortune Ditty.

You create a jolt of lightning at a target within 10m. If used as an attack, this does 2d6 damage, ignoring armor.

## GROUNDING DITTY

I Ditty. Sustainable. 10 Fortune.

You ground the touched target, negating any electrical charge on it and protecting it from electrical damage: gain 5 armor against electrical attacks until the end of the next round.

## AURORA

I Spell. **Cost:** 1 storm Bar. Sustainable. 10 Fortune

You charge the particles in the air around you, illuminating the air and its movements around you. You may use this to distract enemies and protect your allies: increase the guard of any creature you choose within 50m by +1 as long as Aurora is sustained.

**Amp:** You may spend 1 storm bar to use the aurora to overwhelm electronic devices. Any device (including drones and vehicles) you choose takes 1d6 electric damage each round.

## STATIC

I 10 Fortune. 1 Storm Bar.

You create electromagnetic noise that interferes with wireless communications. The range of all devices ([see "Range" on pg 55](#)) within 50m of you is decreased by one and all rolls requiring wireless control targeting or originating within 50m range gain one instance of dulled.

**Amp:** For each additional storm bar added, you may add one additional instance of dulled to any wireless actions. You may choose which devices are affected by this amp.

**Amp:** You may increase the range of this spell to 100m, and the range of all devices are decreased by 2 steps.

## BACKUP GENERATOR

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 storm Bar. Sustainable.

You provide energy to an electrical device, sustaining it and providing power. It can maintain its function indefinitely, and gains Augment 3 on all relevant tests, however on a dynamic failure it becomes inoperable.

You can spend downtime action to provide power for your community. Treat this as the Side Gig ([see pg 33](#)) downtime action, except the GM gains no grit and all downtime actions requiring power gain Augment 3.

## LIGHTNING BOLT

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 storm Bar

Pick a target within 50m. Roll Arcane Arts vs Aegis, if you succeed, do 5D6 shock damage, ignoring armor.

**Amp:** For each additional storm bar used casting this spell, target one additional target within one range band of the original target.



## LIGHTNING STORM

I Spell. **Cost:** 2 storm Bars. Sustainable. 10 Fortune

Pick a target within 50m. All enemies within 20 feet of target take 2D6 shock damage for each round the spell is sustained as long as they remain in range.

**Amp:** For each additional storm bar used casting this spell, do +2D6 damage

## MAGNETISM

I 2 Storm bars. Interrupt. Sustainable 20 Fortune,  
Requires 5 other choices from this paradigm.

You work a magnetic aura, manipulating ferrous materials on or around your target. While this spell is sustained, you may manipulate the magnetic fields around you as an interrupt action.

Roll arcane arts vs aegis against all targets within 10m range of the opponent rolling against your ally. On a success, targets gain dilled 5 on all rolls for until the start of your next turn. Increase this to dilled 4 if they are using or wearing substantial amounts of metal.

**Amp:** For each storm bar used for this amp, you may increase the attraction (decrease the dilled value) by 1 (to a minimum of 2).

**Amp:** The projectiles become dangerous. Anyone affected by this spell takes 1d6 damage for each storm bar used on this amp.

## SEIZURE

I 20 Fortune. Spell. 1 Storm Bars

You manipulate the electricity within the brain of a living creature within 10m. Roll Magic Arts vs Aegis, on a success, the target takes 1d6 health damage and cannot take any actions until the start of your next turn. Each round you sustain this spell you may repeat this effect (rolling again). Once a creature resists the effects of this spell it cannot be affected again by this casting.

**Amp:** 1 storm bar. You may crudely control the movements of a creature under the effects of this spell. On the targets turn you may move them 10m.

**Amp:** 1 storm bar. You may target two additional creatures for each storm bar used for this amp.

## STORM MASTERY

I 20 Fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 storm bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.

# THE COLLEGE OF FIRE (THERMAL)

*I'm not saying that every Fire Mage is an arsonist at heart, but every one I've met thinks it's pretty the way things burn.*

— Dake Enlilyan, Fire Mage

Taking any choices from this list requires Arcane Arts 3.

A caster who takes any ability from the College of Fire may now harmonize one Fire Bar when casting a spell. For every four additional abilities taken from this paradigm, the PC may harmonize one additional Fire bar.

## WREATH OF FLAME

I 10 Fortune, Ditty, Sustainable

You cover a melee weapon or other held object with flames. While on fire, it does an additional 1d6 fire damage on any attacks. If it is vulnerable to fire, it takes that damage too.

## HEAT SHIELD

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Fire Bar. Sustainable.

You wreathe yourself in a shield of fire, protecting you from heat.

Anyone who does damage to you at range T, or anyone you do damage to with a melee attack takes 4D6 points of health damage.

**Amp: 1 Fire bar.** Reduce all incoming fire or cold damage by five.

**Amp: 1 fire bar.** Each additional fire bar increases damage taken and reduced by 3.

**Amp: 1 fire bar.** You can choose a target in T range other than yourself as the benefit of your fire shield.



## CAUTERIZE

I Ditty. 10 Fortune

This can be used on a character who has dropped to zero health. Your flames cauterize their wound, scarring them mentally and physically, but stabilizing them as well. Target is restored to 1 health, but suffers 1 animity damage.

## HEARTH

I 10 Fortune. Spell.

You create warmth and easy availability of fire and flame for your community. Using a downtime action, you increase others' grit, health, and animity gains by 1 during this downtime.

## FLAME BURST

I 10 Fortune. Spell. **Cost:** 1 Fire Bar

Choose a target within Medium Range and roll Arcane arts vs Aegis. On a success, deal 6D6 damage

**Amp:** For each additional fire bar used casting this spell, do +3D6 damage

## FIRE BALL

I Spell. **Cost:** 1 Fire Bar. Requires Flame Burst.

All enemies within 10m of the target take 3D6 fire damage.

**Amp:** For each additional fire bar used casting this spell, do +2D6 damage

**Amp 1 fire bar.** Only targets you choose take damage.

**Amp: 1 chemical bar.** Those who take damage also lose their next main action.

## TEMPERATE DITTY

I Ditty. Interrupt. Sustainable. 20 Fortune, 5 Choices

Spend 1 grit. You absorb excess heat from an object, spell, effect, or ability. The object is cooled to ambient temperature, and protected from heating: One target gains 5 shield from fire attacks until the end of the next round.

**Amp:** For each fire bar used (or added), you may add an additional target.

## HOT POTATO

I 10 Fortune Spell. **Cost:** 1 Fire Bar. Sustainable.

Choose an item within 50m. If attended, it resists with owner's aegis, otherwise treat as aegis of 8. On a success, anyone touching the object takes 3D6 fire damage. Anyone who takes damage from this must immediately drop the item if possible. At GM discretion, this effect may destroy or render inoperable the chosen item.

**Amp: 1 Chemical Bar:** The item is either protected from the effects of the spell, or rendered immediately inoperable. **Amp: 1 Fire Bar.** For each fire bar used on this amp, choose two additional items within 50m.

**Amp: 1 Fire Bar.** For each fire bar used on this amp, do an additional 1D6 damage.

## FIRE MASTERY

I 20 Fortune, 5 choices

Free action. Once per turn, you may spend 1 grit to add 1 fire bar to a Amp without harmonizing for that bar.



# Chapter 22: Sacred Magic

## THE SEVEN GODS WHO DECREE AND THEIR WORSHIPPERS

The Baru religion of Neo Babylon venerates the powers known as the Seven Gods Who Decree. While each of these Seven represent an ideal or domain that makes civilization in Neo Babylon possible, the mantles, both the garment and the symbolic ideals, represent priestly orders, not boxes for the gods to fit into. The seven are known in various places by different names or even by the ideas they represent, but the Powers do not mind. Every faithful person finds them however they must, and the Powers remain gods whether mortals get their names right or not. Each sacred Mantle represents being in tune with a particular deity or power, and by extension, a domain over which that divine being exerts control and blessing. Priests may be religiously more inclined to one god while taking the mantle symbolizing another, as these are theological constructs placed onto the gods, not the god

Upon reaching 3 ranks in Magic Arts, a character may allow themselves to be chosen by a particular Power (see "Choosing a God" on pg 66). The paradigm options available to them depend on the Power they follow. A character may chose an additional mantle allowed by their Power when they reach magic arts ranks 5, 7, and 9. Characters may not select any sacred paradigms if they have taken abilities from an Arcane or Sublime paradigm.

| Mantle      | Related Powers                              |
|-------------|---|
| Authority   | Marduk, Ishtar, Ninurta                     |
| Passion     | Ishtar, Nabu, Shamash                       |
| Knowledge   | Nabu, Shamash, Enlil (Disgraced, Forbidden) |
| Justice     | Shamash, Marduk, Ninurta                    |
| Secrets     | Sayin, Nabu, Nergal                         |
| Death       | Nergal, Ishtar                              |
| Cultivation | Ninurta, Marduk,                            |
| Nature      | Enlil (Disgraced, Forbidden), Sayin, Nergal |

## MANTLE OF AUTHORITY

*Strong laws enable trust among the untrustworthy.  
Great Leaders enable wisdom among the fools.  
— Hammurabi Enlima, Baru of Marduk*

Often associated with Marduk, the Mantle of Authority is, at its worst, the favorite of Tyrants. But at it's best is the domain of inspiring leaders who help others toward a common purpose. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Sacred Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## VOICE OF ASSURANCE

I Spell. Dissonance 1. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You speak an assuring suggestion to a target. Decrease the value of any Ask you make to the target by 3. If they do what you suggest, any skill rolls before your next turn towards that command gain +1 dice and are inspired. If they do not, both you and the target take 2 animity damage.



## INCANTATION OF COMMAND

I Spell. Dissonance 1. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You speak an inspiring command to a target. Treat the power of any spirit you are attempting to exorcise as 1 less for the purposes of your Magic arts tests.

## GRANT AUTHORITY

I Spell. Dissonance 3. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You impart authority to someone else within 50m. They gain +2 dice on all influence rolls and +2 on all defenses for 10 minutes, or until you cast another spell or make an influence roll. While this effect is active, you may choose to allow them to spend your grit as if it was their own.

## OATH

I Spell. Dissonance 4. 10 Fortune.

You bind one or more willing parties (which can include yourself) to a specific Oath. Each participant spends an agreed upon amount of grit. For each point of grit each participant spends, they gain 1 grit that may be spent only towards the goal. If any participant breaks the oath, the oath-breaker immediately takes Animity damage equal to twice the grit spent, and the effect ends for all participants.

## STEWARD

I Spell. Interrupt. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

Pick any number of targets within 50m. You gain +2 dice on any action made to assist them for the next five rounds. For the next 24 hours, if you take any action against them or intentionally allow them to come to harm, you take 3d6 animity damage.

## NATURAL LEADER

I Spell. Interrupt. Dissonance 1. 20 Fortune, requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Make a Sacred Arts role against TN 10. On a success, all allies (not including you) within 50m gain +1d6 on all skill rolls and +1 defenses until the beginning of your next turn, and you gain +1 dice on Influence rolls. You or any target may spend any amount of grit, for each grit spent increase the duration by 1 round.

## PROCLAIM LAW

I Spell. Dissonance 2. 20 Fortune, requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Pick one of your values and state an edict upholding it. Make a Sacred arts roll vs Aegis for anyone who hears your edict within 50m. On a success, they take 4d6 animity damage the first time they violate the edict within the next day.

# MANTLE OF CULTIVATION

*A seed planted today is a meal tomorrow, a sapling planted by the parent is shelter for the child*  
— Apson Belyan, Baru of Ninurta

Chosen of Ninurta tend to favor the Mantle of Cultivation, which focuses on creating growth and stability, both literally with plants and agriculture and figuratively with health, strength and community. This mantle also values the development of robust and prosperous communities and civilization. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Sacred Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## GROW PLANTS

I Spell. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune.

You cause plants of your choice within 100m range to grow at ten times their normal rate. Fruit and Vegetable plants produce an abundance of food. Special: If you have access to a small plot of land, greenhouse, or other cultivation room, you may create a Recovery Resource (Garden) as a community resource. If you use the Garden as a downtime action, you may decrease the GM grit by 1.

## VERDANT BOON

I Spell. Dissonance 2. 10 Fortune.

You endow an ally with strength and resilience. They gain 2 Armor and 2 Adamant until the end of the session. Special: You may cast this spell as a downtime action. If you do so, any member of your community who takes a downtime action with you gains 4 Armor and 4 Adamant until the start of the next downtime.

## GROW STRONG

I Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You imbue an ally within 10m range with vigor and ability. They gain +1d6 on all rolls linked to Brawn or Agility until the end of your next turn, and gain **Augmented 1** on all such tests. You or they may spend one grit to extend the duration of the spell by one round (this may be done multiple times).



## NURTURE

I Spell, Dissonance 1, 10 Fortune.

You heal and strengthen a target within 10m. They heal 4 Health. A character may only benefit from the nurture spell once per session. Special: You may cast this spell as a downtime action. If you do so, any member of your community who takes a downtime action with you gains +6 Health until the end of the next downtime.

## GROW THE COMMUNITY

I 10 Fortune.

You may take a downtime action to reduce the cost of one community paradigm ability by your ranks in Magic Arts. If you do so, regain 1 animity and grit.

## PEACE AND CALM

I Spell, Dissonance 1, 10 Fortune.

You provide the mental space necessary for a character to thrive and grow. They heal 4 Animity damage. A character may only benefit from the Peace and Calm spell once per session. Special: You may cast this spell as a downtime action. If you do so, any member of your community who takes a downtime action with you gains +4 animity and the GM must spend 5 more grit to activate a community impulse until the end of the next downtime.

## RING OF RESCUE

I Spell, Dissonance 2, Interrupt, 20 Fortune

Make a sacred arts roll. Any allies within Short distance may use the result of your roll instead of their guard until the next turn of whoever was interrupted.

## TIRELESS CULTIVATOR

I 20 Fortune, 3 abilities from this paradigm

When you use the Nurture or Peace and Calm spells, you may increase the dissonance by 1 to target a character who has already been targeted by those effects this session (they may not be targeted by the ability a third time).

## VIGOROUS STEWARD

I Spell, Interrupt, Dissonance 2, 30 Fortune, 6 abilities from this paradigm

You may use this ability to target a character who has taken a downtime action to gain the benefits of your abilities from this paradigm. Spend any amount of grit. For each point of grit spent, increase their Guard, Vigilance, and Aegis by 2 until the beginning of their next turn. This may be done after learning the result of a roll targeting them—apply this spell before resolving that effect. Special: When the GM spends grit to trigger a community impulse, the player may spend immediately spend any amount of grit. The GM must spend grit equal to twice the amount of grit spent or the impulse is not triggered.

# MANTLE OF DEATH

*You command the storm which flattens the hostile land, you pour dust over its evil; you pour it over for as long as it disobeys. Because thou art kind, I have turned to thy divinity. Because thou art forgiving, I have sough for thee. Look with true favor upon me and hearken to my cry. May thy angry heart be at rest!*

—Ancient Prayer to Nergal

Most common among chosen of Nergal, the Mantle of Death focusses on bringing death and destruction, both directly but also by empowering others in violence and combat. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Sacred Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## FRAILITY OF LIFE

I Spell, Dissonance 1, 10 Fortune

You pull an injured target closer to death. Choose a target within 10m. On a successful Magic Arts vs Aegis roll, they take damage equal to the current amount of damage they've taken.

## KILLER'S EYE

I Spell, Interrupt, Dissonance 1, 10 Fortune

You make a blow land with extra impact. After witnessing a successful attack within 100m, you may cast this spell to give it **Augmented 5**.



## HARDENED

I 10 Fortune

Your intimacy with the domain of death has desensitized you to experiences others might find disturbing. Gain adamant 2.

## CHAMPION OF WAR

I Spell, Interrupt. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

Target you can see within 50m gains +2 Guard and **Augmented 2** on all Melee and Ranged Combat rolls.

## IMBUE PROWESS

I Spell, Interrupt. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

You call upon sacred power to imbue a target with skill. The target may use your ranks in Magic Arts instead of Ranged or Melee Combat skills rolls for their next three turns.

## MORTALITY'S CHAINS

I Spell, Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

You target a spirit or creature within 50m, with the keywords spirit and (elemental, undead, or construct). Roll Magic Arts vs Aegis of the target, on success the target takes 6d6 Physical Damage and 2d6 Animity Damage.

## ACCIDENTAL HARM

I Spell, Interrupt. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

You call on your power to will the universe to become more hazardous to a target. Make a Magic Arts vs Aegis of a target you can see within 50m. On a success, the next time within the next hour they get a dynamic failure on a test that could conceivably lead to harm, they take 5 Physical damage in addition to the normal effects.

## FAMINE

I Spell, Downtime action, Dissonance 5. 20 Fortune.  
Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

You call misfortune down on a target. As a Downtime Action, you may target a character. Make a Magic Arts roll against their Aegis (if an individual) or against a TN equal to 12 + Influence x2 (for a faction or community). On a success, the target gains a consequence until the next downtime.

Whenever a PC uses this ability, the GM gains 10 grit.

## CONTEST OF MARTIAL SKILL

I Spell. Dissonance 1. 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

You will combatants around you to a contest of skill. Make a Magic Arts against Aegis of all targets within 50m (willing targets may choose to be automatically affected by this spell). All affected targets take a -5 penalty to their Guard. Whenever a character affected by this spell makes a Melee or Ranged Combat roll, that result becomes their Guard until the beginning of their next turn.

## PESTILENCE

I Spell. Dissonance 3. 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

You inflict a supernatural disease upon a target within T range on a successful Magic Arts vs Aegis roll. The target gains an immediate consequence, and each round must make a Physicality roll opposed by your Magic Arts skill. On a failure they take 2d6 damage, on a success they take no further damage for now (on a dynamic or critical success, the spell immediately ends, removing the consequence from this spell).

At the end of each downtime, an affected target must make a Physicality roll vs your Magic Arts Skill as above. If they took the Rest Up action during downtime they gain a +5 on this roll, if someone took the provide care action on their behalf they may replace the Physicality Roll with a Science or Magic Arts roll. On a dynamic failure, this spell passes on to someone else (GMs decision) the target had close contact with—they are treated as if they were targeted by this spell in an identical matter to the original target.

## PAROLE DEATH

I Spell, Dissonance 4. 30 Fortune, 6 other abilities from this paradigm

You allow an injured target within 50m range to continue onward even in the face of extreme injury. Target loses the **Unconscious** condition if it has it, and gains a Parole Death progress track starting at the current amount of damage they've taken to their health track and with a max value equal to twice their normal max health. Any further damage the target takes is applied to the Parole Death track before it is applied to health or grit, up until the max value is reached. This track lasts as long as its value is greater than zero. A character may not be targeted by the Parole Death spell if they are already under the effect of another casting of the spell.



At the end of the each subsequent downtime, the character takes damage equal to the value of their parole death track (this does not add to their parole death track). A character with this spell may take a downtime action to make a Magic Arts roll to decrease the value of the progress track. Once the progress track is reduced to zero (or the target dies), the spell ends.

## I MANTLE OF PASSION

*“But the greatest gift to the seven lines of king was from Ishtar, who gave them passion. For without passion, none would aspire to use their other gifts, and indeed without her gift the lineages would not be able to worship any of the other gods—and for her gift she was given the highest of reverence”*  
— Harmaku’s Aubade of Praises

Passion is most often, though not exclusively the domain of Ishtar. The Mantle of Passion focusses on supporting and enabling people to follow their values and build deep relationships. It can also empower impulsivity and pleasure. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Sacred Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

### DIVINE DESIRE

I Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis on a target you are engaged in conversation with. On success, you learn the value, impulse, goal, or positive relation that is most salient to them at the moment.

### ENTICE DESIRE

I Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis on a target within 50m. On a success, decrease the **Ask** of any request that advances one of their values, impulses, goals, or positive relationships by six.

### FILL LIFE WITH PASSION

I Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Choose a target within 10m (including yourself) that has taken an action to advance an impulse, value, goal, or relation with a Regard greater than 5. They gain 2 grit and animity. This may only be done once per character per act phase.

### LOVE AND KINDNESS

I Spell. Dissonance 3, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Once per session per relation, upon meeting a relation with a Regard greater than 5, you regain 1 grit and animity.

### MANY FRIENDS

I 10 Fortune.

You gain 1 fortune for every 5 points of base Regard each of your contacts has towards you. This applies to your current contacts as well as any new contacts. Whenever you take the Interact with Relation downtime action ([see pg 32](#)), gain 1 grit.

### FOLLOW PASSION

I Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Choose a target within 10m (including yourself) that has taken an action to advance an impulse, value, goal, or relation with a Regard greater than 5. The target gains +2 dice on any rolls involved in that action and the roll becomes **inspired**.

### LOVE IS LIFE

I 20 Fortune, 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Gain 2 Additional Values and +2 Max Grit.

### BOND OF LOVE

I Spell. Dissonance 3, 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Choose a target within T range with a Regard of 8 or higher, or a willing PC who both players agree are good friends or better. Until the next downtime, either character may spend grit from each others pools, When the characters make a teamwork or group test together, roll one additional dice and the roll is inspired.



## DARKNESS CANNOT DIM A LIGHT

| Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

If you have not broken any of your values, target within 50m gains animity armor 5. If you target yourself, instead gain animity armor 10.

## PURPOSE

| Spell. Dissonance 2, Interrupt. 30 Fortune. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm

You may cast this spell upon accomplishing a goal, upholding a value at cost to yourself, or improving the Regard of a relation above 5. Gain 3 grit and remove a consequence.

# MANTLE OF JUSTICE

*Neither mercy that lets a wound fester nor punishment that leaves a greater mark is justice, for justice must always be the balm to the world.*

— Dakuri of the Esteemed House Maadasi, Arbiter of Shamash

Both Ninurta and Shamash, in their various roles as Powers of Justice, have many of their chosen bear the Mantle of Justice. It focusses on upholding justice, ascertaining guilt, enacting punishment, and providing recompense to victims. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Magic Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## ILLUMINATE GUILT

| Spell. Dissonance 1, 10 Fortune.

Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis on a target within 10m. On a success, you ascertain if they believe they have engaged in violations of the law or their communities values recently. As this spell depends on the internal beliefs of the target it is considered unreliable except as a guide for future investigations—some people hold more guilt for being accidentally rude to a friend than others do for robbing a bank!

## ENACT SENTENCE

| Spell. Dissonance 5, 10 Fortune.

Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis on a target within T range who you believe beyond a reasonable doubt has violated one of your values. They gain 1 consequence until they meet a condition you specify (typically restitution or a specific duration). This effect lasts for 1 week, however for each grit you spend, you may increase the duration by 1 month. If you spent 10 grit, this effect is instead permanent.

## VICTIM'S BLESSING

| Spell. Dissonance 3, 10 Fortune.

Choose a target within T range you believe has been a victim of a violation of one of your values. They heal 5 health and 5 animity damage. A character may only benefit from Victim's Blessing once per Session.

## STUDENT OF MORALITY

| 10 Fortune.

Gain 2 additional Values. The first time you uphold a value each session, heal 1 animity damage (this applies separately for each value).

## RESPECTED ARBITER

| 10 Fortune.

You help resolve issues in your community. As long as your community's Regard towards you is 4 or higher, the GM must spend an additional 2 grit to trigger a community impulse. Furthermore, you remove 3 GM grit instead of 2 whenever you take the Deal with a Problem downtime action.

## COMPEL TRUTH

| Spell. Dissonance 2, Interrupt. 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from Mantle of Justice

Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis on a target within 10m. On a success they may not lie for 1 minute, though they may attempt to misdirect you at a penalty (they take a -5 penalty on any deception tests). On a dynamic success, they may not attempt to misdirect you, on a critical success they may not lie by omission and will blurt out the truth in response to questions.

## HIDDEN SUN OF THE GUILTY

| Spell. Dissonance 2, Interrupt. 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from Mantle of Justice

You create a blinding source visible only to those who have violated your beliefs. Choose one of your values. Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis for all targets within 50m. If you beat their aegis and they have violated that value, they take 2d6 health and animity damage. For minor infractions, halve the damage, for major infractions, double the damage. You may make an Observation roll vs Vigilance roll against anyone affected by this spell—they take a penalty on their vigilance equal to half the damage taken. On a success, you identify them as having been affected by this spell



## PATH TO ABSOLUTION

| Spell. Dissonance 5, 30 Fortune. Requires 6 other abilities from Mantle of Justice

You touch a willing target who has violated one of your values. Roll Sacred Arts vs TN 10, on a success, they receive visions of their violation (depending on the value, this may be images of the harm they've inflicted, the beliefs of the community, or simply an overwhelming sense that the value should be observed). The target takes 4d6 animity damage and gains the value as one of their own. Any session they work towards providing restitution towards their violation, they heal 5 animity damage and gain 3 grit. If they violate that value, they immediately take 4d6 animity damage. This effect lasts until they have made full restitution to their violation or for one year, whichever happens first.

## MANTLE OF KNOWLEDGE

*Knowledge is the root of all wisdom, and much foolishness.*

— Lilitu Maryan, Baru of Nabu

The chosen of Nabu often take on the Mantle of knowledge, but it is also a favorite of Shamash's disciples. It focus on learning, understanding, and divinations and wards against threats. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Magic Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

### KNOW THE LANGUAGES OF EARTH

| Spell. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune.

Choose a target within T range. For 1 hour, or as long as they are within 50m of you (whichever is longer) you understand all languages they speak and they understand all languages you speak.

### SNATCH THE MYSTERIES

| Spell. Dissonance 4. 10 Fortune

A favorite of Chosen attempting to quickly study up on a subject, the Chosen touches an object and attempts to learn its secrets. Make a Sacred Arts roll against a TN of 10. On a success, treat the Chosen as if they had carefully studied the object for a number of hours equal to their margin of success (minimum 1).

### SACRED HEDGE

| Spell. Dissonance 1, Interrupt, 10 Fortune

You know the dangers of mystical effects and how to protect against them.

Roll against target caster's Aegis (or effect TN). On a success, increase the Aegis of all allies within 50m by 3 against that magical effect. This lasts until the end of the scene.

### KNOW WEAKNESSES

| Spell, Dissonance 2. 10 Fortune

Choose a target within 50m of you. Make a Sacred Arts roll against their aegis defense, if you succeed you and all allies within 50m get +1 dice on all effects targeting them for the next 10 minutes.

### KNOW WAYS

| Interrupt, Spell, Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

Choose a target within 50m of you. Make a Sacred Arts roll against their aegis defense, if you succeed you and all allies within 50m get +2 Aegis, Guard, and Vigilance against any effects they initiate until the end of your next turn.

### DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE

| 10 Fortune

You become inured to even the most disturbing knowledge. You gain Adamant 5 against any animity damage due to learning uncomfortable facts, exposure to alien forces, or other sources of damage based purely on learning something. This does not apply when it directly affects you—learning about a terrifying creature is one thing, seeing a terrifying creature about to attack you is completely different!



## KNOW MIND

| Spell, Dissonance 3. 20 Fortune, 3 other paradigm abilities

Choose a target within 10m. On a successful Magic Arts vs Aegis roll, you hear their surface thoughts in your head for as long as you take no other actions besides attuning. On a dynamic success, you also know any memories they have of the last day. On a critical success, you gain access to any of their memories.

## KNOWLEDGE

| Spell, Interrupt. Dissonance 3. 20 Fortune, 3 other paradigm abilities

Cast upon failing a Science or Humanities roll to know something. You may spend 1 grit to immediately reroll, gaining a bonus equal to half your ranks in Magic Arts (round up).

## SEEK ANSWER

| Spell. Dissonance 3. 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You look for the knowledge. State a simple question that you do not know the answer to and make a Sacred Arts roll vs TN 10. If you succeed, you learn of the existence and the location of any object within 100m that could answer your question. If the question could be answered by a person within 100m, compare your result to their Aegis. If your roll beat their Aegis, you learn of their existence and location.

## DIVINATION

| Spell. Dissonance X. 30 Fortune. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm.

You pour oil onto water, inspect bones or livers, read the moon, or some other method of interpreting portents as you seek to gain insight into a question.

Ask a question of the GM and choose a Insight value for this spell between 1 and your ranks in Magic Arts. The GM will then choose an insight value for the information you're seeking. Higher insight values provide more information or uncover more hidden knowledge. Low insight values correspond to more easily findable information.

Make a Magic Arts test with the TN equal to 10 plus the insight value you chose. On a failure, you receive no answer. On a success, note whether the GM's insight value or the your insight value is higher.

If the Insight value you chose is higher than the Insight value chosen by the GM, you have interpreted the elements correctly and the GM answers the question truthfully, though not always in a way that feels immediately useful.

If your insight value is lower than the Insight value chosen by the GM, the GM provides a cryptic clue towards the answer—the larger the gap between your insight value and the GM insight value, the more obscure the clue.

On a dynamic success, decrease the GM's insight value by 3— on a critical success instead decrease the GM's insight value by 6.

The dissonance of this spell is equal to the insight value chosen by the caster. In addition, the attune action may not be used to mitigate any dissonance from this spell, though grit damage is reduced by the Dangerous Knowledge ability. On a dynamic failure you, take twice the animity damage from the spell.



# MANTLE OF NATURE

*The more one listens, the more one realizes the folly of thinking we are apart from nature. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we stand on are all a part of the natural world. We can no more separate ourselves from nature than an island can separate itself from the earth.*

— Davaga Uvagh, Naturalist

The mantle of nature covers the domain of the natural world, apart from the restraints of civilization. While both Sayin and Nergal have small factions who follow this mantle, it is often marginalized. Still, followers of the disgraced god Enlil most often chose this mantle. The mantle of nature allows chosen to interact with these devastating elements, but also animals and natural phenomenon. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Magic Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## SONGS OF NATURE

I Spell, Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

You intuitively understand communication of non-sentient natural beings. You may ask simple questions, limited to the understanding of the being (a parakitty might know when its owner was last around, while moss is limited to know if its been stepped on recently). You may use Influence and Deception against non-sentient natural beings. You do not need to take the attune action to resolve the dissonance of this spell until you take an action other than communicate with the natural world.

## PRIMAL INSTINCT

I Spell, Dissonance 1, Interrupt. 10 Fortune

You gain a sudden hunch about a physical or environmental danger to yourself and how to avoid it. If used in a cinematic, gain +4 defense against an attack (this may be used after your opponent rolls).

## THE WAY OF THINGS

I 10 Fortune

Communing with the natural world has taught you many things. Among them, is that life is brief, but even the end of life nourishes life in the future. These thoughts put you at ease with concepts others find troubling. Gain adamant 2.

## DOWSING

I Spell, Dissonance 2. 10 fortune

You attempt to find a natural object or material of relevance to a nonsentient natural being: examples include food, water, shelter, or other living beings. Make a sacred arts test to determine the range of this effect—the result determines the range in kilometers that the object or material can be found.

## SENSE OF THE NATURAL WORLD

I Spell, Dissonance 1. Interrupt. 10 Fortune

You gain an intuitive understanding of the ecosystem surrounding you. Gain +2 dice on any Science rolls to answer questions about life around you, or Piloting Rolls to navigate the terrain. This ability does not work in non-natural areas.

## DANGEROUS LANDS HEAR THE CALL

I Spell, Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune

You channel a natural danger against an opponent. Choose a target within 100m, the pre-existing natural dangers to turn against them and cause damage. Do damage based on the danger and the results of your Sacred Arts roll

- ✂ None (e.g. idyllic peaceful field). Do 1 point of damage as a mild wind blows and object into them or they twist their ankle on uneven ground
- ✂ Mild (e.g. a wild forest or mild storm). Do 1d6 damage as ground gives, objects fall, or they are buffeted by a gust of wind.
- ✂ Moderate (e.g. craggy mountains, a large thunderstorm). Do 3d6 damage as lightning strikes, rocks fall etc.
- ✂ Severe (e.g. a hurricane, a dangerous old growth forest, extreme temperatures). Do 6d6 damage.

At the GMs discretion, other hazards may occur instead of direct damage (aggressive animals, falling down holes, being shoved or trapped).

## GATHER NATURE'S DANGERS

I Spell, Dissonance 2. 20 fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You increase the natural hazards of nature within 100m of you for 5 rounds, up to a maximum of Moderate. Use the following scale:



- ✖ None (e.g. idyllic peaceful field). No effect
- ✖ Mild (e.g. a wild forest or mild storm). Apply a -1 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.
- ✖ Moderate (e.g. craggy mountains, a large thunderstorm). Apply a -3 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.
- ✖ Severe (e.g. a hurricane, a dangerous old growth forest, extreme temperatures). Apply a -5 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.

## SCATTER NATURE'S DANGERS

Spell, Dissonance 2. 20 fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You decrease the risk of natural hazards within L around you for 5 rounds. Decrease the hazards of nature around you by one step on the following scale.

- ✖ None (e.g. idyllic peaceful field). No effect
- ✖ Mild (e.g. a wild forest or mild storm). Apply a -1 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.
- ✖ Moderate (e.g. craggy mountains, a large thunderstorm). Apply a -3 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.
- ✖ Severe (e.g. a hurricane, a dangerous old growth forest, extreme temperatures). Apply a -5 penalty on all relevant tests in the area.

## INCITE BEAST

Spell, Dissonance 1. 20 fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You drive a nonsentient natural animal within 10m into an aggressive range against a target within 100m. Make an immediate Sacred Arts vs Aegis of the animal in question. If the animal is domesticated, the owner may instead make a piloting test instead of aegis. On a success, the animal becomes **Hostile** against the target and attempts to attack them. On a dynamic success, the animal gains +2 dice on any attacks, and on a critical success the caster additionally can control the actions of the animal.

## SOOTH BEAST

Spell, Dissonance 1. 20 fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

You drive a nonsentient natural animal within 10m to act peacefully. Make an immediate Sacred Arts vs Aegis of the animal in question. If the animal is domesticated, the owner may instead make a piloting test instead of aegis. On a success, the animal becomes **Favored** against all targets within 100m. If the animal is already favored to you, increase its Regard to you by 1 step. On a dynamic success, you may increase its Regard by another step, on a critical success the animal becomes **Allied** to you for the next hour.

# MANTLE OF SECRETS

*Knowledge shapes what we believe, and who we are. What others believe of us can bind us, what we believe of ourselves can damn us. Secrets shield us from the truth, so that we can make a better one.*

—A scrap found in the library of Sayin,  
Author Unknown.

Most popular among chosen of Sayin, chosen of Nabu also favor the Mantle of Secrets, which focuses on obfuscation, memories, and the finding of forgotten knowledge. Taking any choices from this paradigm requires Magic Arts 3 and may be limited by choice of Power.

## WITNESS FORGOTTEN KNOWLEDGE

Spell, Dissonance 3. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

Upon witnessing the loss of knowledge (whether it be through the destruction of a book or device or the death of a being), you may cast this spell. Make a sacred arts roll against TN 10 for inanimate objects, or the aegis of the dying being. On a success, you learn any secrets about to be lost, as if you had spend an hour inspecting or honestly conversing with the subject.

Note this spell only works on information about to be irrevocably lost—knowledge of which there is a copy or known by someone else cannot be learned by this spell.



## ELUDE NOTICE

I Spell. Dissonance 1. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You twist attention away from you or another. Make a Sacred Arts role vs Vigilance of a character who you recently lost concealment to. On a success, increase your Concealment to them by 2.

## FORGET

I Spell. Dissonance 1. 10 Fortune.

Pick a target within 10m (you are a valid target). If you are targetting an unwilling target, roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis, otherwise roll vs TN 8. On a success, you erase all memories of 1 hour of time, or an equivalent amount of facts or knowledge. These memories are inaccessible for 2d6 days. On a dynamic or critical success, you may spend 5 grit to cause the memories to be permanently erased.

## UNREMARKABLE FACE

I Spell. Dissonance 3. 10 Fortune.

You cover yourself with a glamour that draws attention away from yourself and makes you harder to recognize. You gain **resistance 2** against all reductions of concealment in social situations. The glamour persists indefinitely as long as remain in a group, if you draw individual Concealment to yourself (e.g. attempting to get past a guarded checkpoint alone or by jumping up on a table and dancing), roll Sacred Arts vs the highest Vigilance observing you. On a success the glamour persists and you remain unrecognizable (though they may still react to you), on a failure the spell ends immediately.

## HUNTER IN THE DARK

I Spell. Dissonance 1. Interrupt. 10 Fortune.

You may cast this spell in conjunction with an attack (yours or another's) against a target within 100m. Roll Sacred Arts vs Aegis—on success, reduce their Guard and Aegis by 5 until the start of their next turn.

## SEEK ANSWER

I Spell. Dissonance 3. 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from the Mantle of Secrets.

You look for the knowledge. State a simple question that you do not know the answer to and make a Sacred Arts roll vs TN 10. If you succeed, you learn of the existence and the location of any object within 100m that could answer your question. If the question could be answered by a person within 100m range, compare your result to their Aegis. If your roll beat their Aegis, you learn of their existence and location.

## MISDIRECT

I Spell. Dissonance 1. Interrupt 20 Fortune. Requires 3 other abilities from the Mantle of Secrets.

You gain Reliable 3 and Inspired on a Deception roll you make in conjunction with this spell.

## FADE TO ANONYMITY

I Spell. Dissonance 10, Interrupt. 30 Fortune. Requires 6 other abilities from the Mantle of Secrets.

You will the world to ignore you. Gain 3 concealment on any ongoing concealment track, and move all current Regard towards you 2 points towards zero.



# Chapter 23: Sublime Magic

Yojin would be the first to tell you that the Five Yojin Ways are not based on scientific elements. A yojin's fire may burn like nature's fire, but they aren't the same substance. Yojin masters practice elemental ways as a martial artist might practice forms based on animals. Rather than being empowered by elements themselves, the Yojin bend themselves to emulate the power they find in the elements. The Yojin doesn't borrow an element, they become it.

Each character may only select abilities from one Elemental Way paradigm.

## WAY OF EARTH

*Stand atop a peak and you'll understand a mountain in that instant. Stand there for a lifetime and you'll know what an instant is to a mountain.*  
—Earth Yojin Teaching.

The Way of Earth embodies the toughness of the ground, becoming resistant not just to physical damage but mental harms as well.

Taking any choices from this list requires Magic Arts 3. A Way of Earth Yojin may have 1 meditation active if they have taken any abilities from this paradigm. For each additional 4 abilities from this paradigm, they may have an additional meditation active simultaneously. (See **Using Sublime Magic**, above).

### SHIELD OF EARTH:

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You fill yourself with the solidity and strength of earth to protect yourself from harm. Gain +1 Armor and +5 Health

### IMPREGNABLE SELF

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You focus your sense of self into an unbreakable gem, becoming unshakeable. Gain Adamant 3.

### UNDERSTANDING OF MATTER

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You gain an intuitive control over solid matter. You may shape earth and metal you touch as if it was the consistency of clay. Ignore 2 points of Body Armor when making attacks

### FORCE OF EARTH

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You make yourself harder and denser as you make attacks to increase your strength. Gain +2 damage on all successful Melee Combat rolls.

### ENDURING MEDITATIONS

| 10 Fortune

Your meditation effects last for one week instead of 24 hours. Once per day when meditating for at least 10 minutes you may spend 1 grit to heal 2 Health and 2 Animity Damage

### STONE'S TIMELESS RESERVE

| 20 fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

Gain +3 Aegis

### RESILIENCE OF EARTH

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

Whenever you spend grit to reduce damage to yourself you block three additional damage.



## ENDURANCE OF ANCIENT MOUNTAINS

30 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm.

Whenever you take damage to health, animity, or grit, you may spend any amount of grit. Reduce damage by 4 per grit spent.

## WAY OF WATER

*A drop of water is easy to move, but hard to destroy. Deform it and it will regrow; boil it and will rain again. Its simplicity is its strength, for there is nothing about it that cannot be remade with ease.*

—Water Yojin Teaching

The Way of Water embodies the fluidity of water, parting before adversity but always reforming afterwards.

Taking any choices from this list requires Magic Arts 3. A Way of Water Yojin may have 1 meditation active if they have taken any abilities from this paradigm. For each additional 4 abilities from this paradigm, they may have an additional meditation active simultaneously. (See **Using Sublime Magic**, above).

### ONE WITH WATER

10 Fortune. Meditation.

You can breathe water as air, and gain +2d6 on all physicality rolls related to swimming.

### WATER WHIP

10 Fortune. Meditation.

When making a melee attack, you may target anyone within 10m. Instead of doing damage, you may entangle an enemy, requiring them to make an opposed Melee Combat roll vs your Sublime Arts skill in order to move. If you move or make another attack, the entanglement effect ends.

### PURIFY

10 Fortune. Meditation.

You gain +4 Aegis and Guard against poison effects. You may remove any impurities out of water you touch, making it potable and refreshing. You may heal any poison effects or damage on a touched target by making a sublime arts test vs the TN of the poison. On a success any lingering effects are removed, on a dynamic success heal up to 5 damage done by the poison.

## FLUID MEDITATIONS

10 Fortune

You may spend 2 grit as a main action to change a meditation to another meditation.

## GO WITH THE FLOW

20 Fortune, Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Whenever you take 3 or more damage (after all other effects), you take 2 less damage, to a minimum of one.

## POWERFUL CURRENT

20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Whenever you get a dynamic or critical success with an unarmed attack, you may move the target 10m in a direction of your choice.

## AN OCEAN SHALL REFILL

30 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm

You roll one additional dice on grit test (keep 3 total). On a dynamic success on a grit test, heal 5 health and animity damage. On a critical success, heal 10 health and animity damage and remove a consequence.



# WAY OF FIRE

*Fire is the great revealer—it sweeps away the underbrush, revealing the great oaks; it melts away the slag, revealing the steel.*

—Fire Yojin Teaching

The Way of Fire embodies the flickering, inconstant, and destructive nature of fire.

Taking any choices from this list requires Magic Arts 3. A Way of Fire yojin may have 1 meditation active if they have taken any abilities from this paradigm. For each additional 4 abilities from this paradigm, they may have an additional meditation active simultaneously. (See **Using Sublime Magic**, above).

## FOCUS INTO INTENT

| 10 Fortune

You may end a meditation to roll 2 additional dice on a roll

## SOUL OF FIRE

| Meditation. 10 Fortune

Whenever you trigger an impulse, gain an additional +2 grit. You gain Adamant 1.

## EXPLOSIVE BURST

| Meditation. 10 Fortune

You may spend 2 grit on a turn to gain Augment 2 and +1 Backup action. End this Meditation.

## PERILOUS TARGET

| Meditation. 10 Fortune

Whenever you take health or animity damage, you may spend 1 grit. If you do, the target takes 2 damage of the same type.

# WAY OF AIR

*To understand air, breathe.*

—Air Yojin Teaching

The Way of Air embodies the amorphous speed of air, and take on its lightness, speed, and intangibility.

## BURNING TOUCH

| Meditation. 10 Fortune

Your unarmed attacks do +1d6 damage. You may end this meditation to make a Sublime Arts roll vs Aegis of all targets in Touch range. On a success, do 2d6 physical damage.

## ASHES OF THE PHOENIX

| Meditation. 10 Fortune

Whenever you succeed on a grit test, gain +2 Health, Animity, and Grit

## WILDFIRE BURNS

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

Whenever you make a dynamic or critical success against an opponent, you may choose to give them a consequence in addition to the normal effect of the dynamic or critical success. If you do, the GM gains 5 grit.

## EAGER SPARK

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm

You gain +6 initiative, and gain Augment 3 on the first round of a cinematic

## BODY OF FIRE

| 30 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm

Your eyes flicker with flame and your body is warm to the touch, erupting at your will. You gain 20 armor against all fire damage. You may spend 3 grit as an interrupt to make a Sublime Arts vs Aegis roll of a target within T range. On a success, they take 2d6 Fire Damage.

Taking any choices from this list requires Magic Arts 3. A Way of Air Yojin may have 1 meditation active if they have taken any abilities from this paradigm. For each additional 4 abilities from this paradigm, they may have an additional meditation active simultaneously. (See **Using Sublime Magic**, above).



## FLICKERING MEDITATION

| 10 Fortune

You may spend a backup action to gain the effects of a meditation until the end of the round.

## LIGHT BODY

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

Gain +1d6 on all Physicality tests related to movement. When you take the [Minor Move \(pg 36\)](#) action under your own power you gain Acceleration 3.

## FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

Gain +2 Guard. As an interrupt action, you may spend 1 grit to increase your physical armor by 2 for one attack.

## ONE WITH THE AIR

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

While able to freely move, you take no damage from falling, and may always land on your feet.

# WAY OF THE VOID

*All things were nothing before they began.*

—Void Yojin Teaching

The most enigmatic of the Yojin, the Way of the Void sees the absence of material as worthy to aspire to as it's presence. By transcending materiality, Way of the Void Yojin learn to transcend material and psychological adversity. Skilled Way of the Void Yojin can create an emptiness around themselves, forcing things away, or fill the emptiness to bring them closer.

Taking any choices from this list requires Magic Arts 3. A Way of the Void Yojin may have 1 meditation active if they have taken any abilities from this paradigm. For each additional 4 abilities from this paradigm, they may have an additional meditation active simultaneously. (See **Using Sublime Magic**, above).

## EMPTINESS OF MIND

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

Gain 1 maximum grit. You may spend a main action to change this meditation to another meditation.

## SUPERNATURAL LEAP

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

When moving you may jump over any intervening obstacles, ignoring gaps and difficult terrain without making a test. You may move in any direction, as long as there is a solid place to land on.

## WHIRLING STRIKES

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

After taking a main action, you may spend 1 grit to take an additional **move** backup action.

## BECOME THE WIND

| 30 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 6 other abilities from this paradigm.

You gain a max speed of 3. When you are hit by an attack that is a normal success, you may spend 2 grit to negate that attack. If you do not take a movement action on your next turn after negating an attack, end this meditation.

## IMPERTURBABLE CORE

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You gain +4 on all grit tests. If you get a dynamic or critical success on a grit test, you lose the consequence you gained for dropping to zero grit.

## POTENTIALITY

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

After you roll, you may spend 1 grit to make that roll inspired

## FILL THE VOID

| 10 Fortune. Meditation.

You may, as a backup action, make a Sublime Arts vs Aegis roll against all enemies within 50m. On a success, they are moved 10m towards you.

## EMPTY THE VOID

| 20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires Fill the Void and 2 other abilities from this paradigm.

You may, as a main action, make a Sublime Arts vs Aegis roll against all creatures of your choice within 50m. On a success, they are moved 10m away from you and take 2d6 damage.



## NULLIFY

20 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 3 other abilities from this paradigm.

As a main action, You may make an sublime arts roll opposed by the casting skill of the opposing caster. On success, you end a spell effect within 50m that they initiated. The opposing caster gets a +2 for each bar or point of dissonance involved to cast the spell.

## VOID BODY

30 Fortune. Meditation. Requires 5 other abilities from this paradigm.

You may spend 1 grit as a backup action to become partially insubstantial until the end of your next turn. You may move through any barrier less than 1 foot deep, and may ignore gravity while insubstantial. You gain +4 on all physicality rolls related to stealth while partially insubstantial, and may ignore gravity when moving. While partially insubstantial, you take and inflict half as much physical damage.



# PART IV: GM GUIDE



# Chapter 24: GM Guide

## GM SPECIFIC RULES

### GM GRIT

In addition to the grit and tracks of individual NPCs and Obstacles, the GM also possesses a grit pool that they can use to complicate the PCs story. The GM grit pool can be spent to benefit any NPC or roll the GM makes as per normal rules, but additionally can be used for the following purposes:

- ✗ The GM may spend 3 grit to add a complication to a successful roll (but not a dynamic or critical success). Sample complications:
- ✗ A progress track (e.g. Regard or Concealment) increase by three
- ✗ The character takes 2 damage
- ✗ The character takes a -2 on their next roll.
- ✗ The GM may spend 3 grit to invoke a characters impulse (pg 25) or value (pg 27)
- ✗ The GM may spend 5 grit to upgrade a PCs failure to a dynamic failure
- ✗ The GM may send 12 grit to invoke a communities impulses (pg 76)
- ✗ The GM may spend 20 grit to trigger a community catastrophe

The GM gains grit in the following way:

- ✗ The GM gains 3 grit when a player regains grit with an impulse in downtime
- ✗ The GM gains 5 grit at the end of each downtime
- ✗ The GM begins the story with 5 grit

Players may reduce the GM grit pool in the following way:

- ✗ Taking the reduce grit downtime action

### TIMERS

While Tracks represent the progress PCs make towards a goal, **Timers** are a GM's way of keeping track of the progress of events in the background of the PCs' stories. If a timer reaches zero, a new complication, challenge, impulse, or other plot twist is introduced.

Timers can work as NPC action trackers, build up tension with factions, alarm countdowns, trap timers, or almost any other situation where the GM wants to keep track of movements, possibilities, or tensions, either behind the scenes or with the PCs' full knowledge.

GMs are encouraged to create timers whenever PCs have a limited amount of time before something happens, or a consequence might occur due to accumulated actions of the NPCs. A few examples are listed below:

**Failure Timers:** A consequence occurs once the PCs have accumulated a certain number of failures on a specific task (this can be instead of normal failure effects or above and beyond the consequences for normal failures).

Example Failure Timer:

- ✗ 1<sup>st</sup> Failure: Normal failure effects.
- ✗ 2<sup>nd</sup> Failure: Lawjack detective tracking the Envoys arrives, concealment goes down by 3.
- ✗ 3<sup>rd</sup> Failure: Site goes into lockdown, all remote access revoked.

**Round Limits:** The PCs have a certain amount of time to accomplish a specific task

**Opposed Timers:** The PCs must finish progress on their timer before another factions timer is complete



# Chapter 25: Allies and Adversaries

In the PC's story, they'll encounter a wide range of other characters, be they, friendly, adversarial, or somewhere in between. In the world of Neo Babylon, this can range from everything from a Lawjack Detective to a dangerous magical creature, a corporate executive to a spirit of justice. Below is a range of NPCs that PCs might encounter in their adventures. GMs should feel free to use and adapt them as matches the story—there's far more diversity of potential adversaries than can be listed in one chapter, and adding uniqueness and character can make different individuals with similar abilities feel distinct and novel!

## POWER

Many of these characters cover a wide range of potential NPCs, with a wide range of abilities, influence, and threat. This is represented by their **Power**. Whenever Power (abbreviated as **P**) is listed in an ability or attribute of an NPC, you can adjust it to represent the danger of that particular entity.

Power typically ranges from 1-10, ranging from NPCs that are only impactful in large numbers, to beings that are among the most powerful on the world. NPCs of similar ability to the Envoys typically have powers between 3-5.

Power should not be taken as a straight measure of challenge to the PCs—a world class physicist on the run may be easier to find than a missing pet, and an incompetent buffoon intent on vengeance may be more trouble than an ancient mountain spirit content to mostly ignore the goings-on of people. Power typically measures an NPC's ability when they bring their full abilities to bear on their best skills—GMs should gauge their narrative challenge based on how likely that is to be the case.

## KEY ABILITIES

NPC's often have key abilities. These are the default, or go-to, abilities the NPC will use first or most often in any given circumstance. They may also be unique or particularly effective abilities that NPC possesses.

## KEY SKILLS

Key skills represent the primary skills of an NPC. An NPC has ranks in their Key Skills equal to their Power, with a bonus equal to their power. Some NPCs have skills at a higher or lower ability than would be indicated by their power—this is listed as a + or – next to the skill. If an NPC needs to make a test that is not one of their key skills, use dice equal to half their power with an attribute bonus of half their power.

## KEYWORDS

Certain characters may have keywords that act as shorthand to let the GM know how to use them, but may also act like special rules the characters suffer or benefit from. For example, if a character has the fearless keyword, they are immune to fear and intimidation, giving the GM an idea of how to roleplay and use them, but also granting the character the benefits associated with that keyword. Some keywords are more descriptive, such as elf, human, Undercity, beast, or elite, while others, such as fearless and ethereal, have particular rules and usage.



# SPIRITS

Spirits is a catchall term for purely ethereal beings—invisible to normal perception and consisting completely of magic. Spirits are as varied as material beings, and the term covers everything from the instinctual elementals to enigmatic celestial beings like kuriv, from a peaceful mountain spirit to a conniving demon. Most spirits spend their entire life in ethereal state, invisible to those without the talent to sense magic around them, but some spirits, through their own power or through the aid of another magical being can take physical form, affecting the world around them. Below are a number of common spirit types, but demons, elementals, kuriv and others are described in their own sections.

The baru say that spirits are the souls of things that don't speak or build. Rivers, caves, forests, trees, plants, animals, clouds, storms, skies, may all have spirits associated with them. They may appear as very large versions of the thing they are the spirit of (huge tree the middle of a forest, huge elephant, etc) or they may be spectral or "light" versions of them as well. They may also appear as humanoids with features of their habitat, like a humanoid made of flowers, or garbage, or perhaps as the shades of those who have lived before.

## KEY ABILITIES

**Ethereal:** In their base state, spirits are beings of pure mana. They are undetectable by mundane senses, and unable to affect or be affected by nonmagical phenomenon (unless stated otherwise). An Ethereal being can be noticed with shine perception, a Magic Arts + Awareness test against the spirit's Aegis. Ethereal beings always have magic arts as a key skill. Ethereal beings who have not manifested cannot have their guard targeted, nor can their health be reduced.

**Manifestation:** Every spirit has an affinity that allows it to somehow manifest itself physically. For some spirits, embracing this affinity also allows it to become more powerful for a time. Every spirit can manifest somehow, as noted in their descriptions, but at Power 4 or more, if a spirit is able to manifest, it may also spend 1 grit and a backup action to empower itself for a round. At Power 6 or higher, a spirit may instead empower itself as a free action at will.

**Empowered:** Some spirits gain special abilities when they are empowered, as noted in their descriptions. If no other abilities are listed, the spirit gains +1 power when empowered.

## UNIVERSAL SPIRIT TRAITS

### KEYWORDS:

Spirits of all kinds will have the keyword **Ethereal**. They will also have the keyword associated with their spirit type, such as **divine**, **natural**, **fend**, **elemental**, **revenant**, etc.,

## RIVER SPIRIT

Ethereal. Eco Spirit.

| Health    | Animity   | Grit      | Vigilance | Guard | Aegis |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| P x 4 + 6 | P x 4 + 6 | P x 2 + 2 | P + 6     | P + 5 | P + 8 |

Armor: P Adamant: P Initiative: P+10



As water falls from the skies and drains into streams, and those streams into river, the mana of the water begins to coalesce. As the river continues, this mana eventually takes on a life of its own, becoming a river spirit. A river spirit exists where the water of the river is, both in the stream itself but also the plants and ecosystem surrounding it. As the source of life around them, river spirits find themselves

**Key Skills:** Magic Arts, Physicality (when empowered), Influence, Arts

**Magical Affinity:** Way of Water, Mantle of Cultivation

**River's Blessing:** As a downtime action, those that rest near the spirit's river can gain the benefit of the spirit's blessing. Those resting lose one consequence and the river spirit makes a TN 8 Magic Arts test. On a success, those resting under the spirit's blessing heal 1 health and animity damage and gain 1 grit.

**Pull Under:** As a main action, a river spirit may summon water to pull down a target near water. The spirit chooses a target within 100m that is within 10m of a body of fresh water. Make an opposed magic arts vs piloting (for vehicles) or Physicality (for beings). The River spirit takes a penalty on its roll equal to the size of the creature or vehicle if applicable. On a success, the river spirit pulls the target under the water—the target takes 4 Physical damage and is moved 20m category down the river.

## GOALS AND VALUES

River spirits tend to be protective and nurturing for the creatures, plants, and people around their river. They seek to protect both nature and communities around the river and ensure there is enough food and water for everyone to flourish. They can become dangerous when they view someone or something acting to destroy the ecosystem, and some rivers become hostile to people, assuming they are there to destroy, pollute, or worse.

## ELEMENTALS

Elementals are a sort of spirit that has found affinity with a particular element and has devoted itself to becoming that element. They are, for almost all intents and purposes, the element they favor, with the main difference being they consist of ethereal rather than physical materials. Beyond simply being one with their element, elementals do not have much will of their own. They are content, like their elements, to be used in whatever fashion others desire of them.

## ELEMENTAL ABILITIES

**Ethereal:** In their base state, elementals are spirits of pure mana. They are undetectable by any mundane sense, and unable to affect or be affected by nonmagical phenomenon (unless stated otherwise). An Ethereal being can be noticed by any magical creature or character, with at least one ability from a magical paradigm, with a Magic Arts test against the spirit's Aegis. Ethereal beings who have not manifested cannot have their guard targeted, nor can their health be reduced.

## AIR ELEMENTALS

Ethereal. Eco Spirit.

| Health    | Animity   | Grit      | Vigilance | Guard | Aegis |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| P x 4 + 6 | P x 4 + 6 | P x 2 + 2 | P + 6     | P + 5 | P + 8 |

Armor: P Adamant: P Initiative: P+10

Like all elementals, Air elementals are instinctual beings, typically content to follow the winds and soar as mana through the sky. When empowered by a mage or Air Yojin, they can affect the winds and cause lightning or gales to occur in the world, following the mana the magic user channels into the world. Careful magic users can use this to control elementals and cause them to do their bidding.



**Key Skills:** Physicality (when empowered)

**Magical Affinity:** College of Force, College of Lightning, Way of Air.

**Gust:** When empowered, the Air elemental may make blasts of air that disorient and knock other characters aside. Make a Magic Arts vs Guard roll on a target within 50m. On success, they take 3 physical damage and gain Dulled -1 on their next turn.

**Lightning:** When empowered, the Air elemental may make blasts of air that disorient and knock other characters aside. Make a Magic Arts vs Aegis roll on a target within 50m. On success, they take 5 physical damage, ignoring physical armor.

## GOALS AND VALUES

In their natural state, air elementals desire nothing more than to move with the wind. Naturally empowered elementals ride with the wind, strengthening it and starting and intensifying storms. Elementals empowered by magic users follow the magic empowering them, and act on behalf of their controlling caster.

# DEMONS

Demons are not quite like other spirits. Many priests say they should not be called spirits at all. They are manifestations of pure malice, born in the Shine either through evil intent or as an emergent biproduct of the world's hate and fear. Regardless, they have a wicked kind of intelligence, like a disease or a computer virus, capable of adaptation, but not sapient. They have no thoughts or feelings or desires, but they mimic the appearance of these things in order to achieve their purposes. Many demons serve other, more powerful masters to whom they return when their physical or ethereal forms are broken.

## DEMON ABILITIES

**Ethereal:** In their base state, demons are spirits of pure mana. They are undetectable by any mundane sense, and unable to affect or be affected by nonmagical phenomenon (unless stated otherwise). An Ethereal being can be noticed by any magical creature or character, with at least one ability from a magical paradigm, with a Magic Arts test against the spirit's Aegis. Ethereal beings who have not manifested cannot have their guard targeted, nor can their health be reduced.

**Domination:** Some demons find pleasure in dominating people. When a demon dominates an NPC, the demon gains access to any abilities it can use while empowered and gains +1 **Power**. As long as a demon is dominating an NPC, they cannot take main actions, but instead simply feeds the demon.

**Possession:** Demons may also possess people. When a demon possesses an NPC, the demon acts through them. The Demon is considered manifested and the NPC gains a boost to their attributes equal to the demon's power. The NPC also gains any key skills the demon has at the same ability as the demon. Further, the NPC has no agency or ability to act or speak while possessed. The demon is in full control. It may mimic the NPC in order to fool friends and family, but it is not the NPC acting or speaking.

Possession ends when a character has exorcised the demon or when the NPC has been slain. In the case of the NPC being slain, the demon may make a magic arts test vs. the aegis of someone within 10m. If successful, the demon possesses that character next. It will lay low, regaining its strength, but it will eventually take over the person as they did the previous host.

Demons can be also be empowered naturally by certain magical effects and specific places. Additionally, some powerful demons may empower themselves at will. At Power 4 or more, an demon may spend 1 grit and a backup action to empower itself for a round. At Power 6 or higher, an demon may instead empower itself as a free action at will.

**Final Throes:** Just before a demon is fully exorcised, it gets a boost of power. Each time an exorcism ability is used on a demon, it loses power. But when a demon is at 1 power remaining, it fights as if it is at full strength. All its abilities, stats, and skills are used as if it is at full power, with the exception that if a successful exorcism ability is performed just one more time, it is disrupted.



**Magical Affinity:** Demons have an alignment to particular types of magic, which can empower them and enable them to take physical form. Similarly, some demons have an opposition to other types of mana—a type of mana that can disrupt their ethereal being when channeled in any way.

# SIDANU

Ethereal. Demon.

| Health    | Animity   | Grit      | Vigilance | Guard | Aegis |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| P x 4 + 6 | P x 4 + 6 | P x 2 + 2 | P + 6     | P + 5 | P + 8 |

Armor: P Adamant: P Initiative: P+10

This is a demon who causes nausea, vertigo, dizziness, and giddiness. It appears as pale green, and its body swirls with various nauseating colors like liquid gasoline. They usually have moon-shaped heads, which can be crescent, full, or in some rare cases, appear as eclipsed. They tend to be found around water supplies or other places where drinks are stored.

**Key Skills:** Magic arts, Physicality (when empowered),

**Magical Affinity:** College of Alchemy, College of Lightning, Way of Air.

**Nauseate:**

**Buzz:**

## GOALS AND VALUES



# Chapter 26: The World of Neo Babylon

In the ancient past, magical powers and wondrous creatures existed only in the realm of gods, legends, and epic poems. Dwarves, goblins, humans, orcs, and Yettin were emerging as the world's first civilizations, largely apart from each other, but ever-expanding their cultures and military might. But 2,650 years ago, the Babylonian Empire under Sharru<sup>2</sup> Nebuchadnezzar II unlocked the secrets of harnessing these powers to dominate others—on a large scale. The Sharru conquered the Pharaohs of Kemet, appropriating their magic and technologies, and did the same to the entire fertile crescent.

Ever-jealous of sharing power, Nebuchadnezzar limited the study of magic to a loyal council of arcanists called the Ukkim. These mages oversaw the research of magic and its use within the entire empire, passing only the most mundane magics to the people, but the most powerful spells were hand-picked for the Sharru.

At the height of his power, Sharru Nebuchadnezzar II was seen running naked into the wilderness, growling at his subjects as he went, and was never seen again.

Nebuchadnezzar's successors continued the expansion of Babylon and nearly three centuries after the conquests began, the Babylonian empire stretched across the fertile crescent, south into Kemet and across the Arabian peninsula, North to Persia and Parthia, East to Sindhu, and West to Byzantium. It was the most glorious, influential, and terrifying force the world had ever seen.

That is why former enemies were willing to lay aside ancient differences to oppose the great empire.

## ALEXANDER THE UNIFIER

225 years after Nebuchadnezzar died, Alexander the Unifier brought together the leaders of Sparta, Athens, Macedon and Syracuse to form the Zephyrian Alliance. With Alexander as their general, they halted the expansion of Babylon at Byzantium, and brokered peace, offering the Hellenistic world their first respite from constant war in centuries. Alexander expanded his alliance West, conquering the Romans, the Iberian peninsula, and sailing South to conquer Carthage. The alliance, now the Zephyrian Empire, pushed its borders North, offering civilization and security to the Gauls and Celts; some which accepted gladly, some which accepted at the end of a sword.

Alexander made it as far North as Lutesia. He took the city over and built its walls, with mages weaving powerful spells to them, making Lutesia an ideal fort for further military excursions. Unknown to Alexander, an unseen civilization was watching from a forest NorthWest of Zephyrian lands. Alexander the Unifier accepted an invitation to a hidden court among the trees hoping to gain allies. Alexander instead emerged from the forest days later with a mysterious illness. His death, days later, prompted his warriors to burn the forest, causing the elves, as well as various other peoples and creatures called fae, into the world of civilized humans. The scarred land marked the boundary between the Zephyrian empire and the Northern tribes for centuries to follow. Some powerful refugees from the forest made their way to Babylon with deep magical secrets. In time, Lutesia was overcome by elves, not by military strength, but through the influx of refugees making it their new home.

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<sup>2</sup> The word for Babylonians kings is Sharru.



Meanwhile, the next several centuries proved challenging for the Babylonians. Their empire was vast and powerful yes, but their enemies were all around them. A Senekemetian empire, made of exiled Kemetians and peoples further west, reemerged to make war on their ancient destroyers. Stretched too thin at the borders of their empire, Senekemet's army emerged from the marshes and laid siege to Babylon, nearly destroying it. The Ukkim, now the secret power behind the throne of Babylon, believed the Sharru were becoming weak and indulgent. So they made a deal with Senekemet to save Babylon. The Sharru was deposed, the Ukkim now directly ruled Babylon, and Senekemet retreated with whatever it was that the arcanists gave them.

The Babylonian Empire held an iron grip on the world for a millennium, conquering states, cities, and tribes in seemingly endless succession. Babylon's tyrants, backed by ever-growing magic abilities, appropriated resources, swallowed up nations and populations, and hoarded magical knowledge, usurping it all for themselves.

## THE SHATTERING

Suddenly, 1,200 years after it began, Babylon's supremacy came to an unexpected end. According to the legends, a great flood sank the entire fertile crescent, from Babylon to the Mediterranean Sea. There are hundreds of explanations for the Shattering, none of which are accepted as reality. Neo Babylon's official Baru texts say Enlil the Storm Lord, previously lord of the gods, gathered his rogue demon-gods, the Anunnaki, and rebelled against Marduk, who had replaced him, by striking at his favored, submerging Babylon beneath the newly formed Rahav Sea. Others claim it was a great magical catastrophe brought about by arcanists attempting to shape the land itself, and in their hubris sunk it instead. Some scientists suggest it was simply an earthquake, which sunk the land deep enough that the seas whelmed it. Regardless of the cause, this event became known as the Shattering. The survivors of Babylon scattered across the world, bearing their culture, beliefs, and magic to all corners of the known world, from Senekemet to Europa to Yanguo.

## DISCOVERY OF AZORE

Long after people from Senekemet made initial contact with South Atlantica, merchants discovered a mysterious continent the ancients had never known. Some arcane historians suggested that Azore was the ancient land of Atlantis; but others speculated the continent of Azore rose from the seafloor as an equal and opposite reaction to the Shattering of Old Babylon.

Led by the diaspora of survivors from Babylon, leaders from around the world were invited to join in creating a multicultural settlement with the hope of fostering peace and prosperity through trade with the native peoples of Azore, who were of many different species. In an unprecedented moment of unity, the nations of the world came together, founding the city of Neo Babylon on Azore's east coast.



1,000 years after the Shattering, Neo Babylon purposed to resurrect the spirit of Old Babylon, where laws were first codified and equal accountability was provided for everyone, from peasant, to priest, to king...

The new city adopted a council of sixty, representing twelve founding populations and Neo Babylon's local interests. This became the Ukkim Council, which rules Neo Babylon to this day. Commerce grew quickly; and like the Babylon of old, Neo Babylon expanded its sphere of influence by scamming, stealing from, and bullying Azore's native populations. The founding of the Great City marked the beginning of a new calendar, which we now know as Neo Babylonian Reckoning (NBR). That was 450 years ago.

## ITIMES OF TROUBLE

For over 200 years, Neo Babylon seemed to grow from strength to strength, exceeding all expectations and becoming the largest city the world had ever seen. Those nations and regions who had representatives on the Ukkim council officially formed the Babylonian Commonwealth, stretching east from Azore to all of the known world. To the West of Azore, particularly in North Atlantica, contact had been limited and trade was modest. An entire world, untouched by Babylonian influence lay across the ocean, but exploration, let alone diplomatic relationships, hadn't yet been achieved. Just north of Neo Babylon, the native humans of Acape-Anya proved to be reliable partners to Neo Babylon, even as to the South and West, the elvish people of Val Broceliande, the goblins of Churuq, the orcs of Tulko, and the various peoples of Kuujitt remained detached. Despite those on Azore who saw Neo Babylon with suspicion, many more saw opportunity to start new lives on the continent, borrowing Neo Babylon's economy to kickstart theirs. New cities such as Hamsu, Baytown, Silver Coast, and the pirate haven of Willam began to spring up on the outskirts of Neo Babylon, borrowing its influence for themselves.

But across the sea, in Europa, things were not well. A group of Iberian nationalists called the Deuendes came to power, pushing back on Babylonian supremacy. They nursed the resentment of many dwarves, and orcs for being overlooked in Europa's economy and society. The sentiment swept through Europa first, and the conquests followed soon after. The Duendes swept through the Western European coast and even made their way to the north of Azore, recruiting when they could, and dominating when they couldn't. Many Iberians deserted the army, refusing to fight, with large numbers settling in Acape-Anya just North of Neo Babylon. The Duendes rose and fell several times in the following decades, but in 271, Lutesia was conquered by the Duendes army. Many elves fled the destruction and occupation and became refugees on Azore, founding a new home they called Le Sanctuaire. Near the end of 271, Lutesian fighters broke the Duendes stranglehold on them for good.



## THE FLOOD

Things began to change in 289, when a raging storm caused the great flood in Neo Babylon, immersing everything up to the Great Ziggurat. The widespread damage to infrastructure caused the Ukkim to innovate instead of rebuilding the city as it was. They mandated all new buildings must be of stone or brick, to prevent water damage to lesser materials; and further, they raises the street level - in many cases as much as 50 feet above the marshlands. As the Ziggurat grew, more and more of the old city was replaced with foundation for the new. Those who continued to live in the older undercity were forced to dig underneath those living above. Seeing opportunity, the Council declared all debtors, new immigrants, and criminals remain in the undercity, as a way to work out their debts and increase their caste. As they struggled to better their lives, the bar for admission to the overcity continued to rise. Soon, the Undercity had grown to accommodate the influx of workers, housing and corporations moved in to take advantage of the captive workers, and now the Undercity functions as one large, lawless, company town where the citizens of the undercity work for those above, while crumbling houses and yesterday's technology and resources flow downward - just enough to keep them consuming, in debt, and as productive as possible.

This event, almost more than any other, seemed to spur the Ukkim to loosen their ideological opposition to technology and machines, and some among them began investing in kind.

## THE WARS OF SCARS

For a time, after the Duendes were defeated, the world seemed free of large-scale conflicts. Then came the First War of Scars, lasting five brutal years. It began with the Yettin of Altaiphera. They had expanded Westward toward Europa, and nearby populations were adopting many of their cultural practices, which emphasized pastoralism, a conservative attitude to new technologies, and individual freedom. Many peoples with shared values allied with them, but as they expanded, their resources became spread thin. Their king, Illus Muhotash, favored retreating back from Europa, consolidating their resources, and waiting until further expansion could be executed efficiently. These policies were opposed by his daughter Chalec. Her stance was that they should instead integrate new technologies and new social ideas into their own society, allowing them to compete with their neighbors and continue their expansion. Chalec's idea was cast defeated, but her spirit was not. In 312 NBR, Chalec left her royal trappings behind and embedded herself in European culture, traveling their cities for two years, experiencing life as a commoner in a strange land.

Chalec hoped to use her experiences to build stronger support for her plans back home. She spent one last night in the city of Eravasca, in Eastern Europa. It was there that an assassin's poison did its work, just after her breakfast in the town square, and it was this match that sparked the war.

The great Clans of Yettin and their allies, centered in Altaiphera (including Yeti, Sasquatch, Ogres, Almaslar, and Bugbears, as well as nomadic human and centaur populations) marched first on Eravasca. They attacked and destroyed Eastern cities leaving devastation in their wake.



Millions perished, but as the Yettin marched toward Lutesia, an accord between the European states and the Alliance of Scandza was eventually able to prevail when Bugbears from the steppe encountered their kin among Europeans and refused to fight further. Many Bugbears joined with the Almaslar in the Autumnal Rebellion, abandoning the war and forming the United Yettin Conference to the East of Europa, weakening the armies of Yettin and creating a buffer between Altaiphera and the West. Fighting on three fronts, and eventually surrounded, the Yettin were forced to surrender and retreat. Punitive measures were taken against Altiphera, impoverishing many Yettin. The armistice that ended the war is still celebrated each year in Lutesia, but many in Europa became suspicious and cruel to large folk. Yettin, including the Bugbears and Almaslar who had helped turn the tide, along with orcs, and dwarves, who many Europeans still saw as Duendes sympathizers, became the targets of increasing hostility.

As Neo Babylon drove the development of ever more complex and advanced machinery, new sources of power, sophisticated communication, and more dangerous weapons spread across the world. Information could now travel the globe in seconds, faster even than magic in many cases.

But while Neo Babylon and its allies were looking ahead, the Bloody Claw, an aggressive and expansive movement from within the Altaipheran Yettin, was rising. Driven to fury by the punishing European and Scandzan sanctions and economic measures that were impoverishing Yettin across Altiphera, the Bloody Claw rallied the herds of minotaurs and centaurs North of Altaiphera, along with discontented orcs and dwarves from Asia Minor, spurred by the news of poor treatment of their cousins in Europa. Western sanctions had not impacted the leaders of Altiphera who had taken them to war, but the common folk. The Bloody Claw's rhetoric was justice and vengeance, but it was also true that many across Altiphera were afraid of their way of life being threatened as Europa and Scandza used technology to improve their military might and cultural influence. Beginning in 338, using destructive magic previously unseen in Babylonian arcana, The Bloody Claw led its alliance to war. The Bloody Claw was more than just a name. It was a mark across the face of those who fought in the front lines. In some cases, it was ink, in others tattoos or even real blood, but wherever the Bloody Claw existed on the faces of the soldiers, they were the equal of ten others, even other Yettin. The Bloody Claw alliance spread across the continent in massive surprise attacks. In 340, Lutesia was occupied by the Bloody Claw Yettin. Much of Southern Scandza and Northern Europa were conquered and their leaders executed.

It took a worldwide alliance, including members of the Neo Babylonian Commonwealth, along with rebels from within the occupied countries, to defeat the Bloody Claw. Six harsh years of war, with new magics and technologies brought to bear, massive destruction to cities and infrastructure, and vast numbers of dead on both sides.

After Neo Babylon helped win the Wars of Scars, their influence expanded on the world stage. Neo Babylon used this moment of solidarity to push the world to convene together: and the nations came to the table, most of them. Nations formed treaties, standardized law and order, and brought new nations into the commonwealth. Resources were thrown into rebuilding and continuing to modernize. States of various sizes began to solidify, land was taken from some, particularly the Altaipherans, given to others, and borders were refined and solidified. All the while, Neo Babylon exerted a globalizing influence, with many local politicians adopting pro-Babylonian policies. The city of Dakar, called the "Gateway to Neo Babylon," and one of the three capitals of Senekemet, grew into an advanced port city. It became the center of emerging corporate power and was quicker to openly adopt new technologies than Neo Babylon itself. It modernized its infrastructure and began to ship goods all around the world, most immediately to Europa and Neo Babylon.

With prosperity, the population boomed, and this new role as the world's exemplar also caused an influx of refugees and other immigrants to flood into Neo Babylon. In response to the surge of new arrivals, Neo Babylon implemented annexation (they called it "integration" or "municipal amalgamation") of the surrounding settlements. Hamsu, Baytown, Willam, the Silver Coast, and Le Sanctuaire, and the area between them, became part of Neo Babylon; districts no longer under independent control but subject to Neo Babylonian rule.



## LAW AND ORDER

Traditional policing in Neo Babylon was done away with soon after the Wars of Scars. What took the place of police were Lawjacks, law enforcement officers armed head to toe with reinforced armor uniforms. Their motto is “peace through obedience.” Regardless of their motto or purpose, it soon became clear the Lawjacks did not exist to serve the people. They served the wealthy and instilled fear into the people. The Lawjacks wear golden facemasks to diminish accountability, and line their boots with metal so everyone knows they are coming and runs away before they get there. Lawjack authority is punitive, not protective. Lawjacks don’t kill, at least not very often. They wield stun batons instead of firearms for the simple reason that dead and injured criminals don’t earn as much as healthy, live ones. Which is where the purgatoriums come in.

For those who haven’t had the privilege of spending time in one, a purgatorium is where criminals are sent to work off their sins. Sins were not matters of morality, however. Since the purgatoriums were built, all crimes are financial. “Do the crime, pay the price”, and there’s a value to every “wrong” to people and to society. Crimes and unpaid debt are sins that have to be purged.

## DISCONTENT ON AZORE

Warfare since the end of the War of Scars has been primarily a minor affair, with small scale conflicts normally lasting only a short time. The exception was the Fairy Wars, the origins of which began just a few decades after the Wars of Scars.

When explorers from Europa first arrived, Azore was already populated. Even as they began to settle, it was some time before Neo Babylon became aware of the most powerful of these countries. Far to the South and West of Neo Babylon, across the spines of Tiamat, and in a deep and beautiful valley, was a civilization comprised primarily, but not exclusively, of elves. They called their land Val Broceliande, clearly an homage to the forest kingdom that had been destroyed by Alexander’s forces over Two millennia ago. Who these people were, and their connection to that ancient elven kingdom was unknown.

To the North of Neo Babylon was Acape-Anya. Its people, called the Chaldani, were an indigenous group of humans who accepted those first settlers with open arms. Acape-Anya is their country and primary city. The people themselves were of mixed Scandzan and Indigenous North Atlantican heritage, but their material culture and habits also had echoes of old Babylon. Many Iberians emigrated or abandoned the army during the Duendes uprisings, so many Chaldani today have a robust culture filled with variety. Much further South, along the East coast, is Kuujitt, a Senekemetian settlement that grew into a nation of its own.

Along Azore’s West Coast, there is a land called Tulko, inhabited by a majority of orcs, but with sizable numbers of dwarves, goblins, and other peoples. Finally, on the Southernmost tip of Azore was Churuq, a civilization of almost exclusively goblins, drawn from Europa, Africa, and South Atlantica. In time, trade relations were normalized between and among most of these groups and Neo Babylon, and although each was somewhat insular, none kept closed borders.

The diverse communities across Azore had a standard of living and technological and magical complexity similar to Neo Babylon, though with variations and somewhat different emphases; their organizations were more similar than might be expected, and there was speculation that Azore must have had some kind of contact with Afro-Eurasia preceding recorded colonization efforts. What no one understood, until far too late, was how the the various factions within Val Broceliande would soon effect the world.

In the 368th year NBR, a series of protests took place in Val Broceliande, to the confusion of many. Anger sparked among the fae, who considered their society superior in many ways; they felt that despite their long-standing help to other peoples, they lived in obscurity. The world at large had often considered “fae” to be just another word for “elf”. They were wrong.



These protests were the largest among elven populations in known history, (though there were notably few). Authorities in Val Broceliande suppressed the protests, but the seeds were planted for the faction known as the Enkeura to come to power in the next century.

## THE FAIRY WARS (OR THE SATYAWE: THE WARS OF SEPARATION)

57 years later, In 425, the Enkeura (Elvish for “The Renewers”) infiltrated the politics of Tulko (their neighbor to the North). Although the Enkeura were notoriously prejudiced against those they said were not fae, they were still able to incite Tulkans to anger against the leadership of Val Broceliande. Tulko had generally seen Val Broceliande as snobbish and ungrateful for their support, and the elven nation had done little to prove them wrong.

The people of Tulko were not fae, but only some of those in Val Broceliande were either. Fae isn’t a species, nor is it a particular branch of elves. It seems to be a heritage. Some, mostly elves, but also dwarves, orcs, and goblins, possess some kind of fae lineage, whatever that might mean. Scientists have not been able to find a fae gene, nor have they been able to distinguish fae from non-fae, let alone explain how this heritage came to exist in these species, but whatever the mechanism, the fae themselves have ways of divining who has this quality. Perhaps by design, no one living in Tulko was fae. Nevertheless, propaganda and nursing mistrust for the elves to the South led Enkeura-supporters coming to power in Tulko at the same time the Enkeura gained sizable support within Val Broceliande itself.

In 432, the Enkeura convinced Tulko to invade Car Boedrein, a nearby city in Val Broceliande, taking them completely off guard. This was the beginning of what would be called the First Fairy War, or in the Elvish language, the Satyawe, the War of Separation. Within two months, the Enkeura had pressed South all the way to Val Broceliande proper where they completed a coup. The mostly non-fae leadership of Val Broceliande fled into exile in Santso.

Once Enkeura and Tulkan forces secured the rest of the country, they moved South into Churuq. While Neo Babylon was loath to become involved in a war on Azore, their hand was forced, and in 433, Neo Babylon, Acape-Any, Kujitt, Churuq, and the government of Val Broceliande in exile, formed the Alliance of Azore (AoA) to stop the Enkeura.

Neo Babylon, Santso, Kujitt and Acape-Any, sent forces to bolster the harried troops of Churuq. Alliance forces fought desperately against the invaders, whose magical prowess rivalled the gunmages of Neo Babylon. During 434, the Enkeura slowly advanced toward Churuq Lo, Churuq’s capital, but were eventually halted by the Alliance.

In the first month of 435, Sunabán forces from New Atlantica, unexpectedly came to the aid of Churuq and the invasion was halted for good. The Sunabáns, a large portion of whom were goblins themselves, made no official alliance with either side, but remained present until an armistice was signed, assuring their cousins were safe, then they withdrew. Val Broceliande remained under Enkeura leadership, but other territories were returned.



# THE SECOND FAIRY WAR (OR THE SECOND SATYAWE IN THE WARS OF SEPARATION)

By 436, it was clear to the people of Tulko they had been used. The Enkeura's rule over them, as well as over the non-fae elves, was brutal and bitter. While Val Broceliande's land grew wilder, it also grew more inhospitable to those without that all-important fae heritage.

But the government of Val Broceliande in exile had not been idle in the years since the coup. They made alliances with Santso, Churuq, and the rest of the AoA, and their spy network stretched the whole of Val Broceliande. They fostered a growing resistance movement in Tulko as well. Many Elven supremacists who had initially supported the Enkeura became disillusioned with the new leadership, as non-fae elves were treated just poorly as the elves had treated the Tulkans. The largest of these bitter factions, led by the sorcier general Adelante, took her Valkyr Company and defected to the government in exile, deeply resentful that fae orcs and dwarves were receiving land and titles while she was ignored.

The defection of the Valkyrs was a pivot point for the exiles, and they made their move. Early in 438, the Government in Exile, along with the Valkyrs, and the Alliance of Azore formed a task force to restore Val Broceliande to its prior leadership. After nearly two years of intense, small-scale battles, the war finally ended in 439, with the surviving Enkeura abandoning the Grand Palace and fleeing for parts unknown. They have yet to be brought to justice. Those who fought for the Enkeura were pardoned, but the Valkyr Company was dismantled for being too brutal and clinging to prejudiced beliefs that were unacceptable to the Alliance of Azore and leadership of Val Broceliande (at least publically). "Stability" returned to Azore, and to Neo-Baylon.



# Chapter 27: The Present

## POWER

Since its founding, Neo Babylon has grown precipitously, and is the cultural, magical, and technological super power of the world. All of this power rests in the Ukkim Council, who in theory represent the different factions and interests from Neo Babylon and the world at large. In practice, the Ukkim do not “represent,” they control. The responsibility of representing the people of the broader world is an unfortunate by-product of the vast influence they wield. While their true reach is obscured behind bureaucracy, shell corporations, and back-room deals, in reality, almost every facet of society and the economy is claimed, if not controlled, by members of the Ukkim.

## MAGIC

The source of Neo Babylon’s power is arcane magic. While Babylon of old wielded magic as a cudgel, burning through their enemies and rending their weapons into useless toys, Neo Babylon has spent the last 400 years using magic to build power through gifts and guild. Cities across the globe revel in the arcane wonders brought to them by the mages of Neo Babylon, as Fire mages powered great forges, Alchemists created new potions and drugs that cured plagues and ailments, Force mages created great ships to effortlessly carry goods and people across the world. And all of this flowed through the Ukkim. Neo Babylon, triumphantly proclaiming the success of the project founded by all people, carefully guards its arcane secrets with as much care as it generously gifts its benefits. Those that were hesitant to accept Neo Babylon’s primacy felt pressured by the sudden prosperity of their neighbors, those who accepted the mages with open arms slowly realized that more and more of their civilization was dependent on mages from Neo Babylon.



# TECHNOLOGY

As the mages of Neo Babylon created more and more elaborate techniques to exploit their power, the significance of cybertech almost went unnoticed. During the Fairy Wars, the corporations the mages built to organize their respective economic interests began to create non-magical inventions of such power that they caught even the Ukkim off guard. Labeled cybertech, this technology made devices capable of running autonomously for days, without the need of any mage to provide their power. These devices quickly exploded in their complexity and computational power, quickly turning from

simple motors and machines to devices capable of autonomously carrying goods between cities or nations, computers able to communicate with others across the globe, and even artificial body parts able to restore the function of missing limbs (and in many cases surpass the originals). The mages who controlled the corporations were caught in a bind—these miraculous devices weakened their hold on the world, in many cases obviating the need to hire a mage to accomplish the various needs of civilization. On the other hand, these inventions represented a new, exciting form of power and prosperity—which they (for now, at least) owned.

The explosion of corporations innovating in cybertech within the last 50 years has rendered the world unrecognizable. The days of sailing ships gliding across the sea under the perfect winds of a force mage have been replaced with cybertech jets—alchemical shops carefully synthesizing potions have been replaced with industrial scale pharmaceutical factories creating the same compounds at a much vaster scale. Despite all the visible change though, little has changed in who controls the world—cybertech has been disruptive only as the previous monopolists have allowed it to, zealously hording the secrets, capital, and authority to create the new world.



# Chapter 28: The Future

The invisible ease at which the ruling elites effortlessly went from dominating the world through control of magic through a world dominating the world through corporations and technology could inspire hopelessness for those seeking to supplant them—a feeling the Ukkim and their allies are happy to fuel. But despite their dominance, cracks have begun to show in their world, and people have begun to see how far those cracks might go.

## THE GREAT STRIKE

The first mistake the Ukkim and their allies made was the eternal folly of the powerful—complacency. As they created empires of wealth and technology, they quickly found their influence expanding far beyond what they could enforce with their personal power. Factories and offices arose as they greedily sucked billions of people in as workers for their empire, offering a simple path (and often the only clear) towards a modicum of financial security and comfort. Soon after the creation of this corporate behemoth, the Ukkim could not live without it. After centuries of luxury and power being a product of the great mages, suddenly they were as dependent on the system as anyone else. Though they owned the systems of control—the corporations, the guilds, the Lawjacks, the purgatoriums, the financial systems, the priesthood, the magic—these systems were only ever devoted to serving their masters and the status quo, leaving no help available for anyone else.

It's unknown who organized the great strike (or if any one person or group organized it all), but the demand was clear—communities felt ignored by the Ukkim and their corporations, and demanded a right to be represented by their own people instead of the distant Ukkim they'd never meet, living a life of luxury they couldn't imagine. In response to their demands, the Ukkim threatened to withhold the luxuries, the utilities, the magical support the people had grown accustomed to promising an impoverished society without them. In response, workers staged a general strike. In hours, the city went dark, the factories of wonder ceased production. The powerful found themselves with no one to produce their food, let alone anyone to prepare, serve, or deliver it. As the days went on, it became more and more clear that the Ukkim could no longer hold up the weight of civilization on their own (if they ever could). Frightened for the first time, the elite of Neo Babylon saw their grand illusion coming down around them. Before the illusion could fully crumble, they offered a single concession to the people's demands: Envoys.



# THE ENVOY MOVEMENT

While the idea was conceived by the strikers, as envisioned by the Ukkim, Envoys were the simplest answer to the demands of the Great Strike with as little true concession as possible. If a community had a problem, they could select a group of representatives for the community to speak for them and petition for their problem to be solved. As envisioned by the Ukkim, Envoys would present an issue to the Ukkim, who would assure them that the problem could be solved and diffuse the situation. The Ukkim happily endorsed the Envoy movement, slathering it with over-the-top praise and explaining how Envoys would be empowered to speak on behalf of their community, giving them a handful of privileges and rights that would be respected by the law, and ideally, for the Ukkim, acting as a buffer between themselves and the angry mobs. When things went right, the Ukkim could take credit. When things went poorly, blame it on corrupt Envoys.

At first, Envoys acted as expected—beseeching the Ukkim to fix specific problems. And at first, the Ukkim made a big deal of fixing those problems—but as time passed, solutions slowly curdled to excuses, and it seemed like, the strike dissolved, the status quo would return.

Suddenly though, something unexpected happened. Envoys stopped asking the Ukkim to solve their problems—and started reaching out to other Envoys for help. Petitioning the Ukkim quickly shifted from the core duty of Envoys to a trivial formality, and communities started choosing Envoys for their problem solving abilities rather than their Ukkim-flattering ones. Officially, nothing changed—but unofficially, it began to feel like everything was changing.

The powers that be have treaded carefully around the Envoy movement. The official deference offered to them in the beginning still carries some official force, and claiming “Envoy business” is enough to avoid hassling as long as Envoys avoid outright criminal behavior (or avoid being caught, at least). In boardrooms and parties across the upper city, the rich and powerful assure themselves that the Envoys cannot possibly live up to the expectations put upon them, and they will eventually collapse in a tempest of disappointment and infighting. The most optimistic of the Ukkim guessed the Envoy movement would remain significant for at most a decade. That was thirty years ago.

The challenges they identify are real, of course. Many communities have serious problems, and the resources readily available feel insufficient to meet their needs. Each Envoy has their own opinion on how the world works and how to change it, and among the Envoys, ideological blocs have emerged, pushing for their (obviously correct) worldview at the expense of those of others. Some of this is fueled by Ukkim agitators, but much of it is simply the nature of diversity.

Nonetheless, it's been thirty years, and new Envoys are inducted every day, each hoping to solve the problems of their community.



# Chapter 29: A Primer on the World of Neo Babylon

## THE SEVEN LINES OF KINGU

### DWARVES

"Then went all the gods to their judgment seats, and thereon took counsel: who should create the race of dwarves, out from the bones of the earth and the wine-dark sea? And in forelikeness of humans they then made them and placed them onto the earth."

The scriptures say dwarves were one of the seven peoples created from the earth by the goddesses Antu and Damkina. Perhaps that is why they've traditionally built civilizations around connections to the land. Originally, dwarven culture relied heavily on farming and mining, but once their ancestors took to the sea and skies, they excelled there as well, as pilots, pirates, and engineers.

### BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Dwarves mature at the same age as humans do, but they live much longer and tend to be resistant to many of the biological reasons for human death. While dwarves get old at the same rate as humans as well, they seem to be able to live an average of 150 years, spending more than half their lives as what other peoples see as very old people.

**Size:** Average dwarves are 1.375 meters, or 4.5 feet tall. This average is misleading, however, as many dwarves are as short as 1 meter, or 3 feet, while others are as tall as 1.75 meters, or 6 feet, though those cases are exceedingly rare.

**Physical Description:** Compared to humans, dwarven hair grows very fast. Their bodies are generally more sturdy than other peoples and their skin coloration includes what is common in humans, but also rare instances of dwarves with blue tints to their skin have been seen. Some dwarves express rare, recessive traits, likely from regional variations, that are atypical and some consider monstrous.

### ELVES

The earliest manuscripts from On High do not mention the elven peoples. Later redactions and official Baru documents, however, include elves as one of the peoples created by the goddesses Antu and Damkina. Elves have had a complicated history with the other peoples of the world, and a good deal of mistrust still exists due to the Fairy Wars of recent memory. But time moves on and the elven people, some of which still keep ancient traditions alive, are also finding their place in a modern world.

### BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Elven age is complicated. While it is clear the average elf's lifespan is longer than all other peoples', the upper range varies wildly. Young elves mature around the same age as humans but do not decline as they age as other peoples do. When they die, they simply die, having no middle age or senior years.

**Size:** The height of the average elf is 1.65 meters, or 5.5 feet tall. There is less variation in size among elves than other peoples, but outliers do exist.

**Physical Description:** Elves appear to only have slight cosmetic differences from humans, but this is deceiving. Elves do have pointed ears and somewhat severe features compared to average humans, their hair is also thinner, but stronger, than other species. They have thinner skin and tend to have more allergies than other peoples as well. Their skin color is similar to that common among humans, with green and purplish tints being less common.



## GOBLINS

All those under heaven,  
The primal Seven,  
E'en the small and slick  
Goblin so quick  
Do not ignore  
Their deep-learned lore  
O'er spirits will ye  
Ne'er master will be.

Goblins, more than any other species, have made an art of fitting in. According to the words from On High, they were one of the seven peoples made by Antu from clay and blood and midwived by the goddess Damkina. Goblins have always been associated with fixing, helping, or otherwise enhancing other cultures and species; despite their breadth of heritage world-wide, rarely have their own unique cultures been given centre stage.

### BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Goblins have a similar life cycle to humans, living typically less than 100 years. Goblin bodies show external signs of aging such as hair graying and thinning and skin becoming more lined and wrinkled, but their physical and mental facilities do not deteriorate as they age.

**Size:** Most goblins stand about 1.25 meters tall, or about 4 feet, but it is common for goblins to be slightly less than one meter as well.

**Physical Description:** Goblins are among the smallest of the world's peoples, and range in skin color from green, being most common, to yellow and orange, with many wonderful shades between. Typical goblins have large, bulbous noses, elongated and pointed ears, and lean, wiry musculatures.

## HUMANS

"As for the human, their days are numbered,  
whatever they might do, it is but wind."

The scriptures from On High say that humans were created using divine blood to be the preeminent servants of the gods, and are the last of those peoples created by them. Despite being the youngest people, it is said they have more of the gods' ambition than all the rest. Humans have spread to every corner of the world, assimilating, and being assimilated by, all other peoples.

### BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** A human reaches physical maturity around the age of 20, and with mental and emotional faculties slightly later. A human in good health can expect to live between 80 to 100 years on average.

**Size:** The average human is 1.7m tall, though there is a great deal of variation.

**Physical Description:** Humans are somewhat a physically unremarkable lineage compared to the other peoples. Their hair color ranges from earthy browns and reds to pale blonde or dark black. Their skin colors are likewise varied from dark brown to olive to ruddy to pale.

## ORCS

"The Earth and the Wind spawned Desire, Desire spawned Death and Mud and they the germs of life. There the orc burst forth as from an egg. Inspired and nurtured by Taautus, were the first to invent letters and write records in their own manner, and he taught them the deep magic of the spheres."

The Tablets of Creation record the orc peoples among those midwived by Damkina, and historical records of the influence of the orcs as part of the Ghassulian peoples date back to ancient Kemetian records under Thutmose III. Ancient hearsay ascribed many traits to orcs that have never been universal, such as hot-headedness and higher pain tolerance. Orcs, in fact, share more similarities with humans than any people, and have experienced dominance, persecution, and integration in equal measure around the world and throughout history.

### BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** An orc reaches physical maturity around the age of 17, slightly earlier than humans. Orcs are much more sensitive to diet than other peoples with many in poor health living life spans shorter than humans, but those in good health having robust lives in excess of 100 years, while in rare cases orcs have been recorded to exceed 175 years.

**Size:** The average orc is 1.9m tall, but their range is even greater than that of humans.



**Physical Description:** Orcs tend to be taller and bulkier than humans and have more prominent facial bones, but are otherwise similar in appearance except for their elongated and pointed ears, and lower canines that extend into large tusks. Orc skin and hair share human ranges, though greenish tones exist in some lineages.

## YETTIN

The yeti in the mountain communities profess that they have lived there since the beginning of time; they did not traditionally believe in creator deities but focused on answerable questions of philosophy and behavior, and how the world works in the present. Ancient Babylonian sources do not explicitly mention the Yettin; one Yettin scholar famously proposed, however, that perhaps Humbaba, the foe defeated by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, was a member of some Yettin group, or that perhaps Lahmu, the strong, hairy god, was a Yettin. Both of these are unlikely, but persist in certain religious circles. Those Yettin who do adhere to the syncretic religion of Neo Babylon mostly venerate Damkina, the lady of the sacred mountain, for guiding their people into the world.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**Lifespan:** Yettin mature at approximately the same rate as humans, and have a similar lifespan; certain Yettin, for reasons unknown, are able to surpass this limit, living for several hundred years.

**Size:** The smallest Yettin are still over two meters tall, but on average around 2.5 to 2.75 meters is typical. The tallest Yettin ever recorded was almost 4 meters.

**Physical Description:** More than other species, Yettin from various parts of the world differ from each other in various ways. Their commonalities are in size and musculature, and their rough-hewn features with flattened noses; their variety comes in size, variation in the length of their arms, and colors and configuration (or lack) of fur, which for most types covers their bodies all over except for the face, palms, and soles.

# CULTURES OF THE WORLD

Origin represents a continuing ascription which classifies a person in terms of their most general and inclusive identity; it's based not on possession of a certain cultural inventory, but represents the culture in which you were raised or with which you identify via shared experiences. the PC may not be from the particular city or nation; this origin may be part of their family heritage, even back several generations, or they may live near or within an expatriate community which influenced them. But no matter what, their origin is part of their identity. Each PC chooses **one origin** at character creation.

## CHALDANI (ACAPE ANYA)

Known as being one of the most sociable and friendly of the cities of Azore, ACAPE ANYA was one of the largest to exist on Azore before Neo Babylon was built. Originally populated by the Chaldani, a people of mixed North Atlantican and Scandzian heritage, its makeup changed immensely following the Duendes attacks in Europa hundreds of years ago. Once the Duendes' armies reached Azore, many warriors, mostly Dwarves, abandoned their posts and settled in ACAPE ANYA. Since then, dwarven immigrants from Iberia and Atlantica have made their home here, transforming Chaldani culture into a beautiful mix of Latin and Central Atlantican heritage. Now largely a dwarven city, the Chaldani in ACAPE ANYA tend to value large, extended families and hospitality; they are almost certain to have an extra seat at the table. The local culture also tends to favor intricacy and rococo embellishment in all art forms, and they tend to enjoy fine living.



Chaldani folk tend to be gourmands and hedonists, reveling in what can be created but also in sharing it. This also means that deep insult can be given when sharing and hospitality are refused or abused. The dominant cuisine is centered on small plates that are often intricately constructed with complex flavors; they enjoy wines that show off not only the skill of the vintner but the way that time interacts with the ingredients.

Some tensions exist between ACAPE Anya and cities in Europa, primarily due to residual tensions caused by the Duendes. Out of Iberia formed the European Bravia, an organized crime syndicate that plagues most European cities and now extends to Neo Babylon through ACAPE Anya's Iberian roots.

Chaldani, a mix of Latin, Old Chaldani, and dwarven tongues, is the local language of ACAPE Anya. It is mellifluous and quick, with a near staccato speed that can leave novice speakers lost in the third past present participle.

**Chaldani Names:** According to Chaldani customs, a person's name consists of their given name followed by the first surnames of their parents. Thus Henri, the child of Yonath Domangul Gomul and Zephira Baro Suarul, would be Henri Domangul Baro. Historically, men place the father's surname first and women take their mother's surname first, thus if Maria was the child of the same two parents above, she would be Maria Baro Domangul. In more recent years, this convention has given way to children of any gender choosing which surnames they prefer first.

**Common Given Names: (Female)** Camiline, Danili, Lucialis, Sofi, Isabelis, Valentis, Victori, Zephira **(Male)** Diegur, Henri, Martur, Nicolin, Santiagri, Sebastin, Tomin, Yonathur,

**Common Surnames:** Azuco, Baro, Cervinta, Domangul, Esparath, Estergo, Florul, Gomul, Hyraxias, Lopul, Paladino, Ramirul, Rejeso, Ruul, Suarul, Velasul

Note: the "-ul" suffix indicates etymology meaning "child of" as in Gomul, meaning child of Gom. An "-as" suffix indicates a regional name, as in Anyas, "from ACAPE Anya," or Iberias, "from Iberia." The "-o" suffix usually points to a profession, such as Paladino, "a paladin," or Baro, "a baru-priest."

## CHURUQ

Churuq was a nation founded on Azore by goblin colonists from South Atlantica, and because of this unique history, it possesses some features that aren't pronounced elsewhere in the world; for most visitors, the compact nature of the buildings and rooms is the most obvious. The culture of Churuq places little value on physical prowess, so people of any lineage tend to be less muscular than the average elsewhere.

But foundation myths suggest that when the colonists arrived, they found an arcane tower, already ancient, and settled around it. Researchers, explorers, and innovators flocked to the new city (and later nation), and over time Churuq straddled the line between the use of science and the arcane; their practical application of both techniques to everyday problems led to many positive interactions with other nations. Even as one of the few places that goblins are so numerous, it has not developed into "goblin land". Residents of all lineages will quietly tell you that they have adapted the best they found in other cultures and that each of them finds their own truth in how to show the world the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Churuq cuisine relies on technique rather than preferred ingredients and has little in the way of preconceived popular dishes. Poaching in water, oil, or even with direct magic is more common than more blunt applications of fire. The region is especially known for its chocolatiers and unique vineyard which produce the immensely popular "goblin strangewine".

Influenced by the speech patterns of goblins, the local language, La-Churuq, is spoken at a lower register and rumbles slightly with glottal stops. The pace of the speech is also slower than other areas, leading some to underestimate the abilities of the wily Churuqians.

**Churuqian Names:** Names of Churuqian origin often seem harsh and somewhat silly to outsider's ears. In fact, only recently, within the last 100 years, did Churuqians begin to take surnames for the ease of trade and communication with other peoples. As a result, their naming conventions seem odd and somewhat crude to others but are now considered sacred among those whose ancestors chose them. Poke fun at your own peril. Churuqian given names are from Churuqian language and are not gendered. Surnames are used for trade and as such are spoken in CommonUr.

**Common Given Names:** Moachee, Cauag, Ubirajaruk, Ubiratak, Ruduk, Jacug, Janaínak, Iaree, Uiarag, Potiruk, Iracemak, Mairug



The Suffixes “-ee, -ak, -ag, -uk, and -ug” are all common in Churuqian names. “-ee” translates as “is like,” as in “Moachee” or “is like Pain.” “-ak” translates as “hunter” as in “Ubiratak” or “stiff spear hunter.” “-ag” translates as “worker,” as in Uiarag, or “one who carries water.” “-uk” translates as “god,” but this is more like a “spirit of something” in Churuqian, not a being to be worshipped. So Ruduk would be ‘god of dreams’. “-ug” translates as “child,” so “Potirug” would be “flower child.”

**Common Surnames:** Don’t Drink This, Flower But Hideous, God Dreamer, Hawkdrop, House of Fish Eggs, Moon Eye, Pain Son, Sweet Like Cow, Water Droppers, Woodspear.

Basically, anything that could have described a place, person, idea, or thing that would have seemed important or descriptive to Chruqians 100 years ago is fair game for surname conventions.

## GHASSULIAN (TULKO)

Long before Babylon grew to its heights, the Ghassulians, an early, orc-dominated, nomadic culture, spanned the Mediterranean as a trading empire, founding colonies and opening new areas of exploration even as they expanded the boundaries of ancient magic. Archeologists say the Ghassulians may have invented a form of alphabetic writing, as opposed to the syllabic script of modern Babylonian, and spread this system through Europa.

Though their original homeland was lost to the Shattering, and their colonies either conquered by Alexander or allied to and subsumed into Senekemet, this culture runs deep in many peoples around the world and prevails primarily in the city of Tulko on Azore, in the Black Sea nation of Tabayá, and in Carthage, one of the three capitals of Senekemet. Ghassulian have a deep and abiding love for their homeland(s), and tend to have a patriotic desire to defend it. The culture values technology and magic equally, seeing both as paths to knowledge and to prosperity. Ghassulian folk have strongly influenced the popular culture perception of orcs (especially in Neo Babylon), where they always seem to fill the role of wise counsellor or philosopher-scientist.

Their language lilts across the tongue and ears with an almost musical quality that is enhanced by whistling consonants and vowels (originally due to orc tusks); this can make the language harder to master for non-native speakers. Ghassulian food is heavy in pulses and legumes, deeply flavored with spices and herbs. The food is neither spare nor spartan, but it is straightforward on the surface and complex in technique to create.

Ghassulian names: Ghassulian families tend to pass surnames matrilineally, and given names are often compounds of real words with specific meanings. Common prefixes are "Abd-" (servant of), "Mithon-" (gift of) "Ger" (stranger, foreign), and "Hanni-" (favored by)

**Common Given Names:** Bomilcar, Gerfilo, Mago, Sophonisba, Hannibal, Mithocedar

**Common Surnames:** Barca, Gisco, Kanaan, Bel-El, Yehawmilk

## NEO BABYLON

The world's first, truly cosmopolitan city, Neo Babylon quickly outgrew its beginnings as a city that would unify many cultures through trade and has become instead the world leader in nearly every area. To many, the dream of Neo Babylon is a worthwhile endeavor, blending all cultures into one, having the best of all worlds, and offering limitless opportunities to rise above the flood of hardship history has offered. For others, however, Neo Babylon and its propaganda are a flattening of beautiful and diverse heritages, the vices and pettiness from every group, and instead of limitless opportunity, they’ve only found oppression. Dreams and nightmares. That is what Neo Babylon is made of.

Insert paragraph on job opportunities

Insert paragraph on food

The best examples of Neo Babylon’s syncretic culture are in the areas of magic, religion, and language. Every type of magic college and sublime monastery is available in the city, but it is the “sacred faith of Babylon” that dominates. This religion has become a monolith into which practices and beliefs from a multitude of polytheistic faiths have been drawn, creating a “universal religion”, all with the names and faces of the deities of ancient Babylon. People in Neo Babylon tend to speak CommonUr, a hodgepodge language with great richness but little internal consistency.

**Neo Babylonian Names:** Honoring the gods is the most common form of naming convention in Neo Babylon. Other names, such as Ansa, Cloy, Yanzu, and Charliziru are in fashion recently despite non-Babylonian origins.

**Common Given Names: (Male)** Abed, Abimiras, Beltashazar, Callen, Chad, Charliziru, Cloy, Dagan, Dakuri, Gibil, Lidan, Mishak, Sargon, Shadrak, Yanzu. **(Female)** Allatu, Annatu, Ansa, Banit, Belit, Damkina, Gaga, Gula, Ishtar, Kishar, Kissare, Lilitu, Mot, Mummu, Ri, Rubati, Shala,



**Common Surnames:** Abinebo, Abumar, Baalmar, Baghdasaryan, Baldiyan, Balthazar, Balto, Enlilyan, Gudeamar, Hammurabi, Ilgi, Inannayan, Merodach, Neboyan, Nabua, Rimsin, Tassi

Neo Babylonian surnames are often chosen in homage to the family's favored deity. "Bel" is a common phrase indicating the god Marduk (Bel is a common alternate name of Marduk). Mar indicates "daughter of" and yan indicated "son of," so family names often are [god's name + mar/yan] such as Belmar or Belyan, Ishmar or Ishyan, or Nabumar or Nabuyan.

## UNITED YETTIN CONFERENCE

The physically largest of the common species on the planet, Yettin have commonly been most comfortable in their own communities, and they had, for much of history, integrated less with the surrounding cultures. This has led to a stereotype of Yettin antisocial behavior, while in truth they are as drawn to community as anyone, as evidenced by the formation of the UYC.

The UYC is a legacy of the Autumnal Rebellion when thousands of Yettin from the steppes rebelled against the Altaipheran Yettin during the First War of Scars; they refused to fight their kin further west and abandoned the war, eventually coalescing into a singular nation with many types of Yettin, as well as other folks, especially as they defended against the worst predations of the Bloody Claw. No single Yettin culture dominates the UYC, and people live many lifestyles from high tech corporate workers to Luddite hunter-gatherers.

Cuisine in the UYC is difficult to immediately define, other than by volume; large meals of fresh food are the expected norm, and food comes in abundance, focusing on calorie density. The melting pot nature of the country means that many immigrants needed to adapt to its local environment when dietary needs were explored, which has led to extensive experimentation and a sense of culinary and artistic freedom.

Due to its Yettin origin, the language of the UYC, Altaipheran, seems to resonate and rumble from deep within the throat with velar consonants, possibly due to the extended construction of the soft palate of Yettin, which was adapted for their eating habits. It is difficult but has not been impossible, for other peoples to learn and speak it fluently.

Names in the UYC are varied, but it is worth noting that most of the population has a tripartite name structure, with one given name and two surnames, one from each parent.

Given names: Oksana, Kateryna, Oleg, Anton, Terta, Greg, Kira

Surnames: Bokyo, Vovk, Kulik (or Kulig), Hongar, Olynik

Surnames can also be formed by adding the suffix -kev to a parent's given name.

## VAL BROCELIANDE

Legends say that Val Broceliande was the first nation founded on Azore, not long after the Shattering, as exiles (primarily elves in Eire formerly of Broceliande forest) gathered from around the world were led there by "fae creatures"; in any event, this is the oldest culture on Azore. The Fairy Wars were all too recent for people with this origin and caused many to scatter before, during, and after, both supporters and opposition to the Enkeura Party. This recent history has made people with this origin deeply and often radically political in many ways, the worst example being the Valkyr's gang resident in the Undercity.

To outsiders, people of this origin can seem dour and humorless. While capable of jokes, we are told, the culture typified insular existence, and there is an innate hesitancy pervading their interactions; folk from Val Broceliande do not give the benefit of the doubt, they wait for proof to trust.

Inherited from the elven founders, folk here have a sense of the simple and the brutalist. Art, food, and language are all performed without adornment or enhancement that is seen as superfluous to function. Food is often served with ingredients standing alone, rarely seen combined in a dish, but set in counterpoise on the plate. Similarly, the sweeping arches of Val Broceliande's architecture are the most efficient way to bear a load; the fact that arches are seen as beautiful and in harmony with the nature around it is often overlooked. The local dialects are sharp and full of hard consonants, focusing on the relationships between words rather than extensive descriptors.

In Val Broceliande, surnames are traditionally inherited from the male parent, though among the Enkeura faction the child takes the surname of the highest-ranked family member, be it grandmother, uncle, or third cousin.

Given names: Adelante, Dëaron, Enzo, Gabriel, Greyson, Louis, Lucièn, Sophya, Yuliette,



Surnames: Kuivariel, Lúthien, Merolás, Éndomiel, Ingirathorin

## SAMPLE FACTIONS

Factions provide a localized setting for your Subversion Games. They make it so you don't have to know too much about the wider world of Neo Babylon in order to make the setting and gameplay feel immersive. When building your communities, chose 5 factions (or more) to be important to the community, but GMs may have as many factions as they like influencing things behind the scenes.

Factions also give GMs fodder for plot hooks and a world that develops around the characters as they play over time. The factions below exist to give options and inspirations, not to constrain. Feel free to change the names or any other parts of the factions before using them, or simply create your own.

### FLAMING SKULLS

**Type:** Gang **Archetype:** Clout **Influence:** 3

An undercity gang known for terrorizing its enemies with fire, violence, and fear.

**Hooks:**

3 - Rumor: The Valkyrs gang have broken the truce with the Flaming Skulls.

6 - The Flaming Skulls will ambush a high ranking Valkyr enforcer, killing them and taking a valuable artifact for themselves.

9 - The Flaming Skulls take over a large portion of Valkyr turf.

**HOME GROUND:** Zigtown, the Undercity

**NOTEWORTHY MEMBERS:** **Vengeance** (Boss, orc, former fire yojin, brutal, loyal, honorable). **Char** (Enforcer. Human, thermal mage, angry, powerful, spiteful). **Snapper** (Soldier. Ogre, big gun, protective, strong, passionate).

**ADVANTAGES:** Large numbers of willing gangers, fire elementals, nothing to lose

**ALLIES:** Hetairoi punk band

**ENEMIES:** Valkyrs, Lawjacks

**CIRCUMSTANCES:** All the Undercity gangs are involved in a massive gang war. It began when the Flaming Skull's former leader Drakaina was assassinated, and now, every gang has been drawn in. The Flaming skulls have deep history with the Valkyrs and it is there that they are aiming to draw first blood as the map of the Undercity is redrawn.

### THE TASTEMAKERS

**Type:** Influencers **Archetype:** Clout **Influence:** 3

The Tastemakers are a group of cybernet influencers operating on various apps. They are directly responsible for making and breaking many of the fleeting cultural trends in Neo Babylon, especially in music, food, and fashion.

**Hooks:**

1 - Rumor that a Tastemaker is coming to Sapphire for a meal soon.

2 - A tastemaker (or perhaps more than one?) arrives in Sapphire and experiences a restaurant.

3 - If the Envoys got involved somehow for the good, they receive no rumors. If they did not get involved, or their involvement went poorly, there is a rumor that the Tastemaker is writing a scathingly bad review.

4 - The Tastemaker who visited Sapphire writes a review of the village's food. If they had only positive interactions (or if the Envoys threatened the Tastemaker), the review is positive, and the community gets 20 progress towards raising influence. If they had no interaction, or poor interactions, the review is bad, and the community loses 20 progress toward raising influence. If they don't have at least 20 progress, invoke the community's impulse.

**HOME GROUND:** Online. The tastemakers are decentralized.

**NOTEWORTHY MEMBERS:** **Adara Sinmor** (The most popular tastemaker. Goblin. They/them. Focuses mostly on music. Rude, selfish, opportunistic). **Hea** (Tastemaker who does mostly food. Non-binary orc. Observant. Fit. Has integrity). **Zamana of House Nidan-Bel** (Lead Tastemaker over fashion. He/him. human. Elitist. Handsome. Wealthy.)



**ADVANTAGES:** They can communicate with millions at the touch of a button. They can mobilize thousands. They can spotlight, cancel, or redeem almost anything or anyone.

**ALLIES:** Performance Artist's Guild, Temple of Ninurta, Soulife Social

**ENEMIES:** Bene Eastar (Disgraced Musician), Unimart (one of the largest 24-hour street-corner retail outlets), The Crow Bar (Tastemakers aren't allowed in)

**CIRCUMSTANCES:** The Tastemakers are constantly making surprise visits to the creators of the bits of culture they focus on. Their highest rated videos are often live streams of them visiting stylists, retailers, and musicians with the intent to take them down in front of their millions of followers.

Other places



# Chapter 30: GM Tips and Tricks

The Game Moderator role in Subversion is crucial. But while a GM certainly plays a different way than Player Characters, it is important, crucial even, to remember that the GM is playing the game, too. They aren't paid employees. Game Moderators shouldn't be required, expected, or manipulated into running games for other players. Subversion is most fun when a GM has the same amount of fun, and is just as satisfied, as the other players. On the reverse side, a healthy GM remembers they aren't against the PCs, but share responsibility for creating memorable stories with the PCs. A GM may be called on to tell a story, arbitrate a rule, or play an NPC, but they are only as responsible for group behavior as all the other players. The GM is not the leader or the parent of the group. Understanding this non-adversarial relationship upfront will save everyone playing a lot of frustration. The following section is designed to support our GMs in co-creating memorable stories and facilitating fun games. It includes mostly advice and guidance, but also some practical tips and tricks.

## THE HIGH CALLING OF A GAME MODERATOR

In Subversion, the role of PCs is to know their character, grow in familiarity with the rules (we all grow at different rates), decide on their character's actions, and co-facilitate everyone having a good time (not just the GMs job). The Game Moderator is responsible for a lot more, usually. While it is true that other players have a responsibility to facilitate the fun of the group (mostly by being friendly and cool to people), the GM's words, actions, and demeanor often sets a tone for the group. As a result, a solid GM will try to make sure everyone is respected and everyone has fun. Subversion has a lot of moving parts, so being a GM often means knowing those parts better than others and using them to be creative often while helping answer questions about the game.

## RULES MODERATION

Subversion, like most Role-Playing Games, has a lot of rules. Sometimes, whether by design or perspective, the rules need to be interpreted on the fly to determine their exact impact on the game. This may happen when a situation comes up that isn't covered in the rules, or when two players can't agree on how a particular rule affects the game. The GM is the one who is the final arbiter of rules in the game. Depending on the table, this can mean anything from a GM making up house rules (changing rules that exist), creating a new rule for situations not covered in this book, or simply making a decision to forgo a rule so as to keep the narrative of the game flowing. This doesn't mean the GM is always right. It means the social contract around Subversion tables is that the GM will do what is best for the players and the story, so other players give them the benefit of the doubt (and the respect to not make a fuss) when a GM makes a call on the fly. The GM, in return, endeavors to arbitrate rules fairly so everyone at the table can have fun. Fun is always more important than rules. If a GM gets a rule "wrong," the time to bring it up, for the sake of the game, is after the session is over or during a break. This applies to rules only. GMs should never feel they have social, emotional, or coercive power over the players, just the rules of the game.

## TELLING STORIES (TO, FOR, WITH, AS)

Subversion is all about telling rebellious stories set in a Babylonian themed cyberpunk-fantasy world. These stories might have similar vibes to other cyberpunk or fantasy stories, but with the main characters being controlled by the players instead of authors. The GM crafts opportunities for characters to explore, uncover, interact, and draws their players deeper into a larger, more sinister, or more satisfying story as the players continue to play. But how Game Moderators do this is important as well, and can vary from group to group. We find it helpful to think of the interaction between GMs and other Players in terms of running games to, for, with, and as players.



Running games TO players is just telling a story. If the GM is doing everything, allowing players very little decision making or ability to interact, this is called “railroading” and can make players feel they are having the adventure dictated to them instead of playing. For that reason, thinking of running games TO players is not a good idea in Subversion.

Running games FOR players is how most RPGs operate. This is where a GM prepares an adventure or a story, and the players interact with it. In this mode, the GM can be seen as doing the players a favor. They are thought of as the consumer, and if the GM makes a good product (the story and its execution), then the players are satisfied. This sort of play is not bad, but it does set up a bit of an unbalanced relationship between the GM and other Players. The GM, not the players, are responsible for the fun at the table, and unless you are at a convention (or game shop) where selling the game to others is the point, this sort of style can sometimes lead to burnout or frustration.

Running games TO or FOR players can be rather hands off, but when you run a game WITH players, it becomes relational. Here, the Game Moderator is not solely responsible for the fun of everyone in the group. Instead, while the GM has a particular role in the group, everyone is on the hook to make sure the game is fun. Everyone must bring whatever skills they have and be thoughtful of other players and the GM, and all must agree that the group and/or the game is important to them and treated as such. If a GM is feeling off during a session, the Players rise to the occasion and help create story drama with the means available to them. This is the sort of co-creation of stories encouraged in Subversion.

## GAME MODERATING IN SUBVERSION

### CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING

Subversion both is and isn’t a “cyberpunk” game. In very broad strokes, there are two things that are meant when we mention cyberpunk in RPGs. The first is a genre and the second is an attitude.

For the sake of completion, we’ll discuss running games AS a player. This can mean having a PC that the GM controls that in all ways acts as a PC (which means the GM acts as a GM AND a Player). This can also refer to some styles of games where there is no real GM, but the Players themselves create the story and the situations as they go, taking turns in various ways throughout the game. While we think that this is a great way to play RPGs, Subversion isn’t quite set up for the latter, at least in these core rules. But if you and your group want to try it out, feel free to bend what rules you need to and have a go at it. Let us know how it goes!

Cyberpunk is a science-fiction sub-genre that explores advanced technology in a dystopian future. In one sense, it is about the setting itself. High tech and low life, as it has been described. So any game where the genre is a future not dissimilar from our world, and technology has run amok without being equally distributed, could be described as “cyberpunk.” The tropes include powerful mega-corporations, privatized law enforcement, hackers, and cybernetic limbs. Usually, you’ll also find a lurid underworld full of illegal trade, gangs, drugs, and addiction.



But on the other hand, the “punk” part is just as important as the “cyber.” The punk is anti-authoritarian, marketing-averse, literate but suspicious, and resistant to tradition. The punk never stops asking who has power, who doesn’t, and what you’re willing to do to get some? Even if the rebels, revolutionaries, and subversives aren’t actively fighting against a corporation or government, they’re still having to deal with life in a world that is both dependent on, and being destroyed by, their technology.

So on one hand, playing a “Cyberpunk RPG” means playing a game in a universe full of technology, inequality, and darkness. Most often, these games will feature mob bosses, corporate intrigue, violence, crime, and other noir tropes. On the other hand, without remembering the punk aspect, these games as often begin to feel like we are supporting and idealizing, rather than pushing back against, the very real threats in our world that cyberpunk has been trying to warn us about.

## HISTORICAL ROLEPLAYING

The default setting for Subversion is an alternate-history Earth, and while the “alternate-history” is very clearly different from our world, the fact that there are still many real-world touchpoints (religions, landmasses, cultures, ethnicities) brings with it a lot of... baggage. Baggage like the historical realities of slavery, racism, genocide, sexism, and more. If you’ve read the setting information earlier in the book, you can see how many of Subversion’s features are very different from our world. However, it isn’t so easy to dismiss these things from our collective consciousness. This is why, when you play Subversion, we encourage you not to default to the tropes your mind conjures about racism, nationalism, sexism, homophobia, sex-negativity, etc., but rather, give yourself and players permission to purposefully break with current and historical conventions. When your characters first encounter powerful warriors, make them women. Make transgender people common and accepted. Make an episode be about tossing out racist or nationalist goons from your community. Subvert tropes (cyberpunk, fantasy, and real-life) as a default instead of simply repeating what has already been done before. This gives both you, the GM, and the players permission to play who they want, do what they want, and feel comfortable with their choices.

## VIOLENCE

Violent games don’t make people do crime. The statistics don’t lie. But violence in RPGs can still reinforce systems we live in that thrive on violence. Even when we don’t do violence ourselves, the pervasive siren call that “might makes right,” so ingrains itself in our souls that it seems that society’s answer to every problem is just to be stronger or more well-armed than the next person. So how do we inhabit these fantastic games, where killing is a part of the world, without approving of that system? Ugliness.

Folks in Subversion, and my grandma, have a word for stuff they’d rather not dwell on. When they see something untoward, despicable, hateful, or cruel, they call it “bein’ ugly.” Our friend Robert Bohl, who created the marvelously subversive Misspent Youth RPG, has a phrase he uses in his games: “Make violence ugly.” It’s your choice, but we suggest that when violence comes to your neck of the woods in Subversion, and it will, that you make it ugly. It isn’t pretty, easy, or without repercussion. It taps into a brutal and primal part of us that we spend lives, if not generations, trying to tamp down. It doesn’t make you heroic. It doesn’t make you sexy. You, and your characters, might feel it is sometimes needed, but we can’t beautify it just because we felt we had no choice. If you swim through a sewer, even to rescue children, you’ll still come out smelling like shet.

In Subversion, loss of animity and grit can both represent the effects of violence on PCs. But even when violence happens and there is animity or grit loss, as a GM, it doesn’t have to stop there. Ask what effects it could have on the community. How does it affect the dead’s family? How do people react to the PC once their deed is known? What effect does it have on the character who pulled the trigger? Who has to clean up the mess? Who is traumatized (animity damage) because they bore witness? Who will seek revenge? If characters have to wrestle with these things each time killing happens, they may still shoot the bad guys when they need to, but they may think twice about it or maybe attempt to find a cleaner, less far-reaching way to accomplish their goals. It is a very small number of people who are proud they’ve killed someone, and fewer still are comfortable with those that have. Remember that when violence comes to Neo Babylon.



## SEXUALITY, GENDER, IDENTITY

Part of Subversion's gameplay is social and relational, and as such, identity is important. By the current day in Subversion's timeline, folk have haven't been burdened with thousands of years of purity culture, and they have seen some pretty bizarre and amazing things. Nearly everyone has given up on caring who others want to be and be with. That means two things. First, Subversion characters can be whoever they want on the gender/sexuality/biology spectrum. Assume that whether by biology, emerging technology, or magic, characters are who they want to be. To put a fine point on it, if a character wants to be lesbian, straight, gay, bisexual, polyamorous, transgender, monogamous, or otherwise queer, they can, no questions asked. But also, if a person wants to be asexual, intersex, or a sex worker, those are valid choices as well. Secondly, the NPCs in Subversion, for the most part, don't give a hoot about PC sexuality, so no Player should ever have to justify themselves or their sex, gender, or biology in the game, with a small caveat that we'll discuss in the "Escaping versus Confronting" section below. Even if sexual content never comes up in your game (see Sex in Your Game below), deciding your character's gender and making it an important part of their story will not detract from your game, but enhance it. To do otherwise is to pretend characters are one-dimensional action stars, which might be fine for an hour and a half movie, but will be shallow over longer-term Episodes and Epics.

## SEX IN YOUR GAME

Characters having sexuality is not the same thing as having sexual content in a game. Characters simply having sexual preferences or being sexual people isn't explicitly sexual any more than having a purple crayon in a box means all your pictures have to include purple. Subversion is a game where you can explore fantastic and exciting situations you otherwise may not get to. That's what makes role playing great! Sometimes, folk feel like exploring sex in an RPG because they've never had it or they've never explored a certain aspect to it. RPGs are a safe place to experiment!

And sometimes, the story itself just takes the characters towards sexual situations, and that's ok! But sometimes, we get into territory some people may not be comfortable with. This is discussed a bit more in the Session Zero section ([see pg 69](#)), but as a GM, you'll be the one to moderate the story's content when sex is involved, based on how your group has decided to deal with it.

With player feedback in hand, when sex comes up at the table, you can A) Let it happen: In this situation, you allow appropriate parties (consenting people of appropriate ages) to narrate, role play, or deal with it however they find satisfying between them, whether PCs or NPCs. You can B) Bring hyper-realism to it, in which sex can have myriad consequences, like the real world, and sex can be dirty, messy, and not at all... sexy, sometimes. Neo Babylon isn't always a "clean," "safe," or "nice" cyberpunk-fantasy city after all. You can always C) Abstract it: Just give a few lines of summary or euphemism to make clear what was intended, what happened, and maybe a bit of the aftermath. For example, instead of going into great detail, when Miran is about to fug Amra, the GM might say, "Amra finds a great deal fulfillment in the arms of Miran, and they both wake the next morning, a bit punch drunk on love and look forward to the next time Amra is in town." Or, you can always D) Fade to Black: This is where the GM simply acknowledges the act and moves on. "Ok, Amra has sex with Miran. What are the rest of you doing while you're here?"

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBVERSION

Two things are true about Mental Illness and gaming. One, it is difficult to make broad, catch-all statements about mental illness which are also true. Two, gaming has often done so anyway, sometimes to great harm. Role Playing Games (and most other media, too, if we're being honest) has repeated, over and again, that those who struggle with mental health issues are different, crazy, funny, dangerous, and maybe even deadly. Words like "insane," "crazy," and "mad" creep us away from offering compassion, or even listening, to those who suffer from mental illness and into a place where they are instead given pity, scorn, contempt, and anger.



Some RPGs have used madness, insanity, or mental illness as tropes in their games, as mechanics, or even the point of the game itself. But mental illness is not a quality for a character to have that gives mechanical bonuses or negatives. It isn't something you can tuck into a box and only have it affect one little part of your life. Like sexuality, our mental and emotional health affects everything we are and everything we do, for good or ill. That is why we suggest that unless players can authentically play a character with a particular mental illness (presumably because they have direct experience with it and won't treat it as a punchline or a "fun" little trait), they may want to rethink that decision. If you are committed to playing a character with a mental illness, at very least, do research and talk to someone who has that particular condition, and don't be a stereotype.

In Subversion, sometimes what we refer to as animity isn't a direct correlation to mental or emotional health, especially not any particular mental illness or condition. Rather, it is a recognition that all of our self, physical, mental, emotional, and beyond, are all affected by all our choices. GMs and players should strive away from making animity or grit one-to-one correlations to mental health or emotional health, while also embracing the idea that being hurt emotionally is every bit as real and affectual as physical hurt.

## ROLEPLAYING AND THE "OTHER"

Often, people ask a GM, "is it ok that I play an X character," where X is someone not like them. X could be a different race, marginalized group, different gender or sexuality, a disability, culture, or anything else the Player doesn't have direct experience with. The answer isn't a hard yes or no. Consider asking the following when players are thinking about whether they should Role Play as someone who is "other" than them:

- ✧ Do you feel the need to create an elaborate backstory for why your character exists in this world? If so, why? If your character cannot exist in the world simply as a character, you may be trying too hard to make them different. Why? It isn't *always* a bad reason.

- ✧ Are you making this character using stereotypes? Did you give your character bipolar disorder because you think they will be super hyper and good at killing, and then "switch off" when not needed? Is your "character of color" poor or uneducated? Is your bisexual character also a nymphomaniac? If you are playing to these stereotypes, you may need to ask why you think those things go together. Please don't play that character.
- ✧ When describing your character, do you go out of your way to define them by their difference to you? If you are white and spend a great deal of adjectives describing your black character's hair and skin color, you need to not do that. Are you a non-asian person, but use a lot of words to describe your character's appearance and martial arts ability? Please don't play that character.
- ✧ If your character's primary values are tied to their race, sexuality, or other difference, don't play this character. You are likely reducing this character to how they are different than you. That won't make for a complex character, it will make for a stereotype.
- ✧ Don't make your character "one of the good ones." Is your character a "savage" learning the ways of the civilized world? Is your character is the only one of their people to be good, reasonable, honorable, or otherwise desirable? Don't play that character. That is a hurtful trope and will not benefit the campaign.
- ✧ Does your character hate whatever makes them different from you? Are you playing a non-white character who wants to be white? Playing a religious minority who wishes they were born among "enlightened folk?" Is your character deaf but makes it their sole mission to gain hearing? Stay away from self-hatred based on existing stereotypes. Unless you can personally identify with those things, it can sound like you are making crass judgements about other people's lived reality.
- ✧ Do you know someone, a friend, who is like the character you are playing in ways you are not? If not, probably best to get to know them, become their friend, and until then, table this character. If you do know someone like the character you want to play, pass it to the others in the group and describe why you want to play them. Listen to feedback and be willing to make changes to your character. If you get a thumbs up, proceed and have fun!



# RACE, GENDER, TRAUMA, TRIGGERS AND DISABILITY

(And other opportunities for you to be a good human)

Chances are, the more you play RPGs, talk about them online, and get involved in a game's culture, Subversion's in particular, you will find yourself interacting with people different than you. The players in your group or in a discussion online may be from a different sex, race, gender, religion, or culture than you. It is also likely that someone in your group has some sort of disability, trauma, or hardship that you don't know about. Many players might have PTSD or may be going through a difficult breakup. They may have just lost a loved one or may be stressed about work. Sharing things about ourselves is sometimes uncomfortable in the best of circumstances, but sharing something as personal as a trauma, trigger, or personal struggle requires a lot of trust and vulnerability. If someone in your group or a discussion you are in is coming from a different place than you, try to be kind. Don't see the differences in others as something to vilify, even if you are uncomfortable with them. Try to assume the best and see the differences in others as opportunities for you to be the good human being Mr. Rogers knows you can be

## Killing and Violence\*

Violence is one likely outcome of the game, but it isn't glorious, beautiful, or clean.

Violence is not easy. Violence leaves a trail. Violence changes the people who commit it. The victims of violence—however justified the perpetrators were—have people who love them, children who will go without parents, friends who will want revenge, and so on. Even the witnesses to violence are hurt by it. In gang violence and war, the weak die first. Gunfire and explosives sometimes have unintended victims. Reprisals for righteous violence can come back to haunt the wrong person.

Even when the ends of violence feel justified for the PCs, the GM should assure the means of violence are always messy. PCs can't knock people out with a tap to the head and have them wake up after a nap; being "knocked out" is a traumatic brain injury. Choking someone to death takes a long time, and they will be screaming and spitting and scratching for the terrible minutes until you end them.

This game is set in an unjust world where powerful people and systems casually use violence to advance their ends. In Subversion, characters may confront that violence, and perhaps even offers it as an easy (or seemingly necessary) way to achieve a goal. Characters have weapons, and every PC can choose to attack or even kill their enemies. When violence happens, prioritize truth when describing it. Make sure it isn't something to be proud of, but a grim necessity, a pleasure for the cruel, a lashing out by the desperate who can see no other hope.

Violence most often plays into the hands of the powers that be, giving them excuses to justify a disproportionate use of force, both against the PCs... and their communities.

\*Used and paraphrased by permission from Robert Bohl's "Violence is Ugly."



## BLOOD AND GORE\*:

When it comes to describing violence in a visceral and explicit way, it is somewhat a separate issue from making violence ugly. It is easy, natural, and can be tempting to depict gory outcomes in glorious and heroic ways. Instead, if session 0 reveals that gore is something your group is in to, depict blood and gore, but make it ugly, ignoble gore. Likewise, if session 0 reveals some in your group are distressed by blood and gore, honor their needs and don't include details that cause them distress, or perhaps even trigger post-traumatic anxiety.

Always strive to foreground the ugliness of violence that still lingers today from atrocities committed during former conflicts. In the world of Neo Babylon, people are still feeling the effects of wars that happened in the past; the Duendes War that caused elves to flee Lutesia, found Le Sanctuaire, and have their city annexed by Neop Babylon; The Wars of Scars which caused many folks to be scared of large folk and which allowed Neo Babylon to overtly dominate the economics and politics of the world, and of course the Fairy Wars, which were only 25 years ago, and whose refugees still sleep on Neo Babylon's streets and whose gunmages are still the abandoned soldiers sent to fight on the city's behalf. Additionally, there is not only the history of violence and conquest to depict, but also the continuing violence of colonialism and oppression. The ugliness of the piled-up incidents of violence, theft, and deprivation are the drawing board on which Neo Babylon is painted.

Finally, you may have a PC who wants to play out "heroic" torture. They might justify it as engaging in "necessary" atrocities, perhaps in retaliation for an outrage or a measure to keep their community safe. If one of the group tries to extract information from someone through torture, underscore that it does not work that way—all torture does is force people to do or say what you want them to. It never gets you reliable information, and let it never be cast as the act of a hero in Subversion.

## PLOT

At its most basic, the sessions a GM runs should give the player characters something to do. It could be as basic as, "You're in an old bar and are attacked by sorcerous card-players!" and then you let them fight. Of course, if that is all the session is, things will seem a bit shallow. So thinking of game sessions in terms of having a beginning, middle, and end would be better. Taking things a step further, you could use the classic "dramatic arc" as follows:

\*Once again paraphrased from Robert Bohl

## ESCAPING VERSUS CONFRONTING

Not everyone plays RPGs for the same reasons. One big difference in motivations is between escaping and confronting. Escapism is when we turn to fantasy or other fiction to get away from the norm. We get enough garbage staring us in the face every day, and it can be incredibly healthy and cathartic to want to get away from that and not think about it, even if it is just for a few hours while we play games together. On the other side, some people find it similarly cathartic to use role playing games to confront the very things they see in real life but may not have the means to fight. I had a friend tell me recently they are tired of experiencing racism in real life and just want to play a game where they fight bad guys and don't have to deal with racism. That escapism is what Subversion is here for! You can play detectives and breachers and mages and never talk about race ever. Another friend told me months earlier that the reason they liked a certain game was that she gets to confront the evils she sees every day and have a powerful character that can actually do good and change the evil she can't in real life. And Subversion is here for that, too! If you want to run a game where dwarf organized crime slavers are trying to sell elven children, and your big damn heroes go in to shut that shet down, do it! Just make sure before you start that your players are all on board. Not everyone needs to have the exact same goals, but the goal of playing is that everyone will have fun, not just the GM or a fraction of the players. That's why a session zero is such an important idea ([see "Session Zero" on pg 69](#)).

Co-Creating Memorable Stories With Players

**Exposition:** This is where you, the GM, would introduce any important NPCs, background info, or bits about the setting the other Players may not know. At its simplest, exposition happens at the beginning of an episode and is a sort of information dump. Consider spicing this up by using exposition throughout the episode in the form of dialogue with NPCs, rumors, flashbacks, or observation.



**Rising Action:** This is how you build the interest of the characters until they have an investment in the outcome. Sometimes, this can be as simple as having a character's loved one be kidnapped or sent on a job. For a better story, however, try to create tension using the character's own values, goals, and deep desires. Use their relations, their impulses, their resources, etc. Once you've established a reason for them to care, raise the stakes, provide mini-climaxes that only partially resolve the tension, and keep going!

**Climax:** This is the turning point of your story, in which something changes. If things were going bad, this is where they start going good. If things were good, this is where they turn sour. This isn't necessarily where a big, final boss battle happens, but it may be where they discover the key to solving something and start the march toward resolution. Multiple climaxes are great! Give players many chances to learn and grow and become different. They don't all have to be happy and they don't all have to be positive. Any "big deal" moments can be climaxes. Movies may have one big climax, but episodes, like our stories, can have a lot before the Epic is over.

**Falling action:** This is where the characters and their rivals are inevitably drawn together and the final showdown takes place. This may be a fight, but it could just as easily be a high stakes infiltration, a trial, or social confrontation. Whatever happens, the tension from the rising action and climax has to get resolved and not much else should distract from that goal at this point. Once the final outcome is decided, the falling action ends.

**Dénouement:** This is where we find out what is different as a result of the entire episode. The bad guys are sent packing, people fall in love, innocent people are rescued, and the haunting is gone! Describe, and let the players describe, how the world or their characters have changed, if they have.

Some GMs like to have all this planned out, and some like almost no planning. Both are fine, and discovering your style may take a bit of experimentation, so don't worry! Here are some things that might help along the way:

- 3) Unexpected complication in the plan (Now the GM gives a bunch of Grit)
- 4) Players scramble to salvage the plan (and have threat to help them)
- 5) End (and maybe tie it to the revealing of a threat?

when the PCs take actions to change things. What most tabletop roleplaying games would refer to as going on an adventure. Unless this is the very first episode of a Story, the PCs will have chosen a goal to accomplish.

The key to this is that the PCs choose what to do. Even if the world seems to force them towards a specific goal (such as an impending attack on their community), the PCs can always choose to do whatever they wish. This is where the largest chunk of play occurs. Often, depending on the group, maybe just the very first time, the GM will narrate the characters receiving a tip, a job, or some other event in which they are given something to do, some act that will propel them forward into a narrative. Don't worry if they don't know what they are doing, that will make for good discussions in the Reflection!

The Action is a focused effort by the PCs towards a stated goal. This might be proactive, such as doing a job for the community or working towards a personal goal. Or it might be reactive, such as investigating a murder, repelling an attack, or acquiring specialized medicine to stop a plague. The GM may have ideas about what will happen during the Action, but PCs' desires, missions, and values are also potential plots. There are always things to be done on behalf of your community: creating or upgrading a community resource is always a good use of your time. If your community has any ongoing effects caused by its impulses, spending an act to deal with those issues will end the effect — if you're successful.

Some groups prefer the GM to set the goal and situations for the PCs, but other groups may prefer the PCs to steer the larger narrative. In the first Action of a larger story, the GM will usually present the PCs with a goal in order to get the ball rolling.

## SESSION PLANNING

Here's a quick and dirty session plan using the above as a guide:

- 1) Set up the Job
- 2) Come up with a Plan



Sometimes, a GM may spend grit to introduce a dire threat against the community. Something bad happens that must be dealt with, or something very bad will happen unless the PCs find a way to prevent it. The PCs must work to aid in the community's recovery, healing, or perhaps seek justice or vengeance. Alternatively, the threat represents an impending danger that can only be prevented or opposed with a desperate action. Of course, the PCs might choose to ignore the threat and pursue their own agendas, but the consequences will be terrible. Simply ending an episode with any unresolved threat raises the specter of doom over the uncertain future.

Urgent needs don't have to be gloomy or dangerous, though. They might also represent requests from an authority, an elder, someone in the community, or a stranger in need. They might represent opportunities that will fade quickly if not seized upon but offer no significant danger if ignored. Or they might represent cultural events, such as festivals, concerts, sports, feasts, or parades. Perhaps the Action might be to acquire significant doses of a nano-serum before afflicted members of the community perish, and the goal for another might be to get an autograph from The Red Dagger band at the concert for a community member who is a big fan. It might be to make sure an elder has a peaceful evening so that they can go on a date.

## GATHERING INFORMATION:

When PCs are doing legwork or trying to find out something by hitting the streets, asking relations, looking on the cybernet, etc., don't withhold information based on how well they can roll. Instead, do the following:

### 1) WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE?

Decide what relevant information can be gained by the PCs or if it is impossible.

### 2) HOW CAN THE PCS GET THE INFO?

Decide which ways the PCs can or can't access this information (relations, observation, cybernet, research, arcane, etc.)

### 3) DIFFICULTY

Determine how easy the information will be to obtain. Start with a TN of 10 and modify:

- Add +1 for something more difficult than just looking around.
- Add +2 if information cannot be found in the immediate area
- Add +4 if information is only found in another district
- Add +6 if information is hidden, but not too well
- Add +10 if information is hidden well
- Add +12 if information is secured somehow
- Add +15 if information is damning to powerful people (wealthy, political, underworld, famous)
- Add +18 if information is Top Secret or World Changing

Feel free to modify the TN up or down as needed to reflect the ease or difficulty between finding information in different ways (arcane TN might be 2 lower than cybernet TN, etc.).

This roll doesn't determine whether or not they can find the information. Rather, it determines whether they can find it by themselves or not. If they fail the roll, that's ok. But the information now has a cost.

### 4) COST

If there isn't some way to get the info already available, introduce one (relations, observation, cybernet, research, arcane, etc.). This is who they need to pay a cost to. The higher the TN that was missed, the more costly the information will be.

TN: 10 – 11: A small payout/bribe, a trade. A successful intimidation or social roll will eliminate the cost.

TN: 12 – 14: A favor owed, a medium payout, a side fetch job, a successful intimidation or social can bump the cost down one level.

TN: 15 – 20: two favors, a large payout, an entire session fetch job. a successful intimidation or social can bump the cost down one level.

TN: 21 – 25: A custom favor likely requiring a betrayal of values. An unsavory favor to be called in later. A very costly payout. A side job episode. a successful intimidation or social can bump the cost down one level.

TN: 26 +: Something that will likely put the PCs' relations or community at risk. A custom favor that will likely involve an entire episode and betraying multiple values. Cannot be intimidated down or socially influenced.



These are just guidelines, however. The GM is allowed and encouraged to use any costs they desire in order to get the information the players want. The only caveat we suggest is GMs should not allow mission critical information to be protected so well that PCs can't or won't be able to reach it.

## 5) AUTOMATIC SUCCESSES

If player abilities or other modifiers reduce the TN below 10, the PCs are able to find the information automatically because they are good at what they do.

## OBSERVATION ROLLS AND GMING

GMs should endeavor to increase the drama and forward motion of stories using Observation, not shut it down. Failure may mean introducing a red herring as well as helpful data, not simply finding nothing.

Often, a GM might ask the PCs to roll Observation to notice something. In general terms, we encourage GMs not to put episode-critical information behind tests that can be failed, but if a test to notice something is desirable, use Awareness (+ another relevant attribute). For example, feeling subtle differences in the thickness of small objects might be an Awareness (+ Brawn) test, while you may ask for Awareness (+ Wit) for sensing logic flaws, Awareness (+ Will) for a memory test, or Awareness (+ Charisma) for sensing deceit or manipulation, etc.

# BUILDING ENCOUNTERS

## CHALLENGE NAME:

## SITUATION

## STAKES/CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

NPCs:

Beasts: Beast knowledge, etc. Offerings, tricks, not negotiations

Beings: Wants, needs, fears

Names, a mannerisms, a few notes about their appearance

Motivations:

Values

Ties

Flaws

## PROGRESS TRACKS:

## FAILURE CONDITIONS:

## SUCCESS CONDITIONS:

## IMMUNITIES

## TIMERS

## LOSS CONDITIONS

Each Cinematic will have one or more **loss conditions**, as determined by the GM. Each loss condition is listed below.

## FAILURE TIMER

The **Failure timer** is when the player characters have a limited number of chances, not to succeed, but to fail—maybe they're tinkering with a fiddly device that the wrong moves will irreparably break, or trying to convince someone to do something with only so much patience to hear their proposal. With a failure timer, the GM sets a number of failures for the loss condition. If the players fail that many attempts before they complete the progress track, they lose the Cinematic.



*Example: Nugalbanda the seer keeps all his research in the Jade Tower. Unfortunately, the tower has a high-end cybertech lock. Jacko, the team's breacher, thinks they can crack it. The GM states the progress of the challenge at 25, and the TN at 15 and warns, "this looks pretty tough, If you get sloppy, you could trigger the alarm." Then, the GM sets the failure timer to 2. That is, if Jacko fails to hit the TN two times before he gets 25 progress, the alarm will sound.*

## NPCs COMPLETE THEIR PROGRESS TRACK (RACE)

In a **race**, there are NPCs who are trying to accomplish something before the players accomplish their goal. In this case, the NPCs would be assigned a parallel progress track, and if they hit complete it before the PCs complete theirs, the PCs lose and the NPCs win. Alternatively, if the NPCs have a slightly different goal than the PCs, they can have a completely different track altogether. Whoever completes their progress track first ends the Cinematic.

*Example: The PCs finally have their goal in sight: the crystal head of Havar. Unfortunately, another group has their sites set on it as well. The Crystal Head sits on top of a rocky outcropping, which will take time to climb. The GM sets the progress track at 25, which can only be met by making a physicality test. While the PCs and NPCs fight it out over a few rounds, an NPC named Milo makes 25 progress towards the goal, reaching the Crystal Head of Havar first, and ending the cinematic.*

## ROUND TIMER

The **round timer** is used when time is crucial to success. The GM picks a number of rounds as the round timer—if the track is not complete before that point, the players lose the Cinematic.

*Example: The PCs have learned that there is a timed bomb about to go off. The bomb can be defused, but the trigger is guarded by a pack of demon dogs. The GM says the timer will go off after 4 rounds. So the PCs have 4 rounds to get past the dogs and disarm the trigger before the bomb explodes. If they do not disarm the trigger when the 4<sup>th</sup> round ends, the failure timer kicks in and the cinematic ends.*

If a round timer is combined with a race, the GM may decide that whoever has made the most progress wins if no side has completed their progress track by the end of the Cinematic. Below are some additional options for round timer win conditions:

- ✂ Whoever made the most progress on a progress track
- ✂ Whoever made the fewest failures on rolls
- ✂ Whoever did the most damage
- ✂ Whoever lost the least amount of health

## LAST TEAM STANDING

Sometimes the only way a Cinematic ends is when all opposing characters are subdued, have given up, or left the field. This is most often the case in combat, but the **Last Team Standing** failure timer can also occur in other situations where it makes sense to directly target opposing characters.

## EVOLVING CINEMATICS

In an **Evolving Cinematic** the success or failure conditions will change while a Cinematic is going on, either due to decisions by the characters, reveals made by the GM, or additional challenges being introduced. If the circumstances of winning or losing a cinematic evolve, the GM should set a new progress track and let the PCs know things have changed.

*Example: A fight starts between the PCs and a group of NPCs. They decide to try to take out the health of the NPCs by fighting. After a few turns, the PCs decide they are outmatched, so instead of trying to fight, they focus on running away. At this point, Last Team Standing rules don't quite apply, so the GM suggests using the Chase rules ([see "Chases" on pg. 60](#)), and the PCs hope to make enough progress on the chase track to lose the NPCs. The PCs don't quite manage to get away after a few turns, but they do see a water tower and decide to destroy its legs, knocking it over. They make enough progress to do so, but the NPCs have caught up with them. But now, another problem. The water tower is falling and there are community members in the way who might be hurt. So the PCs shift again and the GM says that unless they can make enough progress on what they are calling the "rescue" track before the NPCs beat them senseless, there will be consequences for the health of these community members.*

*This cinematic goes from Last Team Standing, to chase, to making progress against the water tower, to failure timer, with the PCs health as the failure track. Mixing and matching these tracks and timers can lead to dramatic, evolving cinematics!*



## ALTERNATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Sometimes, characters will seek an alternative resolution to the Cinematic—perhaps instead of running away they decide to hide, or instead of fighting they de-escalate the fight. Depending on the circumstance, the GM might add a new progress track to represent the new goal, resolve it as simple rolls, or even just end the Cinematic outright.

### ACCEDING

Not every battle is worth fighting, and not every scenario is going to lead the PCs to be the big damn heroes. Sometimes, it is better to not fight, even if it means leaving in the short term in order to be able to win later. Any time before a Cinematic is about to happen, the GM may allow the players to simply opt-out of Cinematic, to not participate. This can have severe narrative consequences, but that can be fun, too. The GM should reward the players for these decisions where appropriate, with extra fortune, giving up GM grit, or other boons as the PCs stand by, embarrassed but resolute, that they will make this right... eventually.

### DEUS EX MACHINA

Greek plays sometimes ended with a god swooping in and fixing things in the end, often rigged up on stage with some kind of machinery. So the phrase Deus Ex Machina, or god in the machine, refers to a resolution that wasn't foreshadowed or expected. Sometimes, your Cinematics can end in odd ways that come as a surprise.

*Example: the bad guy is about to be captured, but an armed gang busts in to rob the place just at the wrong moment. Now both the bad guy and the PCs have a third party to deal with that came out of nowhere. The bad guy (or the PCs) may escape in the confusion, leading to more drama in the future.*

The PCs can propose a “god in the machine” rescue. If the GM is amenable, they can offer such a rescue—at a cost. The GM offers an amount of GM grit they will gain if the Deus ex Machina comes through. If the cost is acceptable to the players, their unlikely rescue happens—but eventually their luck will turn for some consequence in the future...

## MIXING ENCOUNTER TYPES

Combat  
Social  
Breaching  
Stealth  
Chases



# RELATIONS

The relations the PCs create provide incredible story potential to Subversion games. Whether you use the PCs relations or introduce new ones, they provide touchpoints for the characters to spring from. Major relations are NPCs that will be important throughout the entire length of an episode or epic. GMs should protect these NPCs, let them grow along with the characters, and when/if they die, it should be a major climax moment in the game. These major relations should have actual motivations similar to the PCs and if you give them long-term plans, they will come alive.

Supporting relations are usually only important to a single character, and may be used in their background to add variety to the rest of the action. Perhaps they are shopkeepers or owners of brothels in the community. They have names and personalities, but aren't essential to larger plots (unless they are!). A single trait and a short-term plan of action should be enough for these characters.

## ENEMIES/AUTHORITY

In the same way relations can enhance a episode, so can enemies. Important: not all enemies should be physical threats. Yes, it is great to have a gang of bad guys who challenge the PCs to fights, but it is also wonderful to have a guild master who owns the mine outside of the community where lots of the PCs friends work. He does everything legally, but is an immoral piece of filth who preys on the weak and covers his tracks. The PCs may not be able to directly confront him, but he can be a thorn in their side for many sessions. Create a few recurring villains that will plague your team on repeat plays. These are what we call Major Enemies or even the community's Authority. Similar to major relations, give them real motivations and create long terms plans for them.

# CAMPAIGNS

You should have a pretty good idea, after talking with your group, about the kind of episode you want to tell. Even though you may only want to plan in depth for a session at a time (or not, you do you!), if you plan on playing together for a while, your sessions will blend into longer stories we call episodes, or even larger narratives called Epics. If you take a little time to plan for episode-or-Epic-length adventures, you can enhance the story and everyone's fun!

Obstacle Enemies are the kind that may be memorable, but aren't going to last a long time. These are the ones that usually exist only to provide obstacles for the PCs to overcome. They don't need to be quite as fleshed out as major enemies, but only need to be as complicated as what they will be used for in the episode. We find it helpful to have a stable of obstacle enemies so we can give the PCs a challenge whenever they do something we aren't prepared for. As with supporting relations, give them a single trait and a short-term plan.

## EXTRAS

Extras fill in the gaps of everyday life for your world and don't need expansive backstories or well-thought out traits. Having a piece of paper near with a list of random names (Cole, Habiras, Serwe, Patrika), traits (sickly, strong, sleepy, obnoxious, sleezy), voices (Bill S. Preston Esquire, Marcellus Wallace, Natasha Romanov, Rocky), and occupations (Barber, Prostitute, Farmer, Mayor) near you, can make it easy to create a believable NPC on the fly.



Start with a general outline or narrative arc for your episode. Think of it like our dramatic arc above, but in very big terms. Nothing would get solved in a session, or perhaps even 6 sessions, but you can still plan for it. Is there a big bad villain they will face? Some community to rescue? A demon to banish? Try to outline or summarize the large plot in just a few sentences, like this: A groups of former gangers are looking for redemption by acting as their community's Envoys, but eventually, they must confront an ancient evil interfering with the lives of the people they've sworn to serve."

After you have the basic idea, break that big idea into smaller chunks, bits that you can fit roughly into one session with your group. In our example above, session 1 might be "group is released from jail on condition they leave the community and never come back." That doesn't sound like it ties into the larger arc above, but it sets the stage and allows exposition and setup to occur without forcing the characters too far down one path. In this initial session, you should have more exposition and introductory material prepared since they players will be counting on you to set the stage a bit more than you'll have to in later sessions. Introduce major relations and perhaps even major enemies. Try to have a broad set of experiences ready for them over the first few sessions so they can really get a feel for Subversion's world and what it can offer. Published episodes can help fill in some of the individual sessions, or you can make them up yourself.

The end of your story or Epic may not happen for years, but it likely will happen, by design or otherwise. As a result, it is a good idea to have an ending in mind so you can bring certain threads together and work toward narrative payoffs and big reveals. That doesn't mean the end you had in mind can't change, they most often will as players interact with the plot hooks, but it will keep the story moving along if you know where things are going. And of course, one ending can also be the start of something new, either with the same characters, new characters, or maybe with the previous characters as NPCs!

## **PRACTICAL EXAMPLES**

There's no end to the troubles your group can get into in Subversion. But just because the choices are endless, doesn't mean telling stories is easy. So we've included a short list of example stories or prompts that might help you when crafting episodes for your players. The first group are larger story arcs, fit for multiple episodes or Epics. The following section are more precise prompts, better meant for smaller episodes or sessions.

### **STORIES/EPICS**

#### **THERE ARE LOTS OF NEIGHBORHOODS, BUT THIS ONE'S OURS**

There are many communities, districts, towns, and groups in the world of Subversion, but this one belongs to the player characters. For unknown reasons, it faces routine dangers of all kinds, both from inside and out. Fortunately for the community, it has its Envoys, the community's finest. These Envoys are talented, dedicated, and decent, doing what they need to do to protect the community and its people.



## I'M LOOKIN' FOR A FEW GOOD PEOPLE

A stranger rolls into the community and is recruiting folk for a strange, dangerous, but lucrative expedition into a place that's been overtaken by animals, criminals, or something darker. You'll need a diverse group with various abilities, but the payoff could be enough to rescue your community.

## GOVERNMENT WORK

You and your companions are government operatives. The continent of Azore is large and threats come from many and varied places. It is the job of your squad to confront and pacify all of them, internal, external, technological, and arcane.

## MUSCLE FOR HIRE

You are individuals, known for their skills, brought together for a special mission. When that mission goes badly, the team sticks together in order to track down who betrayed them, why it happened, and to make it right. Unfortunately, the answers go much deeper into dangerous and strange territory than anyone could have predicted.

## EPISODES

### PROTECTION

Sometimes people get on the wrong side of dangerous people. That's when they need people like the PCs to step in and stop whatever harm is coming. The safety of whoever is paying, asking, or praying is what this episode's all about.

- ✂ The Envoys need to protect a diplomat from the Ukkim from a Pretanikan assassin.
- ✂ A recent earthquake opened a street near Willam in the shape of a giant mouth. Winged beasts are crawling out the pit and headed towards the community.

### SAVING

The characters are pressed upon to lend a hand to people in need. The need could be rescuing someone who's been kidnapped, helping before/during/after a flood hits, finding lost kids, or any other situation where people need saving.

- ✂ A couple of kids who aren't supposed to be in love run off and get trapped by a demon.
- ✂ Members of the Cult of Enki are kidnapping men and conditioning them to sell as slaves.

## ESCORTING

Things aren't as safe in certain parts of Neo Babylon as others. Going on a trip, no matter how close or far, without protection, is risky. So however they get on the team, the PCs are charged with making sure a person, people, or thing gets safely from where they are to where they need to be.

- ✂ An ambassador from Val Broceliande was the lone survivor of an assassination attempt. She needs traveling companions until she arrives safely back in her homeland.
- ✂ A cursed mage-gun needs to be carried to the Undercity and destroyed in the acid of the Sogs. This gun takes no ammunition, but goes off at random intervals.

## TALKING

The PCs are told/asked to act as partial or impartial arbiters between two or more factions (maybe because the Lawjacks don't care). This could lead to conflict, investigation, or more social interactions.

- ✂ The community barber accidentally shaved the mustache off a visiting arcane emissary. The emissary has called for a mage duel, but the barber, who is not well trained in arcane magic, will surely die and his 5 children will be destitute.
- ✂ Two young ladies from the community are set to be wed to two rich brothers, but are secretly in love with each other. The ladies ask for help in getting each of their parents on board and finding the brothers more suitable wives.

## INVESTIGATING

The Envoys are tasked with sneaking or otherwise looking for dirt, evidence, or information. Maybe there's been a crime, strange happenings, or just to get to the bottom of a conflict.

- ✂ A yojin prodigy with strange power is causing a ruckus and needs to be handled.
- ✂ A con artist is selling untested "snake oil" to unsuspecting folk in the community... who are turning into snakes.



## NUTS AND BOLTS

### WHERE YOU PLAY

If you play RPGs long enough, you'll eventually find that some game sessions fall flat due to factors completely independent of the game itself. When a group is having personality clashes, when the environment is too noisy or uncomfortable, or players are feeling ill or preoccupied, no matter how great the GM or the plot is, the game may turn from fun to frustrating.

Wherever you play, as far as it is possible for you, chose a place where all players have a comfortable place to sit and ideally, plenty of table space to roll dice, place refreshments, and manage books and sheets. This CAN be at someone's home, but can also work in a library, school, community center, or online. Take breaks often for stretching and other bodily needs, and maybe even play background music if you want to set the mood.

## RECORD KEEPING

While players only really have one character to keep track of (theirs), GMs are responsible for all the other characters in the game. Not only that, but GMs also need to remember plot hooks, events, relationships, and all sorts of other stuff as they run the game. A good practice is to keep one or more notebooks handy to write down NPCs that were encountered, events that happened, and ideas that come up in play so they can be remembered later. Don't worry about organization too much while the game is going on. Instead, just make shorthand notes. After the session (not necessarily right away, but not so long that you forget), take your notes and enter them into a game journal.

A game journal is your "series bible" in which you have all the important characters, minor characters, plot hooks, and everything else you need to know in order to run your game smoothly. Don't edit your game journal while playing, keep the action moving, but DO spend time outside of the game session adding to and making connections between the people, places, and things inside, adding the events of the last session as you go.

## GAME MODERATION STYLES

Don't worry too much about being a great GM. Most folk just love having a game to play in at all! So give yourself some grace when it comes to whether or not you think you're doing a good job. It is also possible that you ARE doing a great job, but might be comparing yourself to someone else you think is a great GM. Well, you both may be great, but have different styles, and that is ok! Check the (incomplete) list below to see what style you may enjoy, or what style you might want to try out. All of these are valid, and depending on the group, can all be great fun.

### THE MOVIE MAKER

The movie maker GM is always looking to create memorable scenes and have epic episodes spun. They may fudge a bit on rolls or introduce, kill, or otherwise alter NPCs in order to get the most out of any scene or game. They may or may not have a master plan, but when it comes to whether or not the PCs should do something, they think, "if it will be awesome, do it!"

### THE ANTAGONIST

It might not be fair to call this GM antagonistic, but it will certainly feel like it to the PCs. This style of GM loves the tactical nature of combat and loves pitting the group against all sorts of danger, challenging them and also trying to defeat them in a fair fight. This sort of GM can be best when the PCs love combat and feel a sense of accomplishment when working together leads to a hard fought, but fair victory. This GM must be cautious to give opportunities for non-combat situations to happen and also to not develop and actual adversarial relationship with the group.

### THE LOVING DEITY

This GM wants the players to have fun, get along, and tell great stories. As such, the GM bends rules, breaks rules, takes suggestions from players, and may even back off when appropriate to allow players to do whatever they want. This style of play is wonderful if you love role-playing and have a group that loves it, too. It can be frustrating for those who prefer to stick tighter to the rules, so make sure to read the room if you see players floundering.



## THE WORLD BUILDER

This GM spends hours, days, months creating the perfect story, world, community for the players to explore. They've named all the NPCs, given them backstories, and know where and when the PCs might meet them. They have everything, not planned, but created in a way that the group can explore this custom-created world made just for them. This can be wonderful fun for everyone, but this GM may feel frustrated when the PCs don't interact as meaningfully with their creation as intended. They may focus on the dopey janitor rather than the big boss who the GM wants them to fight. Too much planning CAN backfire, but as long as the GM is open to the players having their own creative powers as well, this can be great!

## THE IMPROVISOR

The best plan for the improviser is no plan. They don't have anything but the barest of plot, trusting their group will go and do exactly what they want to, and when they do, the GM will improvise! This can lead to amazing feeling of open-world agency for characters and can make their characters feel alive, but can also be stressful for a GM to have to make up everything. Not all of us are capable of thinking on the fly, nor should anyone feel they have to in order to be a GM. If this style works for you and your group, great! But it won't for everyone, and that's cool!

## PROBLEMATIC PLAYERS

Not everyone gets along. That's a fact of life. But in a role-playing game, there is room for all personality types, provided there is enough respect for the game and the other people playing it. Having said that, there are some types of players that have potential for making problems for the game.

### DEDICATED NON-GAMER

This person really doesn't want to be playing. They may like the other people in the group or just don't want to miss out on what their friends are doing, but the results are frustrating. You may find this type of player having to be reminded dozens of times who their character is, what the most basic rules are, or simply distracting the group with unrelated chatter while others are trying to play. Our suggestion: Talk to them. If they understand what they are doing and want to get better, great. If it continues, plan other times to hang out as pals and leave the gaming to those who want to be there.

### TROLL

These might be the worst type of player. For whatever reason, perhaps they've had bad experiences or actively dislike others in the group, they go out of their way to spoil others' fun. They purposefully go astray, in nonsensical ways, from the GMs stories. They actively challenge other PCs to combat for frivolous reasons. They create drama whenever they can for whoever they can. These sort of players mostly happen when a group doesn't know each other before playing, but however this person makes it into your group, they must be addressed or they will ruin things. Our suggestion: Give them one chance to get better, then simply un-invite them from the game.



## POWER-GAMER

They scour rulebooks, spending hours finding just the right combination of gear, character builds, and rules to make the ultimate combat (or other skill) machine. Everything they touch is too easy, nothing is a challenge, but they are also one-dimensional. They sit around doing basically nothing, champing at the bit until they are able to use their one trick, fly through it with ease, then go back to grousing until the situation arises again. Our suggestion: It is up to you. If you want to give them plenty of opportunities to do their thing, great. As long as everyone is having fun, no problem. If it is affecting the player's mood, your mood, or the mood of others, you can have a conversation about how to fix it. Often this can be discussed and headed off during a good session zero, but usually isn't a sign of disrespect or anything that can't be fixed.

## RULES LAWYER

This player challenges the GM on rules all the time, perhaps because they really do know the rules better than anyone else. They feel that, unless the game is being played exactly by the letter of what is written, it is wrong. This can be incredibly frustrating for both GM and players alike. On one hand, we love this player! They like our rules well enough to read and memorize them all! On the other hand, we ultimately want fun in groups, not pedantic arguments. Our suggestion: Speak to the player and perhaps dub them "rules person." Defer to them when it doesn't matter, trusting they know the rules. But also make it clear you are the GM, and it is important that the players trust you to run the game, without feeling anxious about getting a rule wrong. Ask them for advice, but feel free to ignore it when you feel appropriate.

## EVERY PLAYER

All players have the potential for being problematic, and with the rarest exceptions, all players can be wonderful additions to a group. You may have noticed a common thread in all of our suggestions, and that is to talk to your players. Listening to players, hearing their concerns and desires, as well as sharing your own, will go almost 100% of the way to fixing most problems at a gaming table. But it won't fix them all. If at any time, someone in your group is disrespectful, hurtful, or otherwise crappy; you are not obligated to play with that person, no matter what. Your sanity is more important than the comfort or fun of a toxic person.

## GM HACKS!

(bite-sized, best practices and gaming life-hacks)

If there are NPCs in the group, don't let them take the spotlight from the PCs.

If you make a mistake, own it, apologize if needed, and undo it. Simple. Easy. Everyone appreciates someone who can own their stuff and move on.

Try not to include impossible situations. If there is a villain the players cannot stop, don't bring them face to face. If there is a robbery they can't stop, make it happen off screen. No one likes to feel useless.

Re-use places and things your players have encountered before. The gunmage had a beautiful, pearl-handled mage-pistol when you first saw him, and now it returns in the hands of someone else! The temple of Ishtar calls on the players for help every so often. The same corporation continues to mess with multiple NPCs over many episodes.... Players love that stuff.

If something important happens, make sure the players are involved. Don't make a habit of making them spectators to the game's amazing happenings!



It may seem counter-intuitive, but if you can avoid it, don't roll dice for everything. Dice usually slow things down. So make dice rolls fast, and don't drag out encounters unless they are important. Use dice quickly and poignantly.

Have NPCs talk about the players. Whether it is in whispers or news, having the PCs noticed and recognized for their deeds, good or bad, will amp up their investment.

Give players options. In an RPG game, it can feel like any and every choice is available. And that may be true! But with that also comes indecision and uncertainty. Some players need some sort of nudge to get their creativity flowing. So instead of asking, "what are you doing now?" perhaps something like, "it looks like you have a few leads. Do you want to follow up on the farmer's grapes, the Tulkan boxer, or help the raven-haired boy?"

Don't bother trying to make sure everyone is having fun all the time. If they come back, keep playing, and aren't disruptive, they are probably having a good time. If you sense this isn't true, a quick convo will clear things up.

Don't roleplay uninteresting stuff. We all know PCs eat, sleep, and use the bathroom, but unless there is a reason to do so, don't role play that stuff. Do it off screen.

Sometimes the players will do something you don't expect. Sometimes, they have an idea that is so clever, it circumvents your carefully laid plans. Go with it. Take their ideas and reward that cleverness. Sometimes, they will have guesses about the plot which end up being better than what you had planned. Go with it! They'll never know and will feel incredibly invested when their hunch turns out right. The point is fun, not telling one, particular story.

Keep a list of names for NPCs handy. Give them interesting traits and remember (write down) which names you've used and how. Bringing back NPCs in recurring roles is one of the most immersive things you can do in your games.

Give at least one PC a cool moment twice per session. Choose two PCs to have something significant occur to them, and over time, all players will feel they've had a lot of neat moments, and will be invested. This may mean knowing your PCs' strengths and crafting encounters just for them sometimes.

When all is said and done, every PC should feel "heroic." That is, they all should have contributed meaningfully to the objective. If you see a PC who hasn't yet, make something up that plays to their particular strengths, even if you hadn't planned it originally.

Have fun! Break rules if you need to, but no matter what, you have permission to do whatever will make your group have the most fun.

Stop and ask players what to do.

"I'm not sure what feels right here. What do you all think?" "What is an appropriate reaction for this NPC?" "I'm having a little trouble figuring out what the answer/action/distance/description/time/date/appearance might be. What do you all think?"

Then, either choose one of the suggestions, use the suggestions as a springboard for your own, or come up with an acceptable way forward together. The GM and players are telling a story together, not trying to 1-up each other. Work together when you want or need to! This option takes the pressure off the GM and can lead to much cooler stories!

The group needs to infiltrate a prison to rescue their friend. There's simply no way one person can pull this off. The group's breacher has swiped a layout of the prison from the cybernet. They know they need to go in and get out quietly or they'll be surrounded and crushed. Daphne, an acrobat before she became an Envoy, wants to scout the prison before they go in.

GM: Okay, you're wanting to give your group an edge going in by staking out the prison. This is a high security place, so even scouting is going to be difficult. Target number is 16. Make the roll.

Daphne: Ok, my physicality is 5 and my agility is 4. I rolled... 17!

GM: Nice! Since the Lawjacks aren't expecting any trouble tonight, you find it rather easy to observe the facility in detail. You spend time hidden just outside the compound, with your enhanced vision goggles, watching their movements, seeing where they go and what they do, and most importantly for your team, you see that there are times when the shifts change and things are bit looser and less regimented. You also think you may know where they are keeping your friend.

This means that if your group goes in just before a shift change, you might be able to catch them off guard, so to speak. When the team goes in, everyone has 1 temporary grit to spend until you are detected.



# PLAYING THE COMMUNITY

One of the responsibilities of the GM is to play the roles of the NPCs in the PCs' community. These NPCs are the biggest support of the players, sometimes create conflict with them, provide resources to support them, and perhaps even the reason why the PCs care so much.

Try to have at least 1 NPC per player that you use over and over, allowing the PCs to get to know them, build relationships with them, and provide a sense of personality and continuity to your community.

## DOWNTIME AND THE COMMUNITY:

During downtime, in addition to the PC's individual downtime actions, the GM can use the community and its NPCs to provide plot hooks that the PCs may pick up and run with. These may, but not always, be what the PCs' next session will center around. Having NPCs share their private problems with a PC, having community representatives send the PCs on missions, or simply alluding to something they've seen can all give the PCs some narrative room to work.

- ✂ Stakes: This is what happens if the PCs succeed or fail. What are they fighting for or against? How will things change either way?
- ✂ Twist: What information, encounter, betrayal, or revelation adds doubt, dissention, anger, fear, or other emotion before the episode is over? In an episode, include temptations the characters will find hard to resist. What if a bad guy offers to help the community in ways that would take the PCs years to do? Ex: build up assets, help with authorities, etc?

## ENCOUNTERS: HAUNTING (RULES)

## CRAFTING GOOD STORIES

It can be tricky to come up with good story ideas, especially for groups that play a lot. But there are some hacks to make things easier on yourself. When crafting a story, start by identifying the main things you need:

- ✂ Concept: This is the ultimate problem the PCs will end up solving (or not).
- ✂ Face of the problem: This is the person or thing responsible for causing the problem.
- ✂ Locale: Where does this episode take place? Which part of the neighborhood, city, continent, or world?
- ✂ Cast: At least 2-3 NPCs who can be friends, enemies, or both, all of which can be used to give info, move the story along, or provide stakes for emotional connection.

## PARTY BOUNDARIES

If motivations determine what the party will do, boundaries determine what they won't do. These both shape the sort of stories they might go on (a group that refuses to break the law won't go on many heists!), but also impose limits on how a group will accomplish goals (a group that refuses to use violence except in self-defense will have to rely on guile or subtlety if they need to steal something).

## DON'T BE EVIL

It might not always be easy to know what the right thing to do is, but there are always things that are clearly wrong, and you don't do them. Regardless of whatever else is going on, if it ever looks like your group is the bad guys, that's when you stop.

## LAW-ABIDING

You might not agree with the law, but you don't need to break it to change it. You'll agitate, negotiate, expose wrong-doing or even put pressure on someone to do something, but you'll do it all in the constraints of the law.



## NO COLLATERAL DAMAGE

For some people the ends justify the means—you're not those people. If a plan means an innocent person will get hurt—either literally or figuratively—you find another plan.

## NON-VIOLENCE

Maybe you don't believe violence solves problems, maybe you're squeamish, or maybe just the idea that you could hurt someone seems laughable. Regardless, if the job requires violence, this is the wrong team for the job.

## WILL OF THE COMMUNITY

It doesn't matter what you think, you follow what the community thinks, and acting against the interests and will of the community is a line you won't cross.



## Out of Character Motivations, Lines and Veils

The motivation of the characters plays an important role in what happens, but even more important are what the players want (and don't want) to happen. A player might want to play a cynical smuggler in it for the money in a story about bringing down an evil organization—in which case their motivation for money isn't actually what the player is interested in. In this case the player should make clear where they want the story to go—as well as make sure their other connections and motivations ensure the character has a reason to go there (maybe the organization decides to start hunting them down, so survival becomes part of it, or they develop a relationship with other members of the party).

Similarly, there are some topics that players may have no interest in dealing with even if their characters might be ok with it. Everyone should make sure that everyone is having fun and feels comfortable with the story. This is especially the case with topics that relate to real world trauma. Some topics might be off-limits for some players, and groups should determine what out of character lines exist in their group and avoid them (both by discussing any lines before the game starts as well as being responsive to any topics raised in the course of a game).

A less drastic option for dealing with some topics are veils: topics that can be part of the story but occur only off-screen or described in passing. This offers a way to allude to bad things happening in the world (and maybe work to fixing them) without making someone uncomfortable or triggering traumatic experiences.



# Chapter 31: Lexicon of Neo Babylon

**Amortals:** 1) Beings which are not biologically alive, and so cannot technically die. Examples include demons, and if cyberscientists are correct, any future artificial intelligences which may emerge.

**Banch:** 1) to complain 2) profane, aggressive term for a disliked person 3) a grunt or follower

**Baru:**

**Bistar:** 1) someone without honor 2) profane insult

**Breacher:**

**Chosen:**

**Clink:** 1) Cyber-Link, C-Link

**Crypt:** 1) Street Drug. Niche and expensive, but always in demand. Allows the user to commune with the dead (or it is believed)

**Cyberkit:** 1) a tool used in breaching and cybertech manipulation. Each breacher has their own, cobbled from what they've scavenged or bought, interacting with headware in various ways. No two have the same form or even functions. Also called breach kits, breacher kits, breacher rigs, cyber rigs, cyboards, brain boards, tech decks, etc.

**Ek:** 1) short for Ekku, child born and raised in a Baru temple

**Ephemerals:** 1) Those beings who, live only a short-time, dependent on the will of those who created them. Examples include elementals.

**Eternals/Immortals:** 1) Living beings who cannot die. Examples include spirits, gods, and if they exist beyond rumor, vampires, liches, and naspar.

**Frag, Fragging, Fragged:** 1) common profanity 2) to have sex 3) to kill or murder. Syn. Fug

**Fug, Fugging, Fugged:** 1) common profanity 2) to have sex 3) to pummel or beat. Syn. Frag

**Good silver:** 1) one's own genitals

**Gutterwitch:**

**Ishtar's Secret, Ishtar's:** 2) someone else's genitals ("their Ishtars," "caught a peek at Ishtar's secret")

**Jumper:**

**Kark:** 1) karkitt, sex worker

**Kash:** 1) A kind of alcoholic drink

**Khayin:**

**Khora:** 1) friend

**King Mud:** 1) Street drug. Brown and viscous. Amps physical performance.

**Kint:** 1) common profanity 2) genitalia 3) familiar (still profane) term for friend or random person

**Ks and Qs:** 1) Karks and Quads (see Kark, Quad)

**Lawjack:**

**Lineage:** 1) The particular biological line from which sapient species can trace their origins. 2) One of the Seven Lines of Kingu

**Mage:**

**Mithus Magi:** Magical Duel

**Old Siren:** 1) A betel nut-flavored spirit said by some to induce hallucinations.

**Pally:** 1) paladin 2) person with cybertech enhancements 3) a local hero, often with cybertech enhancements

**Personkind:** 1) A grouping that includes all sapient beings with recognizable agency, wants and desires.

**Radroof:** 1) The Skyfloor. The structure between the Undercity and the Overcity. Emits simulated solar radiation.

**Quad:** 1) Qadiss, priests at Baru temples authorized to provide sacred rites via sexual activity

**Sacred Blue:** 1) a street drug made from blue lotus. It is most often smoked or made into tea. Induces a calming, dream-like high.

**Shine:** 1) Properly, Shinitu, the world of spirits and other ethereal beings. Some have called it the ethereal realm or the Aether (the root of which means, "shine"). Those who have pierced the veil and perceived this world that shares the same space with ours describe it as like ours, but full of luminous, or "shiny," beings and things, thus many began to call it the Shining Place, or just The Shining, and eventually, just The Shine.

**Shet, Shetting, Shat:** 1) common profanity 2) to defecate



**Stans/Stanz:** 1) silver standard shekel 2) money  
3) payment

**Street Prophet:**

**The Seven Lines of Kingu, The Seven Lines, The Lines of Kingu:** 1) The seven major sapient beings on the planet whose cultures and civilizations are widespread and continue to grow. The Baru faith teaches that these seven were created by the powers from the blood of the primordial Kingu and the clay of the earth. They are Dwarves, Elves, Goblins, Humans, Orcs, and Yettin. The seventh line were Suhurmasu, who perished in the Shattering.

**Thude:** 1) Generic slang for a person 2) Friend. Often used in the phrase “my thude(s).” 3) Archaic word for a fashionable person.

**Ukkim:**

**Umbra:** 1) Street Drug. Perception of color fades and the contrast between light and dark lessens. Emotions cease to have impact.

**Unders:** 1) the Undercity

**Uppers:** 1) Neo Babylon, particularly the Overcity, also called Nice Babylon, Babel.

**Yojin:**



# Chapter 32: Glossary

List all keywords, page reference, and summary/rule definition

## 1D6, 2D6, ETC.

This common shorthand refers to a particular number of six-sided dice (or D6s). The number in front tell you how many dice are being referred to. So if a rule says, “roll 2D6,” you would roll 2 six-sided dice. Sometimes, the rules call for rolling extra dice, or adding bonus dice to a roll. In these cases, you would see this written as +3D6, indicating you should add 3 six-sided dice to the roll.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Subversion often uses shorthand to refer to game concepts and terms that come up often. So you may often see GM, AP, or BRW instead of GM, Armor Penetration, or Brawn.

Attributes

Bonus

Combat

Community

Conflict

Consequences

Damage

Defenses

Discovered

Downtime

Envoy

Episode

Fortune - The meta currency of Subversion. This is what PCs will use most often to advance their characters. In-game, Fortune Tokens are what subversive communities trade between themselves in exchange for goods and services. So people may offer a number of Fortune tokens to the PCs for doing tasks or as rewards for helping. This underground currency can be exchanged in-game for 1000 stanz each, which most people only do as needed, since that is a poor exchange rate.

GM

Goals

Grit

Health

Impulses

Nonplayer Characters

Mark

Modifier

Player Characters

Progress

Reflection

Rounds

Session

Skill

Skill Test

System

Stanz

Target Number

Grit

Dulled

Busted

Humbled

Unconscious

Haunted

Broken – When a piece of gear is broken, by an ability, GM grit, Trouble, or due to the story, that gear can not be used until it is repaired.



## BEING KEYWORDS (WRITTEN HERE AS REFERENCE FOR LATER

arboreal  
 Arcane  
 Amortal  
 Amphibious  
 Beastkin? Beast? (includes a chimeric part of “normal”  
 animal?)  
 construct  
 Demon  
 Draconic  
 Drone (Androne)  
 elemental (electric, fire, ice, water, earth, air, void,  
 etc.)  
 Enormous (16 squares)  
 Ephemeral  
 Ethereal /Obscure/Invisible/Unseen/  
 Fae  
 Fearless  
 Flying  
 Ghost  
 Huge (9 squares)  
 Immortal  
 Large (4 squares)  
 Line of Kingu  
 magic  
 Malevolent (has evil intent – this acts as a value for  
 behavior purposes)  
 Medium (one square)  
 Person/Personkind  
 undead  
 Sacred  
 Small (1/4 square)  
 Spirit  
 Sublime  
 Tiny (1/9 square),



# Chapter 33: Balance Notes and Design Principles

## I FORTUNE COSTS:

Skills are dynamically balanced based on two principles: there's diminishing returns for the number of dice, and bonuses become increasingly expensive. The dominant way of becoming better at something should be raising the ranks in the skill or attributes, and so, generally speaking, other bonuses should be circumstantial, or ideally, provide alternative uses for the skill or rely on non-stacking abilities such as Reliable or Inspired. Below is a list of balance points for various abilities: this list is subject to change (some of these need some solid mathing) but should serve as a broad guideline.

### GEAR (0-4 FORTUNE)

Probably too cheap now, seem to have comparable abilities to Origin/Lvl 1 Paradigm abilities

### ORIGIN OPTIONS (5 FORTUNE)

- ✂ Reliable 2 on skill
- ✂ +1d6 on skill in extremely niche case (no more than 10% of skill usages)
- ✂ +1 on niche use (no more than 25% of skill use)
- ✂ Conditional inspired
- ✂ +2 to Health, Animity
- ✂ +1 to Grit

## 10 FORTUNE PARADIGM ABILITY

I Unlock new use for skill

- ✂ Allow substitution of skill in suitable case (No more than 25% of the substituted skills uses)
- ✂ +2d6 to skill in niche use (No more than 25% of the substituted skill)
- ✂ Swap attribute for defense
- ✂ swap attribute for pool

- ✂ +2 bonus to Adamant for a particular beast/being/experience
- ✂ +2 starting concealment for particular circumstance
- ✂ better teamwork bonus in a particular situation
- ✂ losing gracefully or on purpose. ie: "fight another day" or other "losing" mechanics.

## LINEAGE OPTION

15 Fortune

+3 Attribute

- ✂ 1 rank in skill
- ✂ +2 on a defense
- ✂ +4 on conditional <50% defense
- ✂ +1d6 on multiple skill tests, applying no more than 1/3 of the time

## 20 FORTUNE PARADIGM ABILITY

I 20 Fortune

Generally speaking, a lvl 2 paradigm can double the effect of a lvl 1 paradigm (i.e.)

- ✂ +4d6 to skill in niche use (with pre-req of earliaver paradigm ability)
- ✂ +3d6 to skill in niche use (without pre-req)
- ✂ +2 to defense
- ✂ +2 armor
- ✂ Reliable 3 on a skill



# **OTHER BALANCING POINTS**

- ✂ Spending 3 grit saves you a main action



# Chapter 34: Change Log and Playtesting Notes

## SPECIFIC FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- ✖ Level of gear detail/number of items at the right sweet spot?
- ✖ Balance, especially for chargen options
- ✖ Is there a good way to simplify the relation rules while making them a compelling resource and balanced investment.
- ✖ Does the lack of bonus stacking feel good?
- ✖ Inconsistencies in rules (there's been a lot of changes—where have references become out of date)
- ✖ What's missing, what should get trimmed?
- ✖ Do the various systems all make sense together?

## TO DO:

- ✖ Balance Gear and Paradigms
- ✖ Making sure Breaching rules cover desired use cases/make sense for normal use
- ✖ Fill out some paradigms with <10 abilities
- ✖ Rules for Enemies (relations with <0 base Regard)
- ✖ Prebuilt NPCs, adversaries, and characters
- ✖ More GM specific Rules (running the community)
- ✖ Clean up/double check GM grit works
- ✖ Consider: downtime impending consequence/ doom track – randomly builds up each downtime

## CURRENT VERSION (.48)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Added more details on devices and Breaching

- ✖ Added Copy Identity authorized action
- ✖ Distances all changed to meters
- ✖ Changes to movement and speed
- ✖ Added some Paradigm abilities

## PREVIOUS VERSION (.47)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Changed downtime rules to default to one downtime action, consolidated options
- ✖ Continued changes to Relations, Factions and Communities
- ✖ Communities now have archetypes per relations
- ✖ Defined the default duration of a round as 10 seconds
- ✖ Fleshed out Ideologies more, Ideologies give corresponding Faction
- ✖ Miscellaneous lore and flavor tweaks
- ✖



## PREVIOUS VERSION (.46)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Tweaks to grit rules
- ✖ Tweaks to concealment rules
- ✖ Clarified opposed vs simple tests for contested progress tracks (specifically concealment)
- ✖ Added set trap to concealment rules
- ✖ Tweaks to opposed tracks
- ✖ Tweaks to numbers in social rules
- ✖ Quick allows you to take a backup action you've already taken
- ✖ Added Drug Rules
- ✖ Added Militaire Drug related paradigm abilities
- ✖ Added more detail to relation archetypes
- ✖ Added more detail for specific devices to breaching section
- ✖ Added Community Paradigm, made relations and resources community paradigm abilities

## PREVIOUS VERSION (.45)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Tweaks to grit rules
- ✖ Tweaks to concealment rules
- ✖ Clarified opposed vs simple tests for contested progress tracks (specifically concealment)
- ✖ Added set trap to concealment rules
- ✖ Tweaks to opposed tracks
- ✖ Tweaks to numbers in social rules
- ✖ Quick allows you to take a backup action you've already taken

## PREVIOUS VERSION (.44)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Rebalanced Caste Fortune
- ✖ Redid Debt Rules
- ✖ Added Berate to social actions
- ✖ Added animity damage to threaten
- ✖ Removed impulses from origin drawbacks
- ✖ Added generic drawbacks
- ✖ Changed frightening to do animity damage when threatened or attacked as well as when first encountered.
- ✖ added frightening values to some weapons
- ✖ Grit can be spent at any point to block health and animity damage, not just when health and animity run out
- ✖ Changed Time to Prepare Downtime Action
- ✖ Changes to Scoundrel Paradigm
- ✖ Minor Changes to Concealment Rules
- ✖ Complete redo of Chase Rules

## PREVIOUS VERSION (.43)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Added "fearless" keyword and keyword paragraph to Allies and Adversaries section
- ✖ Added intro and small paragraphs about weapons, damage, and armor to the Combat chapter
- ✖ Further reduced initial setting intro and added more to the expanded setting info near the back
- ✖ Added some language about mantles
- ✖ Added descriptions of sacred magic being "in-tune" with divine powers



- ✖ Changed “venerate” action to “attune”
- ✖ Changed “miracles” to “chants”
- ✖ Changed “Divine Insight” to “Divination” and changed a bit of the wording of the spell.
- ✖ Changed some wording under sacred, sublime, and arcane magics regarding spirit companions to bring it in line with our conceptions of spirits.
- ✖ Added a place for Caste in the lore section
- ✖ Changed Vamping/Vamps to Amplifying/Amps
- ✖ Clarified ruled for harmonizing mana
- ✖ Conceptual changes to shine perception
- ✖ Small changes to aetherlight ditty to bring it in line with shine perception changes
- ✖ Added shineglasses to magical gear
- ✖ Small change to fill life with passion
- ✖ Changes instances of shining perception to shine perception, added “shinesight” as a colloquial term for it.
- ✖ Changed instanced of skill “checks” to skill “tests”
- ✖ Cleaned up instances where observation tests were called perception tests.
- ✖ Added a new Face ability: The Long Game
- ✖ Small changes to the following paradigm abilities: Ready for anything, team player, alchemical pharmacist, acidify, Alchemists Stone, Stable Compounds, Ditty of Restoration
- ✖ Added futher guidance to community creation step 5. (Factions (Internal & External)
- ✖ Added Somatic Poison and Psychotropic Poison in place of Synthesize Poisons
- ✖ Changed Synthesize Stimulants substantially
- ✖ The Divine Poultices changed to The Mystic Poultices and changed significantly
- ✖ Added “I know a gal” to face paradigm
- ✖ Changed relations part of chargen significantly. Took out purchasing as default, added package options instead for ease and quickness. Also, added note about not filling out info for relations and having the option of leaving them TBD until needed.
- ✖ Made debt a paradigm, not a chargen option
- ✖ Moved character caste to community caste
- ✖ Changes to vehicle fortune costs
- ✖ Added Drones
- ✖ Added additional rules about operating vehicles and autonomous operation
- ✖ Added additional vehicle options
- ✖ Added Jumper paradigm
- ✖ Added Magic Hunter paradigm
- ✖ Tweaked Grant Access Authorized Action
- ✖ Added Revoke Access Authorized Action
- ✖ Clarified that Firewall is a progress track specific to each breacher. Added 1/hr heal rate of Firewall.
- ✖ Changed (removed) some spirit rules and rules for companions
- ✖ Added spirit types as: Divine, Fiend, Nature, Elemental, Revenant

## PREVIOUS VERSION (.42)

### CHANGES

- ✖ Tweaks to lore
- ✖ Adjusted session zero and community rules
- ✖ Changed Deep Desire and Mission to Personal Hook, added trouble
- ✖ Added agriculture backgrounds
- ✖ Additions to Alchemical College
- ✖ Additions to combat rules
- ✖ Rules for building and fixing things



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# STAND FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

## STAND AGAINST THE AUTHORITY

Subversion is a cyberpunk/fantasy roleplaying game set in the global capital of Neo Babylon. Players assume the roles of complex, flawed, and subversive characters whose community, relationships, and values steer the story. Subversion offers rules for both action-packed and slowly developing scenes, robust character advancement, moral injury, conflicts of belief, community growth, hacking, sorcery, martial arts, ancient deities, and a huge variety of roles and specialties — all which drive the main engine of rebellion against the faceless forces of injustice. More than mechanics, players' values, impulses, and emotional resources wrap the game's systems together. Player choices affect everything—themselves, their friends, and the world around them. Fate swirls around the characters, allowing them to push back against the world, but more often than not, the world pushes back. Every hurtful experience opens a door to character growth. Every success brings opportunity to uncover the truer enemy. Character creation isn't just assigning numbers, it is crafting a person with motivations and struggles: When a player makes a character in Subversion, they are brought face to face with questions beyond how hard they can hit. Instead, they have to wrestle with what they want, what drives them, how far away from their community they will go, and what they are willing to sacrifice for the greater good. These decisions affect not just the character, but the other players, and the arc and realization of the larger story, too. Subversion is about turning the world, any world, upside-down.