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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language and some graphic representations of violence. It contains references to human actions the reader may find offensive or unpleasant, such as suicide, murder, or prostitution, as well as extensive references to criminal activity. The game does NOT contain any graphic representation or verbal description of sexual acts.

HOMAGE TO D. VINCENT BAKER AND *APOCALYPSE WORLD*

The rules of this game are partially based on the "Powered by the Apocalypse" game engine, presented in 2010 by D. Vincent Baker in his revolutionary game *Apocalypse World*. Vincent changed role-playing games forever by introducing a new way to play that emphasised a flowing conversation and a great story. Many great games that use this engine have since been published. We thank Vincent for his contribution to the world of role-playing games which also allowed the creation of *City of Mist*.

VOL 2 OF THE CORE BOOKS

This book contains rules and guides for creating and running City of Mist games as a Master of Ceremonies (MC), as well as ready-to-play content. For information and rules for players portraying characters in a City of Mist game, see the Player's Guide.

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City of Mist

A DETECTIVE ROLE-PLAYING GAME IN A CITY
OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AND LEGENDARY POWERS

MASTER OF CEREMONIES' (MC) TOOLKIT



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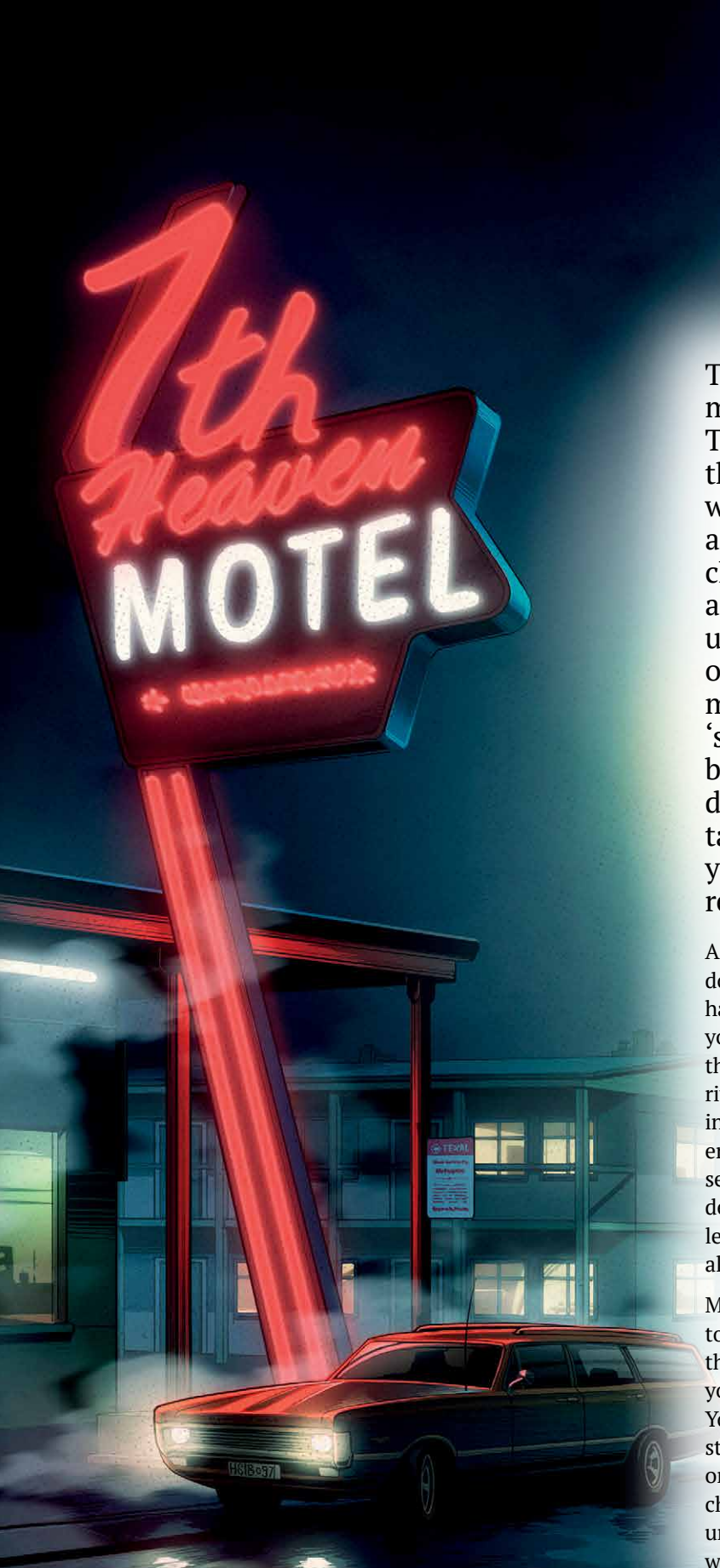
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The Master of Ceremonies is the most important role in the game. The MC is the host, the referee, and the narrator of the game. She also writes most of the locations, characters, and situations that the lead characters will encounter. Just like in a TV show, while it's possible (even if undesired) to have an episode without one of the lead characters, it is much harder to have one without the 'showrunner'. The role of the MC can be passed around in the group, with different members of your group taking it up for a session or a case, or you could have a single player as a recurring MC.

As the MC, you carry the game for everyone. You don't know how things will turn out and you don't have absolute control over the narrative. Instead, you create open-ended situations that will allow the lead characters to shine, crash, and evolve; riveting strange cases for the lead characters to investigative; and cinematic challenges that will entertain everyone in the group, including yourself. It's a role that combines writing, managing, decision-making, and improvising. It's easy to learn, but hard to master; anyone can do it, but it is also an art that can be refined over many years.

Most importantly, the role of the MC is fun. You get to create and play a variety of characters and watch the faces of your players as they unravel a mystery you wrote or face off with a villain you designed. You create most of the materials for your group's story. And yet, you will be just as amazed as everyone around the table when the players and their characters interact with your materials in entirely unexpected ways (as is bound to happen!). In other words, you are also a spectator in this show.

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THE ROLES OF THE MC

YOU AS THE WRITER

Before you start playing with your group, you prepare the **case** your group will investigate. A case contains all the main details of the investigation, such as what clues can be found on a specific murder scene and where they lead, or what kind of challenges, called **Dangers**, the lead characters might face. If you're playing a series, you will need to know how this case connects to other cases to form a story arc.

Since *City of Mist* investigations can involve many details, you are encouraged to put some thought and time into creating and writing down your cases. The process of creating cases and story arcs for *City of Mist* is explained in detail under Writing a Case, page 84.

As an alternative to writing your own cases, you can use existing cases, such as the free cases provided with the *City of Mist Starter Set* (available at cityofmist.co/download) or any other *City of Mist* products. It is even possible to improvise an entire case from scratch, as the rules allow you to create materials on the fly. However, be advised that clues that don't add up or holes in a Danger's backstory can ruin the investigation or break the ever-necessary suspension of disbelief. Unless you are very skilled at improvising investigations, you should probably make at least some preliminary preparations.

YOU AS THE REFEREE

You are also the referee of the game. Between and during sessions, you have the final say on how to interpret and apply the rules of the game. This requires you to be at least familiar with the rules described throughout this book as well as the Player's Guide, and have a good grasp of the game's basics. *City of Mist* is a relatively rules-light game as most Core Moves are intuitive and self-explanatory, so playing a session or two should bring you up to speed with the rules. As an alternative, you can delegate the role of the referee to someone else in your group who knows the rules better.

When you make decisions regarding the rules, your guiding principle should be ensuring the enjoyment of everyone at the table. If a certain rule gets in the way of fun, make an exemption. If it repeats, consider changing or ignoring that rule. However, note that enjoyment is a complicated thing; some rules exist to maintain a certain level of challenge in the game, or to counterbalance other rules, so consider well what you keep or discard and be ready to retrace your steps if you find that the play experience isn't matching your expectations. Throughout the book, you will find text boxes with optional rules which allow you to tweak the level of challenge and complexity of your game without breaking its balance.

YOU AS THE HOST

During a game session, you are the host of the conversation. You manage the judicial distribution of airtime between the players by deciding who gets the **spotlight** and can take actions. The role of the MC as a host is explained under The Conversation, page 166 in the Player's Guide.

YOU AS THE NARRATOR

During a game session, the players will turn to you to manage the storyline. You do so by initiating and concluding scenes. You will narrate the details of a scene and portray any non-player characters. Based on your case, you will decide how the characters and objects in a scene respond to the actions of the characters and describe it to your players. You will use the **MC Intrusions** and **MC Moves** to introduce complications, describe cinematic moments, and make the atmosphere more creepy, suspenseful, or emotional as you see fit. Your role as the narrator is explained under Running a Session (page 62).



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THE MC PRINCIPLES

The following principles are recommended for *City of Mist* games. These are overarching guidelines that outline the spirit of the game. While technically you don't need to remember them to run the game, it's useful to keep them in mind in order to run a *good* game. The second and the third are variations made on the principles first introduced by Vincent Baker in *Apocalypse World*.

COMMUNICATE WITH THE GROUP

In the end, everyone in your group is there to have a blast together. While you all probably enjoy different things, there is plenty of common ground upon which you can create your story together. It's easiest to find that common ground when you communicate your preferences to each other. Sometimes players don't know how to do that, or even that they *can* do that, so your role as an MC is to ask, listen, and engage. Ask the players in your group how they feel about the game flow, what optional rules to use, and what they think about your last case. Perhaps one of them wants more mystical characters or another wants the action to be less challenging and more heroic. Hear them out, express your own opinions, give alternative suggestions and compare with examples from your favorite shows. Find a way to make it all work together. Sometimes one of you will have to make concessions about things you want, but that's okay, as long as there are other things in the game that they find enjoyable – one game can't have it all, but it can have a lot.

PLAY TO FIND OUT

City of Mist produces the most exciting tales when you and the players collaborate to create the story. A collaboration can only happen when you as the MC give the players the freedom to drive the story *wherever they want* (while still using the rules to get there), just as you have the freedom to drive it where you want, when the rules say so.

Try to avoid having pre-existing expectations about how the case should unravel, which scenes should take place, and even what decisions the players should take. Any preconceived plans about the game can only diminish the enjoyment of your collaboration with your players. At best, they allow the players to be willing actors in a play written by you (which sometimes can be fun, but that's not why you're playing *City of Mist*). Most of the time, however, having a rigid plan in mind constricts the players' creativity and ability to develop the story in ways you had not thought about, ways which can be incredibly fun and inspiring. The worst part is that this robs you of the excitement of being a part of the audience, being surprised by what happens to the lead characters when they interact with the case you wrote.

"Play to find out (what happens)" means you do not actively try to control (aka "railroad") the story to evolve in the avenues you anticipated. This starts from the writing phase; instead of writing scripted scenarios, write stand-alone locations, characters who have plans (and not predetermined destinies), and open-ended situations. During the game, when a player wants to try something different than what you had in mind, allow it without manipulating them back to your planned trajectory. This changes your plans, so you adapt them or discard them altogether. Your plans are only worthwhile insofar as they make the game enjoyable for everyone; if you truly designed something cool that you want to keep, you can simply find a way to introduce it later.

You don't need to be prepared for any possible scenario. *City of Mist* makes it very easy for you to improvise new characters and situations, when necessary. For example, creating a new Danger can take moments once you know how to do it (see Dangers, page 118). Learn to adopt a love for being surprised by your players. It's easy when you think about the game like a TV series or a comic book, where you don't really know what's going to happen next. Running a game whose end you *don't*

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know is an exhilarating experience which might just become your favorite way to play.

Megan (playing Goodfellow): So Goodfellow just set free this Big Bad Wolf, and now the Wolf wants to devour the whole City and there is nothing I can do to stop him?!

MC: Yeah, pretty much.

Megan: Great. So Goodfellow would like to make a deal with her.

MC: Seriously?

Megan: Yeah, that's Goodfellow for you. Always trying to spin things to make a profit. I think I'll offer her my help with devouring the City, for a price. I'm **Convincing.**

MC: That's insane. (But it gives me an idea how to develop this further...). Make the move and let's find out what happens!

BE THE CHARACTERS' BIGGEST FAN; MAKE THEIR LIVES INTERESTING

While you have the role of playing the lead characters' worst adversaries, and while you're expected and required to plague their lives with all kinds of complications, you are by no means playing *against* the players or their characters. The opposite is true: your job is to help the player characters shine. You do so by putting them through trials and challenging situations, such that allow your group as an audience to learn something new about each character and see her do cool things.

To do so, you need to be the characters' biggest fan. Learn everything you can about them. Speculate about what could happen to them, what they would fight for, what they can endure, and what are they willing to sacrifice – just like you do with your favorite movie, TV, and comic book characters. When you present a new threat or complication, be at the edge of your seat, waiting to see how they cope with it and what hard choices they make.

Once you become the characters' biggest fan, use this information to make their lives interesting. Aspire to introduce investigative, dramatic, and active challenges that will force them to be awesome – or crash.

Try to create story developments that build on the lead characters' backstory and details; use their themes, their Mysteries, and their Identities whenever possible. Knowing their most intimate fears and hopes, you can tailor events in the story to hit exactly where it hurts and give the players opportunities to **Make a Hard Choice**, **Stop. Holding. Back.**, or otherwise dramatically develop their characters.

This approach makes for a great game because you focus your attention on the lead characters and make the series about *them,* instead of a generic one-size-fits-all narrative.

THINK CINEMATIC

The combined imagination of everyone at the table has limitless potential. While the players are responsible for the cinematic actions of their individual characters, it's up to you to stimulate their imaginations and get the creative juices flowing by setting up the right atmosphere, style, and pace for your story. Since *City of Mist* draws heavily on the comic-book neo-noir genre, you'll want to make your games look and feel like a movie, TV show, or comic book in the genre. You do so by thinking about your game as a similar work of fiction in the genre, or in other words, you think cinematically.

Thinking cinematically has an impact on everything you do as an MC. The shared imagination of your group becomes your group's canvas or screen. When you write cases, create dramatic locations and design memorable villains that would look good "on screen". When you act as a referee and the rules leave room for interpretation, make decisions based on the "rule of cool", favoring what would be more entertaining to "watch". As a host, you control the spotlight like a movie director, switching between "cameras" or "panels" to produce specific cinematic effects. Most importantly, as a narrator, you choose the story developments and the actions of non-player characters, as well as their timing, based on what you think would be the most compelling in terms of aesthetics and content.

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In practice, thinking cinematically means asking yourself questions from a cinematic perspective and using the answers to guide your decision-making as an MC. Some examples include:

? WHAT WOULD BE THE COOLEST WAY TO START A SESSION? HOW DO EPISODES OR ISSUES USUALLY START IN THIS GENRE?

Choose the first scene or cutscene based on that.

? WHAT IS THE FIRST SHOT THE AUDIENCE (YOUR GROUP) SEES IN A SCENE?

Describe that to your players.

? WHAT MUSIC PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND?

Play it on your phone or computer.

? WHAT IS THE ATMOSPHERE I WANT TO CREATE IN THIS SCENE?

Use the right tone of voice and choose the right words that instill this feeling.

? WHAT KIND OF MOTIFS APPEAR IN A STORY LIKE THIS?

Weave them into your case when you write it, and into your descriptions when you narrate.

? WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST SHOCKING / ENTERTAINING / MENACING / AGGRESSIVE / ETC. ACTION THIS CHARACTER CAN TAKE NOW?

Choose an MC Move to reflect that action.

? WHAT MORAL DILEMMAS ARE TYPICAL IN THIS GENRE?

Write a case around such a dilemma.

THINKING CINEMATIC WHILE PLAYING TO FIND OUT

Note that cinematic considerations should not conflict with playing to find out. They do not give you a mandate to direct events in the way you want them to happen, only to temper the different components of a story in a way that is aesthetically pleasing for everyone. In other words, you should not use 'cinematic considerations' as an excuse to railroad the game.

Thinking cinematically should guide you only when the next development is in your hands - when you *already* have the spotlight or when the rules say you can intrude and add details. For example, if the crew is investigating a crime scene and one character misses a move, you can use an MC move to say the police are alerted to the crew's presence or that the place has been scrubbed clean and there is nothing more to find here, basing your choice on cinematic thinking. However, if none of the players miss a move, you will have to hold off with such story developments and let the players' moves drive the story, even if cinematically it would be cool to have the police show up.

A CINEMATIC GAME

In *City of Mist,* some of the cinematic elements of comic book neo-noir have been integrated into the rules. For example, stories in this genre often start with a voiceover monologue given by an investigator; the move **Voiceover Monologue (Session Start)** imitates this opening. Flashbacks are also common in this genre, which is why the move **Flashback** allows players to take actions retroactively and narrate a flashback. The Core Moves represent typical actions taken by protagonists in the genre, and so on.

Additional cinematic considerations and suggestions for the MC are given throughout this chapter in the **Think Cinematic** sections.

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WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

- **Chapter 1: Word on the Street** provides advice on how to imagine the city and what should be imagined in it, as well as describing some of the main City districts, locations, and local Rifts and Sleepers. It's told from the perspective of relatively new Rifts who are only beginning to discover the secret world around them, but also includes some of the secrets the lead characters are going to work hard in order to uncover.
- **Chapter 2: Behind the Scenes** is a detailed breakdown of your roles before and during a game session. It explains the MC moves with a step-by-step guide on how to run sessions, including a variety of tools to help make your game cinematic. It also provides an in-depth walkthrough for creating your own cases and designing your series based on the Iceberg model.
- **Chapter 3: This is MY City!** includes rules for creating and handling Dangers, a Danger Profile directory with ready-to-use Dangers, and a special section on creating and using custom moves with templates and ready-to-use examples. It also contains a comprehensive guide to Avatars and their operations and four Avatar operations.
- **The Appendices** include the playable case *Gambling with Death*, the writing of which is detailed in examples throughout Chapter 2. Also included are the MC summary sheets, as well as tracking sheets for the players' themes, crew and the series as a whole.

PRONOUN USE

Throughout this book, wherever possible, the text refers directly to you, the reader. Mostly, this relates to you as an MC; in some places, it relates to you as the player or as the character you are playing. A clarification is given where needed; elsewhere, the meaning can be understood from context.

Where the third person is required, this book refers to characters as 'she', players as 'he', and the MC as 'she' as well. This is an arbitrary division for the sake of readability and balance in the use of pronouns; characters, players, and MCs can be of any or no gender.

HIGHLIGHTED TEXT

Throughout this book, specific game elements are highlighted in different colors:

- **Tags** (first explained on page 74 of the Player's Guide) are highlighted in *yellow* (or *purple* in dark pages).
- **Statuses** (first explained on page 218 of the Player's Guide) are highlighted in *green*.
- **Spectrums** (first explained on page 120) are highlighted in *red*.

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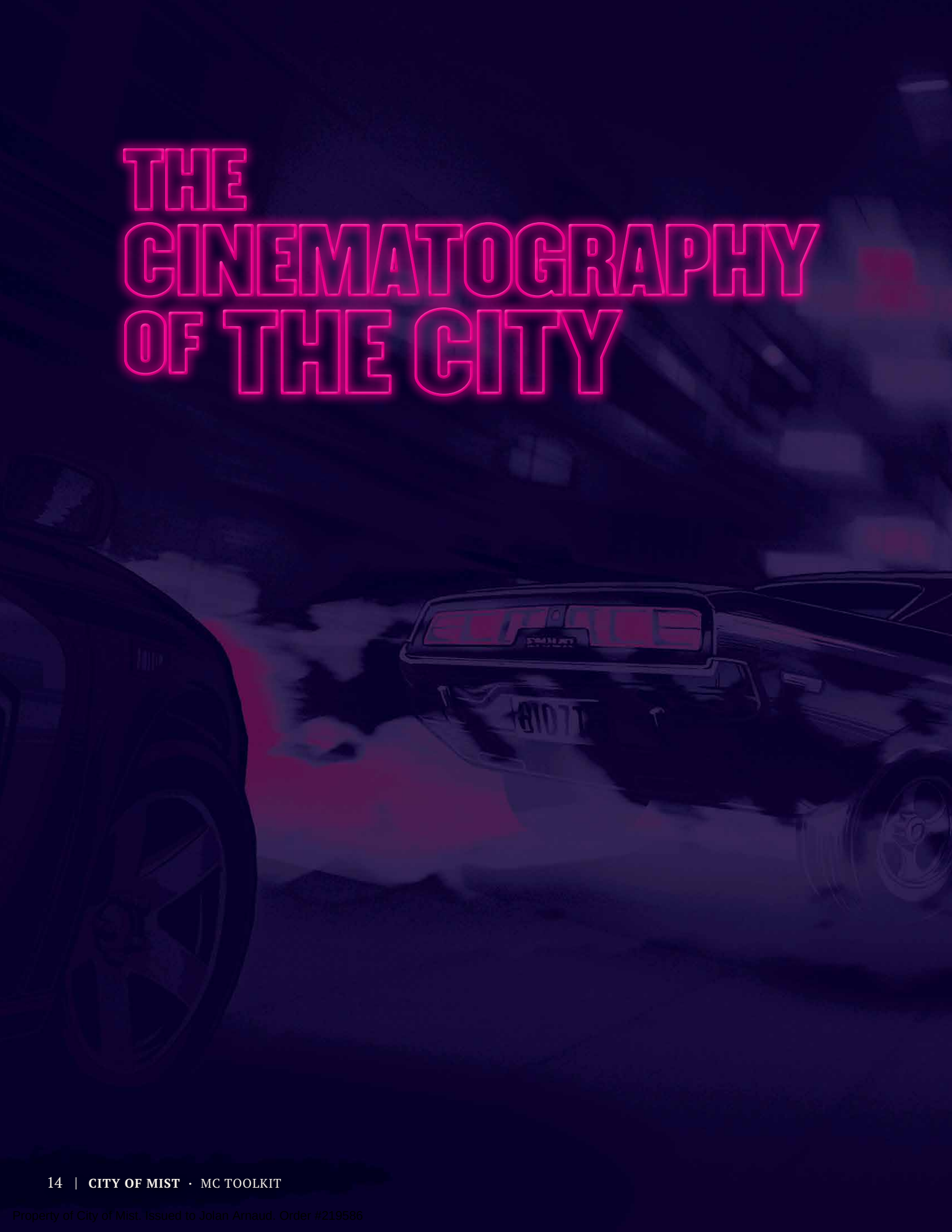
WORD ON THE STREET

ABOUT THE CITY OF MIST

CHAPTER 1

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THE CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE CITY



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The City is the backdrop for your story; its streets, alleyways, and rooftops are where your crew will uncover disturbing truths, unleash their mighty powers in a fight for what matters to them the most, and make harsh sacrifices.

The City is every city. You can choose to identify it as a specific city, real or fictional, or leave it as an unnamed, generic city. Perhaps it doesn't really exist on our Earth, only in the Mist. It is advised that you leave the question of whether the City is real or not open-ended, one which may never be answered. Keep it hazy, keep it dream-like.

Whether it's real or a figment of the Mist, the City at least *appears* to be real and has everything one may find in a modern-day city. **For all they know, all of the characters in the story exist in a real city.** This includes, among other things, the following aspects of a major urban center:

- **Geography**: different districts, neighborhoods, and zones; topography; parks and natural reserves; natural bodies of water and watercourses like rivers, canals, ponds, and a lake, the sea, or the ocean.
- **Infrastructure**: water sources & system, sewage system, power grid, fuel distribution system including petrol/gas stations and gas pipes, food storages, distributed heating, etc.
- **Transportation**: roads, parking garages, trains, subway system, buses, taxis, freight trucks, airport, seaport.
- **Population & Demographics:** people of different ages, gender, ethnic groups, religion, social standing, political views, etc.; locals, visitors, immigrants, and indigenous people.
- **Ecosystem:** climate, urban flora & fauna, pollution (air, water, noise, and light).
- **Food systems:** food factories, supermarket chains, local produce, markets, restaurants and eateries.
- **Government:** municipal body, politicians & representatives, tax system, elections, government services (e.g. social welfare), bureaucracy, emergency services.
- **Society & culture:** community centers, religious centers, cultural life (books, television, movies, theater, museums, art, etc.), media, recreation.
- **Business & Commerce:** banks, corporations, companies, small businesses, shops and stores, professionals, freelancers, investors, advertisement.
- **Law & Order:** legal system (courts, lawyers), law enforcement (police, federal police, special task forces), prisons.
- **Crime:** personal crime (domestic violence, rape, murder), petty crooks (grand theft auto, burglary, arson, etc.), organized crime (protection, gun trafficking, drug production, prostitution, smuggling, money laundering, etc.), white-collar crime (bribe, extortion, embezzlement, etc.)
- **Education & Science:** public schools, libraries, colleges and universities, kindergartens, private research institutions, labs.

CULTURAL AND ETHNIC REFERENCES IN CITY OF MIST

This book and other *City of Mist* content make extensive use of cultural and ethnic references. First, because the myths and legends that will be incarnated in your characters come from various world cultures, past or present. Second, because modern-day cities are hotspots of cultural and ethnic diversity and *City of Mist* would not feel real if it were any different. While we attempted to introduce examples from as many cultures as possible, it's impossible to include every world culture in one book. I encourage you to take your own native cultures or cultures you are interested in and bring them into the game as characters and Mythoi.

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DESCRIBING THE CITY IN YOUR GAME

City of Mist is a game of imagination. There's no need to prepare all the details of the City in advance – you'll make them up or look them up as the need for them arises. For example, when one of the lead characters is setting up a meeting with an informant, the player can just make up a street name and say "Meet me at my place. It's in 403 Lexington St.". You don't have to check in advance if your City has a Lexington St. or where it is. When you say it, it becomes real in your story. If the other players or the MC see things differently, talk it out. If you wish, you can note down new details as you add them to your City, for consistency.

The important thing is to be familiar with **city tropes**, that is, typical elements or locations that are likely to appear in a detective or neo-noir story. If you don't want to give a specific location or can't think of one, you can always use these tropes instead, saying "Meet me at my place. It's in the Industrial Zone. I'll write down the address for you."

The important parts of the City are the parts in which your crew's' story takes place. You will know a few things about these specific locations because you will create them when you create new cases (see Chapter 2: Behind the Scenes) or read about them in published cases. Everything else in the City is described in broad strokes; it is there purely as backdrop, like fleeting sights seen when driving around the City.

For the same reason, the *City of Mist* setting does not have a city map. Instead, it has **Districts**: collections of locations that you can use for your scenes and connect as you please. There's no need to have a detailed description of what's between one location and the next, because scenes never happen between locations. If you decide to set a scene in a taxi on the way between two locations, then this taxi simply becomes a location as well. When the characters are in a rush, the MC can determine how long it takes to travel from one point in the City to another, but this serves as a plot device, not a grid paper exercise. Remember, the City is just the backdrop for your story.



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HOW TO USE THE DISTRICTS

Below you'll find common tropes of districts, locations, and characters that you can use in your story. Each combines an outline of the trope as well as detailed examples of what such a location could be like in *City of Mist*.

Read about the districts to get the feel of the setting and to inspire your own locations and characters. You can use the locations and characters given here in your cases, adding them in advance or on the fly. (Find the rules relating to some of the NPCs in Chapter 3: This is MY City!). You can also suggest the locations and characters given here for the lead characters' backstories.

THE NATURE OF THE CITY

Every part of the City hides a story: not just dry historical facts but something *alive*, something that's struggling to exist – a legend. It's in the people but it's also in everything they do and make: the buildings, the establishments, the trends.

It's the old opera house on the waterfront that echoes faintly with organ music late at night, or the landmark corporate skyscraper that you always see on the skyline but whose actual entrance you can't ever seem to find. It's a new fad of dolls for little girls that seem to devilishly smile at you or a rock star who sends uncontrolled waves of ecstasy through her listeners. Or maybe it's that crummy diner at the corner of the street, giving off such tantalizing smells of fresh coffee and pastries that even sworn enemies can be seen there, having breakfast together.

The parts of the City that were abandoned by the mainstream, however, are the ones that reek most of something eldritch. Go under a highway bridge and you might find a hovel where something big and roughly human once lived. Way up by the spires of a forsaken church, stone statues of angels occasionally disappear for a day or two, as if they were off to run errands somewhere else. And if you ever make it to the abandoned subway tunnels, you'll see the occasional hooded teenager slinking furtively into a candle-lit cistern, perhaps a member of some unknown cult.

NOTHING BEYOND THE CITY

One of the premises of *City of Mist* is that **the lead characters never leave the City**. Whether other people actually leave the City is another open-ended question; everyone seems to think that coming and going is something normal that happens all the time. Tourists, business people, and strange country folk show up and disappear regularly. The City residents behave as though they are a part of something greater, like a country or a world, but whenever it actually comes down to acknowledging it, the story veers off conveniently.

The game is focused on the City. The farther the lead characters move away from that focus, whether physically or in a conversation with a City resident, Rift or Sleeper, the fuzzier things get, like the faded edge of an old photo. Where exactly did Johnny go? Not sure, he's out of town. Where did you say this truck came from? Somewhere out of town, I reckon. Where are we now? Oh, we're just a few miles out of town.

Why don't people ever talk about the greater world out there? Are people in this City just so in love (or obsessed) with it that they don't consider anything else worthwhile? Or is it another aspect of the Mist, possibly the strongest of them all? *You* may want to know the answer to these questions but your characters don't; they too are completely focused on the City.

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DOWNTOWN

"She was a sight for sore eyes. And my eyes were pretty damn sore. Wasn't just all the lights and the adverts, blasting from every building. It's what I've seen on these streets: more dead bodies illuminated by neon than I care to count. She had something about her that made me complacent. She almost looked lost, standing at the junction in an evening gown, her exposed back turned to me. I overlooked the strange tattoo, but I shouldn't have. 'Buy me a drink? Looks like we both need it.' I had no idea what I was getting into."

– Sullivan, reporter for the City Herald

Downtown is where it's all happening. It's the beating heart of the City, pumping millions of souls in and out every day, locals and visitors of all walks of life who come here for business, pleasure, or both.

By day, downtown feels like a clockwork toy city: everything is buzzing with hurriedness and purpose, people trying to get things done. Neurotic interns run around with coffee trays, rushing to get back to their bosses in one of the top floors of a skyscraper before the start of an important meeting. Trucks unload goods in the back alleys of renowned designer stores, while at the front suited salesmen shower fake compliments at preposterously wealthy ladies with pampered poodles. Torrents of foreign tourists armed with cameras stream through the well-known monuments and attractions, such as the tallest building in the City or the City History Museum, where a hallmark piece of art is kept. So caught up in their activities, none of them are actually *present*; it's all about functionality, ticking the checkbox, moving on to the next task. Time seems to speed up when you're downtown and the people blur into streaks of muted colors. It's a city on amphetamines.

Downtown is a rainforest of billboards and neon signs. Visible all through the day, they become the only illumination after the sun sets. The hustle and bustle never quiets down; it only changes direction. In the neon-spiked darkness, downtown seeks release for all the tension it built up during the day. Cabarets, nightclubs, and trendy bars operate at full capacity right next to fancy restaurants, theaters, cinemas, and the opera houses. Diners, coffee shops, and food stands line the overcrowded plazas where live events take place, covered by all major media channels. There's entertainment for everyone here – according to what you can afford – including any sort of urban recreational activity. Private parties with expensive drugs and high-class prostitutes are commonplace, but the backstage of the City's most flamboyant district has even darker, stranger pursuits to offer.

BEYOND THE MIST

Rifts that operate downtown often sense that the Mist is strongest here. While this may be a subjective impression, there's no arguing that the constant bombardment of stimuli here makes everyone more prone to absentmindedness. This tilts the game strongly in favor of the more awakened Rifts. Legendaries prey on the hyperactive Sleepers that come here, or at least enjoy more discreteness due to the distracted masses, while even Borderliners have a hard time staying focused on their investigation through the thick fog of distractions.

Being at the center has its perks. Consumerism is a part of every big city, but downtown it is a force of nature, literally. Rifts related to urges, desire, and consumption of all sorts are attracted to the beating heart of the City, where there are more people to influence and tempt to take part in their Mythos' story. This naturally relates to money, business, and shopping but also to everything else – the consumption of art and culture, for instance. In fact, any Rift that has aspirations of influencing the masses or desires an unremitting stream of unsuspecting Sleeper victims will set its eyes on a downtown base of operations. Indeed, this is the best place to work... if you can measure up to the competition.



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PLACES OF INTEREST

THE SUBWAY STATION is a place in between. Once you've gone underground, it's as though you travelled to another realm: a dark place where fluorescent lights flicker and things screech and roar in the tunnels. There is always some kind of underlying tension in the subway. Some primal instinct tells you that you are not where you should be. You are, in a way, buried in the earth, where all things come to die. You are on the verge of a great darkness, where the spirits of the dead and the memories of all that was broken or lost end up. It's a limbo, but nobody can sense it: during rush hours, when so many people wait nervously to be swallowed up by steel worms, the Mist covers up this feeling. But when you're there alone, venturing deeper and deeper underground on grimy broken-down escalators, the sensation that someone else is there with you cannot be avoided.

Teenagers hanging out late downtown talk about a weirdo roaming the subway tunnels, wearing a hoodie that sticks out over his head like a raven's beak. Sometimes he will just show up and stare at you out of the darkness of his hood. Word is you're safe as long as you stay on the platform. Is he guarding something in the depth of the subway tunnels? Or is he just a psychopath preying on those who missed the last train?

THE THEATER AVENUE glitters with stardust. The City's oldest and indeed largest theaters and opera houses line this expansive avenue, while smaller and more obscure establishments scuttle along the side streets. Spectacular productions succeed one another at a staggering pace, vying for the fickle audience's attention and money. Behind the scenes, actors strain to achieve greatness while hard-working stage crews put together grandiose sets and complex lighting and stage effects, only to take it all apart again after a few shows.

One of the longest-running shows in town, *The Sad Tale Of*, can be found in the established but obscure **Old Orphanage theater**. Hidden in a side street, the theater is visited mostly by those savvy to its existence, but has gained a steady following over the years. People describe this show as touching and remarkably life-like, but almost too wistful to watch. Some have seen it dozens of time, claiming that each performance is completely different than the other, but words fail those who try to explain. "You simply must see it," is all they'll manage.

THIN PLACES

In some places, the Mist is thinner than usual. More often than not, this is true for places that have been forsaken, ruined, or lost, so now only few people visit them. Even Sleepers can tell when they've wandered into a thin place: it creeps them out. Strange forgotten thoughts bubble to the surface and a haunting feeling of etherealness washes over anyone who comes near. All the hidden forces behind the Mist become slightly more palpable, evoking dark and gruesome fears.

Ironically, thin places are often shrouded in actual mist, smoke, or steam – it's all the waning Mist can do to hide what's going on. Mythoi's Enclaves can sometimes be reached by going through a thin place, which serves as a transition between the concrete world of the Mist and the abstract realm of the Mythoi. Another explanation, of course, is that people's imaginations just become more active in these strange spots in town.

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THE ALLEY is where you'll find all of the City's trash hidden away. Not just the garbage: this is where shady deals and brutal crimes take place. When you want to meet secretly with a contact, because you haven't decided yet if you're going to work with them or kill them – you do it in the alley. When you want to hide a body long enough to get out of town – you stash it in the alley dumpster. It's where you go when you escape unseen from the scene of the crime or when you stalk someone to take them by surprise. The alley is a place for thieves, muggers, and crooks, and for lowly laborers who are pushed away from the frontline: cooks, waiting staff, porters, sanitation workers, exotic dancers. And while alleyways don't need Rifts to make them scary (Sleepers do that just fine on their own), Rifts are naturally attracted by this backstage of the City. Here you can operate freely, unseen by Sleepers and Rifts alike.

Almost every building in the City has an alley behind it, accessible via a backdoor, the fire escape, the sewer system, or the street, so alleyways act as a dark network of secret passages for the City. Some alleys, however, don't lead to where you thought they will. Some connect to another alley, others strangely emerge into a big bustling street a few blocks away. Sometimes you walk down an alley only to find yourself in a beautiful blossoming meadow in the middle of a hidden courtyard (but how did they get those tacky fake unicorns in here?). And one urban legend has it there is an alleyway that leads to yesterday.

THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT is a conglomerate of glistening, larger-than-life glass skyscrapers and lower, yet equally gargantuan, ornate stone buildings, at least half a century old but well-looked-after. This is the City's main seat of power, where corporate giants, banks, and government officials rub elbows. Anything big in business happens here, with the top financial and legal firms, major bank branches, and corporate headquarters all tucked conveniently next to each other. The City's highest-ranking executive authorities, council of legislators, and courthouse are just around the corner. The stench of corruption is everywhere; money might as well flow in the gutters of the empty side streets and spacious plazas that connect all this splendor. Black government cars, ostentatious white limousines, and limited series sports cars glide by effortlessly, reflecting citadels and palaces on their tinted windows. A handful of well-established plush hotels and expensive art-deco residential towers accommodate the rich and powerful, with all the luxury, security, and anonymity money can buy. And it is from here that these modern-age queens and kings, along with their advisors and emissaries, play a multi-faceted game of chess where the City's residents are the pawns.

There is one building in the financial district that has no name, nor is it possible to reach. Most days it is hidden behind other skyscrapers, out of sight; but every now and then, when you least expect it, it shows up on the skyline. Don't even bother trying to find its street. As soon as you come near it, the street bends unnaturally like a broken arm and you end up losing sight of it again. Fools will tell you it is just around the corner and that they can take you there, while the wise will tell you it does not exist and never has: a dark and dreary castle, engulfed in sea spray and murders of ravens, its old crooked spires painfully tearing into the clouds.

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THE SMOKY JAZZ CLUB is a corner of refinement whisked away in the basement of an old building on one of downtown's side streets. Music coaxes you in as you pass by; it sounds like a tune you once heard, a long time ago. It evokes a warm and familiar feeling which, if heeded, will compel you to enter. There, amidst wafts of cigarette smoke, a mixed crowd of well-off enthusiasts and bohemian artists listen spellbound to the switchbacking improvisations of a small band of suited musicians, accentuated by the husky voice of a singer in a flowing evening gown. You might even see the Girl of Ipanema walking through the smoke.

Downing another double whiskey on the rocks or sipping on a cosmopolitan, you'll find the jazz club is a good place to contemplate your current place in life, your next move, or the dire overall state of affairs in the City (and do a Voiceover Monologue, see page 199 in the Player's Guide). Most of the local crowd may be too busy brooding over their own trouble, but some will listen. Unexpected help or a fateful meeting may emerge from the smoke. Then again, it can always be that you were dreaming, or drunk, and when you leave this place you're still just as depressed as you were when you came in.

One of these clubs, **"Reeds"**, gets little coverage by the critics but among its regulars it's fondly known as downtown's best kept secret. It is said that the wisest person in the City hangs out there, known for dispensing the best advice one could ever hope to get. The few who know about this place assume this refers to the old and blind sax player, Zebedee Jackson, but he's in fact just the keeper of the gate. Zebedee has his way of reading people, and if he thinks you have a real problem, and that you're not trouble, he will tell you to go down to the basement while he plays a sad and mysterious tune for you. There you will find that the wooden stairs, covered in a hazy mist, open up to a wide outdoor pond where you'll find him paddling his feet or fooling around. Just a boy, a very strange enchanted boy, a little shy and sad of eyes, but wise beyond fathom.

THE RUN-DOWN APARTMENT is all some can afford if they want to live downtown. Usually situated in an inconvenient location, such as just above the subway railway or a noisy restaurant, this apartment suffers from all manners of pollution. During the day, the dust and sunlight filtering through the blinds make the air here hazy and dense, almost dreamlike. At night, the neon sign attached to the side of the building casts an eerie glow on the place, topped by electrical crackle. Still, despite crumbling paint on the walls and bad plumbing, it's a good enough place to put your head down, for a while. The fridge is usually empty, except for a bottle of cheap alcohol. The rolled up wad of money under the exposed stained mattress is gone. But it's a shelter and it's safe. That is, until that night when you'll hear someone fiddling with the lock on the door and you'll wish you had installed another one.

The run-down apartment can be used as the sad abode of one of the lead characters; the home of another character involved in a case; a crime scene or a place to look for evidence; or even as a safehouse for the crew.

PLAYING THE RIFTS IN THIS BOOK?

The *City of Mist* setting is a proto-setting: it contains a variety of ideas for locations, characters, and trends that you can use in your game to make your City feel real and alive right off the bat. By choosing which story elements to include in your City and how to use them, you make the City yours.

None of the locations or characters in this book are written in stone. They are not a part of a canonical world (is there, even, only one City of Mist?). This is especially true if one of your players wants to play a Rift whose Mythos is already mentioned here. They can use the character given here as an inspiration for their character or simply make their own version of this Rift.

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LOCALS

SHERYL FISHER

EBISU, JAPANESE GOD OF WEALTH IN BUSINESS AND ONE OF THE SEVEN LUCKY GODS

Sheryl Fisher is the plump and preppy CEO of the City's top advertising firm. From her office on the 40th floor of the highest skyscraper downtown, which sports a massive aquarium dotted with colorful sea critters and luminescent jellyfish, Sheryl makes sure that the transactional juices of the City keep flowing, keeping her clients, her bank account, and her Mythos happy. She does so using her uncanny penchant for baiting the consumers into buying whatever her clients sell, a quality she seems to have passed on to her copywriters as well as to the advertisement campaigns she runs. She is a wizard at conjuring jingles and catchy phrases for her clients and known for creating more than a few "must have" fads in the City. While outwardly jovial and good natured, Sheryl hides a chilling ruthlessness when it comes to protecting her fortune. If some other Rift pries into her business, she is not beyond concocting a bait that will be the last they'll ever bite. Thus far, Sheryl's elimination of the competition hasn't traced back to her, even in rumors. This is likely because she is judicious in the application of her powers – only real threats ever get dealt in this manner. And while some of the incarnations of the other six Lucky Gods are pleased with her performance so far, others among them find her conduct too much to stomach.

JUDAH WELLS

THE FROG PRINCE

Judah Wells is a hard-working garbage collection truck driver who covers the back alleys of the district. Every day, Judah laments his lack of a more lucrative job, but the burden of life in the blue-collar residential district with a wife and two kids keeps him too occupied to do anything more than daydream about being rich. In the meantime, he keeps his eyes open, hoping for a windfall of some type. Recently, a strange compulsion to search the dumpsters and sift through the upper-class trash has taken over him. He knows it's self-indulgent (and a bit gross: it's one thing to collect garbage, and another to wallow in it) but he just can't help himself; he feels compelled to do so, driven by a strong conviction that there's something in there, something that will change his life. His inner monologue created an entire fiction of him stumbling upon some amazing golden artifact. He daydreams about how he will feel when he finds his 'treasure' and what he will do with the money. Most of his co-workers think he's gone mad and either pity him or frown upon this behavior. If he keeps it up and someone reports it to his superiors, he stands to lose his job.

Truth be told, it *is* a matter of time. Judah will find something and it will be golden and worth considerably more than just money. Judah's coming windfall will propel him into the social stratosphere of the City. But will he handle it all with aplomb or come crashing down famously?

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ALICE

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Alice is new in town. Few know her; no one knows where she's from. She seems to be a drifter of the backpacking sort, wandering downtown in a windbreaker and wool hat, rubbernecking the glowing neon and jumbo screens, riddled with amazement. Buy Alice a cheap burger and she is happy to talk without taking a breath. She will share her delirious metaphysical theories with you, adamant that there is something essentially wrong with this Babylon you live in. She'll tell you that everything here looks absolutely mad to her, that where she comes from, things are a lot more 'normal' and 'down to earth.' Reticent to say exactly where that is, she won't say much beyond 'outside the City' or 'in the country'.

Some of the things she says make sense, because downtown is pretty crazy. But don't follow her nor take any recreational substances she offers you. If she's in the zone and wanders into a live music event at the plaza or a nightclub, or any other audio-visual display that will mesmerize her, you will find out the exact meaning of "When logic and proportion have fallen sloppy dead."

JUDGE MEYER

SLEEPER

Judge Meyer does what he can to survive in the cutthroat world of politics; at least, that's what he tells himself. The good judge was never much into justice, but long ago, when he graduated from law school in the City's top university, he had a burning passion for all things legal. He was fascinated by how the judicial system aspired to correct a broken world and to keep it working. Now in his 60s, Judge Meyer is anxiously awaiting retirement. The world has proven to him that it is broken beyond repair, time and time again. The things he heard in his court have jaded him, leaving little room for black and white, right and wrong. So he takes a little money here and there and bends the rules for those who can afford it, big deal. Frankly, it's not as though they leave him much choice: if he wants to keep his position he'll do as they say, take the money, and see what good he can do in other avenues. But sleep has been scarce for Judge Meyer at night. Can he shoulder the guilt for much longer?

THE BACKSTAGE KILLER

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

The Backstage Killer is an alleged serial killer operating in the alleyways and parking garages downtown. The killer has recently been linked to at least five different murders in the theater avenue, all targeting the rich and the beautiful. Police profilers were convinced that they can snag the killer, and have pointed out his or her rather transparent methods and all-too-obvious issues with vanity, expressed as an obsession with the victims' appearances. But even when the police were able to close in on the killer – arriving at the scene too late to save the victims – the killer was somehow able to elude them. The profilers are now looking at two new theories, one claims the killer is a former prima donna, the other a disturbed fan. But talk to the cops on the beat over steaming coffee to-go and you'll hear another story: a hushed showdown at the backstage of a major theater, where the suspect reputedly vanished into thin air, has them believing their suspect is using stage effects to escape undetected. According to them, the killer is either a frustrated stagehand or one of the theater managers.

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THE BLUE-COLLAR RESIDENTIAL

"They were living in a one-bedroom apartment: the parents and two kids. When I asked them about the murders, he put forward a little too clearly that they knew nothing, but she looked sullen. It might have looked as if there's some bad blood between them, maybe domestic violence – but I know a dysfunctional family when I see one, darling, and it wasn't that. It was about a secret, something dark that was seeping through the cracks of their relationship. On the way out, I managed to get the little brat to spit it out. It was his little brother. 'He's a monster,' he said, sobbing."

–Excalibur



Property of City of Mist

Life is tough for the hard-working people of this neighborhood. They struggle daily to survive and make ends meet. They work hard and enjoy what little comforts they can get: a cold beer, a pack of smokes, new shoes, or a working fridge. Opportunities are not plentiful: the education system here is mediocre and the job market is flooded. The best most people in this neighborhood can hope for is to get through the month without sinking deeper into debt.

Sadly, this means this neighborhood breeds most petty criminals in the City and a good share of its organized crime. People here work hard all their lives; by now, they've either given up on their dreams or are desperate enough to leap at the promise of a golden opportunity even if it comes with great risks. Mobsters and loan sharks thrive on protection money and the high interest paid by individuals with no other choice. Teenagers are naturally drawn to the thug life, where they feel they can earn a measure of respect and a nice bit of money. Idealistic local politicians try helplessly to change things for the better while their corrupt counterparts (and sometimes alter-egos) make a cut on the backs of the neighborhood residents.

Most of this neighborhood is a warren of tall tenements and apartment blocks where visitors often get lost. Some streets and buildings look stenciled, except for the various businesses on the ground level: grocery stores, barber shops, fast food joints, pawn shops, laundromats. If you venture into the backyards and alleys, you may need a local to help you out of the labyrinth, decorated everywhere by laundry on clotheslines. Most of the day it's a pretty noisy and lively place: kids holler at each other and loud music is playing outside, mixing with the ruckus of traffic. At night, the streets grow silent and tense. Squad cars patrol the neighborhood, but there are too few to make a difference. It's up to the locals to take care of themselves: anything can come out at you from the dark.

BEYOND THE MIST

Hope – even false hope – is a good foundation for a Mythos to strike roots. The blue-collar residential district is therefore a prosperous hotbed for Rifts. From small-time crooks desperate to get their chance at greatness (or notoriety) to hopeful believers who want to make this neighborhood a better place, almost any story about tough luck and perseverance can find its host here. Blue-collar occupations and modest means also mirror perfectly the trades and lifestyles in myth and legend. Farmers, millers, fishermen, and their families star in many fairy tales. It's no wonder then that these Mythoi often associate themselves with folks from this neighborhood.

This district attracts Rifts that seek to involve many Sleepers in their schemes, but on a deeper level compared to downtown. The people living here are not going anywhere; they're the captive audience of any Mythoi who will successfully dominate their lives. While competition between Legendaries surely exists, the nature of the neighborhood tends to foster a handful of long-standing Rifts whose influence then becomes almost impossible to root out. They can become leaders of the community or behind-the-scenes criminal overlords who call the shots on their turf. Even if toppled, the same Mythos might simply take a new Rift as its new face, and continue business as usual. Any new Rifts operating here will learn very fast who is in charge in their part of the neighborhood.



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PLACES OF INTEREST

THE 24/7 DINER is where you go to start your day with black coffee and pancakes in the morning, take a break around lunchtime, hold an informal face-to-face meeting in the afternoon, and have a sad dinner alone at the bar in the evening. If you're there at night, the staff will start treating you as part of the furniture. Greasy meals and percolator coffee is all you'll get here, but it's cheap and it keeps you going.

With neon lights lining the underbelly of the bar and framing each and every window, the diner glows in eldritch magenta and lipstick pink throughout the night. Red leather seats enclose the booths and a bell rings whenever someone walks in. It's the penultimate casual meeting place, where anyone is welcome and no questions are asked. Sure, sometimes a hobo wanders in and starts shouting in a foreign language until they give him some food and send him away. There's also something funky going on with the *soup de jour*. Once or twice you may have witnessed someone trashing the place (or were responsible for that yourself). But for the most part the diner is where you can gear up, wind down, or just sit by the window and watch the City go by.

Joe's Burgers & Stews (The Magic Cauldron) is one place like that, situated on a junction connecting a few of the neighborhoods blocks – and turfs. Joe is a robust and energetic woman, who seems to labor tirelessly to keep the customers satisfied. Perhaps that devotion has earned her a place of honor among the hooligans and mobsters of the district; how else would you explain the uncanny lack of incidents in and around her diner? The diner sits right on top of the neighborhood's criminal faultline. It should be exploding with violence and yet that never happens. If some stray gangster stumbles in, Joe walks right up to him and explains the rules of the place along with a bowl of stew. Oddly enough, that's all it takes to keep them in check.

THE PRIVATE OFFICE is often found on the second story of a crumbling residential or office building, overlooking the street. Visitors knocking on the milky glass door at the entrance dramatically show up as crisp silhouettes, most commonly of attractive ladies and despicable gents. Black lettering on the glass identifies the practitioner: a private eye, a lawyer, an accountant, or a doctor. Inside, light filters through the shutters in smoky slanted stripes. The sound of the street below is muffled, yet constant. Behind a heavy wooden desk buried in paperwork and illuminated by a green desk lamp there's a swivel chair where someone is often drinking, smoking, holding a gun, or all of the above.

The private office is a staple of detective stories. Whether it's the lead characters' base of operations (and sometimes not-so-temporary home), the setting of dramatic conversation revealing a shocking truth, or the target of a break-in that now must be investigated, the office should appear in your story in some way. Luckily, the City is dotted with such small establishments so weaving one into the story will be quite natural.

Marty Brooks (see page 31), a local conman, keeps such an office for a nondescript business he uses to launder his money. The lettering on the milky door is easily removable and he has a whole box of them, just in case he needs the place to look like something else for a while.



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THE PRECINCT'S POLICE STATION is the symbol of law enforcement in the district. It is a bustling hub of activity: people coming in to press charges, officers riding out in squad cars to answers distress calls, criminals brought in. The cops here handle everything from a cat stuck in a tree to the incrimination and apprehension of the most wanted criminal masterminds. Beat officers, undercover units, task force detectives, and even a SWAT team all operate out of this modern-day fortress. The precinct is fully loaded with the necessary gear and armaments cops need to do their duty, not to mention a tempting evidence storage room with plenty of cash, drugs, and confiscated arms to go around, but only the most foolish or daring of criminals would dare mount an assault on the district's stronghold of authority.

When you stand on **THE DOCKS**, watching the gray waves roll and listening to the calls of the seagulls and ship horns, you could be fooled for a moment to think the place has a romantic streak to it. Turn around and you'll find grimy loud cranes carrying shipping containers here and there, rusted ships swaying in briny water, and rows upon rows of warehouses and hangars, abandoned for the most part. Uncountable quantities of commodities come in and are shipped out of this port every day, not all on record. Shady deals are closed with a handshake; money then exchanges hands, goods get loaded onto the back of a truck, and off you go. This godforsaken land at the edge of the neighborhood is the perfect venue to conduct illegal business, and many mobsters and gang leaders have sent their enemies to swim with the fish off these piers.

Ultimately, however, the docklands are the **Longshore Union**'s turf. This legitimate association of dockworkers also happens to be a front for a murderous pack of thieves and hooligans (Red Caps), dexterous with their knives and tommy guns as they are with a forklift. Even powerful underworld names make contact and offer due compensation before operating from the docklands, to avoid encroaching on Union territory.

THE PUBLIC PARK is the City folk's escape from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Spanning a mile or two in each direction, this massive green space includes lawns, ponds, wooded areas, and natural terrain – a welcome respite from the City's asphalt and concrete. During the week it's quiet here, with most people passing on their way elsewhere. On the weekends it's more crowded, with the sounds of open-air concerts and seasonal fairs filling up the air. Designed for leisure rather than efficiency, the paved footpaths wind and coil around the park, making it hard to cut through if you don't know exactly where you're going. Even locals can find this place bewildering as the path often comes to a dead end in the rushes on the shores of the pond or just under a jutting outcrop of lichen-covered rock. There's a teenage gang of little shitheads (the Merry Men) who mug people lost in the park, especially the affluent ones.

Sometime the path leads unexpectedly to a dense wooded area laced with fog so thick you can't see the sun, or anything more than a few dozen feet away for that matter. Any Rift whose Mythos' legend takes place in a forest immediately recognizes this as the **Enchanted Forest** and turns back, if she's smart. A seemingly innocuous Enclave, the Enchanted Forest strives only to become a place where magical adventures take place. Unfortunately, that has made it the willing home of not one, but several of the most nefarious Rifts this City has known.



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LOCALS

JACQUELINE BROWN

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Jacqueline Brown was a frustrated young supermarket worker living with her sick mom when she was fired for stealing. The next morning she was shocked to discover that out of a can of baked beans that she dropped in the backyard, a 3-foot-wide beanstalk had grown almost as far up as she could see. Experimenting with this, Jacqueline discovered she could grow stalks out of any bean and later reduce the stalk to mere dust with a single strike of her bare hands. Seizing on the opportunity, she scouted the City's penthouses for a window left open and eventually found her target. She stole something very important and valuable, "a goose that lays golden eggs", so to speak. But on her way down the beanstalk, she found the owner of the house, a rich and powerful man, was climbing down after her. When Jacqueline reached the ground, she struck the beanstalk, disintegrating it under the man's feet, fleeing the scene just as she heard the wet, meaty crash. Amazingly, no body was found, yet evidence showed a lethal impact had taken place there. Jacqueline is now on the run from the police who want her for questioning but, unbeknownst to her, she is hunted by a much more dangerous entity, one which seeks her for what she stole.

SAMUEL VALTIERRA

BARON SAMEDI

Samuel Valtierra, who was allegedly once a sullen middle-aged cemetery keeper, now runs this neighborhood. Ruler of the local underworld, he and his gang of Skullz occasionally get involved in shady drug and gun trafficking business, but they mostly dominate the neighborhood through extortion, threatening local businesses with violence if they don't pay for their 'protection'. Most stores in the district, and particularly vulnerable businesses like liquor stores and diners, pay homage to Valtierra. "Nobody dies unless Valtierra says so," is the common saying used by his men. And strangely enough, it seems to be true. Valtierra's gangsters have been known to survive gunshot wounds that should have killed them, popping back out of their base at the Guede Funeral Services seemingly unscathed. What's more alarming, Valtierra seems to mysteriously know everything that goes on in the neighborhood, even secrets people swore to take to their graves, so it seems no one is safe from him. But Valtierra has bigger aspirations than just this blue-collar residential hood and as a result, bigger problems. His alleged ability to safeguard people from death is interfering with the plans of a much more ancient and powerful underworld bigwig, one who is coming to collect.

HUGH FLYNN

PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

Hugh Flynn has always been a popular yet controversial figure in the neighborhood's politics. A sworn activist, Flynn has been personally laboring for the embetterment of local citizens' lives for over a decade and has even had limited success. He is especially concerned with the children's safety and education in this age of pornography and pedophilia. No one can contest the fact that Flynn is a great public speaker, and he knows it – his office often organizes rallies, public meetings, and press conferences. He is a master at stoking the emotions of his audience, to the point that they are willing to follow with him through thick and thin. Out of those who heard him speak in person, few have not joined his cause. But it's exactly this instant and total faith he inspires in people that sets him up as a villainous cult leader in the eyes of others. Some folks are afraid to attend his speakings for fear of being brainwashed. There's a pack of mallrats that even accused him of abducting their friends, although that's probably just a prank. But what is Flynn's real agenda? And if it's truly to help the district – is a little brainwashing really so bad?

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"THE WATCHER"

POLTERGEIST

"The Watcher" phenomenon would make a great study in social sciences or comparative urban folklore (in fact, there is one student in a local college who has been recording it). Over the last few years, people in different parts of the neighborhood started reporting strange incidents of divine intervention, incredible providence, and unexplainable serendipity. All those affected by the phenomenon describe being visited by a benevolent invisible presence who intervened to save them from crisis, danger, or depression. As these reports became more frequent, a social network of those affected began forming, gaining unprecedented momentum. These "Watched", as they call themselves, shared their experiences of being taken over or possessed by this benign force, allowing them to stand up for themselves against mugging, abuse, rape, and even cases of police brutality. Most Watched believe that "the Watcher" is an individual seeking to help this neighborhood. One of their most outspoken members, Maria Bridey, is convinced the Watcher is in fact her missing brother, Nate. Local authorities are unsure how to handle the situation. Dismissing the possibility of truly paranormal activity, this could be a brilliant scheme by Bridey herself: appealing to her neighbors' religious and spiritual needs as a way to kickstart her own political career.

MARTIN "MARTY" BROOKS

SLEEPER

Marty is always looking for the next hit. Having developed an earnest aversion for hard work from a young age, Marty found that he had to learn how to exploit the gullibility and absent-mindedness of his fellow man. A lot has happened since he started selling baseball cards at ten times their worth in the schoolyard, but nothing really changed. When he lands a windfall, Marty lives the high life with gold-digging women and designer drugs. When he's stuck for money, he plans another, bigger heist or a new scheme to get him solvent again. Marty has been around for decades, he's worked with the best and the worst, and he got out of some serious dire straits, never doing more than a few months in the brig. The only one Marty can't con is Time itself; with a growing waistline and a receding hairline he can't seem to hide anymore, Marty is not the playboy he used to be, but he is still as sharp as a knife.

COULD RIFTS HAVE HEARD THE STORIES THEY ARE BASED ON?

Since all other aspects of modern culture exist in *City of Mist*, it's reasonable to assume that ancient legends and stories are also a part of the culture in which the lead characters operate. This means Rifts can identify the legend behind their Mythos or another Rift's Mythos if they have enough details. They can also do some research and easily find out more about this Mythos.

This does not necessarily make *City of Mist* a monster-of-the-week game, where the protagonists work to reveal the villain's origin story and find a clue on how to defeat them. While this type of research can be useful and interesting, as it gives new directions for the investigation, remember that there is no telling how a given Mythos manifests in the City. Rifts always have an ordinary and human side, which shuffles the deck and can make them indifferent to certain aspects of their Mythos. Knowing a Rift's Mythos does not necessarily reveal everything about them or their motives. A Mythos can manifest in countless ways, its legendary attributes and weak points appearing in unexpected forms, sometimes not even manifesting at all. Moreover, Rifts are still people, messy and emotional and ambitious. If the players or the characters rely too heavily on legends and fairy-tales, they may be taken aback by what they discover when the whole truth is brought to light.

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THE OLD QUARTER

"There's more to this City than just a pile of concrete and lost souls. Beneath this filthy human mass of obliviousness, there is an ancient truth, a truth that everyone wants to keep hidden so it doesn't spoil their dreams. I had a strange dream, about a golden idol. It was lying in a chest, covered in cobwebs, stashed in the dark under the beams of a sloped roof. It must have been a very strange dream indeed because suddenly I found myself standing there, in a dusty attic poorly illuminated by light coming through the cracks. When I opened the chest, it was empty. The last thing I heard was a voice behind me, 'Looking for this?'"

–Declan L'Estrange

Centuries ago, maybe even millennia, migrating people first settled in the area that is now the City. They were met by indigenous tribes, as history tells us, or, if you want the romanticized version, by monsters, spirits, and gods. Their settlement thrived and evolved, growing greater in fortune and population as time went by. Eventually, it became this City you see before you; but it all started here, in the Old Quarter.

Old stone buildings and cobbled streets with wrought-iron street lamps make up this cramped district, giving it the appearance of a place out of time. Landmarks of the City's history are everywhere you look, from pompous historical estates with neatly-trimmed gardens to well-preserved townhouses where someone important once lived. As you venture deeper into the quarter, it becomes harder to navigate by car. Narrow alleyways lead to quaint crafts shops, boutique hotels, glorified bistros, and art galleries, then open up to small squares, decorated with antiquated but masterfully sculpted fountains. The Old Quarter is no less than enchanting; ironically enough, it has the air of something foreign, far from the modern City not by distance, but by time. Everyone you'll meet here has an interesting tale about the Quarter and you can almost breathe in the history that these stones have seen. If you are looking for something eccentric and unusual, you will find it here.

The Old Quarter is a treasure trove of antiques as well as of the arcane. From artifacts brought here long ago from faraway lands by pirates and mariners to parchments and maps recording the early days of the City and pacts of black magic, every attic or basement in this quarter is bursting with ancient knowledge to be uncovered. No wonder then that all the peculiar academics, bizarre street performers, and aspiring mystics end up here. At night, cat burglars wrestle with modern security measures to put their paws on priceless items, overlooking the ancient inscriptions they should really be worried about.

Most of the population of the Old Quarter can trace their heritage to the indigenous people of the City, to its first settlers, or to both. The buildings are almost all owned by old-money families, who have kept the quarter clean from the commercial interests blowing from downtown. Here there is peace, tranquility, and unspeakable secrets buried beneath the ground. No one talks about these things; those blue-blooded people know how to suffer quietly. But more than one family here has been reputed to carry a genetic flaw in its bloodline, *a curse*, if you will. Then again, it could be simply the product of centuries of inbreeding.

BEYOND THE MIST

The Old Quarter seems to be where the Mist is the thinnest in town. Whether that's due to some mystical property of this quarter is beyond anyone's knowledge, but it might just be that in the Old Quarter the Mist simply has less work to do. The people who live or come here already know this place is weird and they expect nothing less of it. With this reinforced suspense of disbelief in place, the Mist can concentrate its work elsewhere. As a result, the Old Quarter is the district with the most newly awakened people. It is the perfect place for Touched, who can explore their Mythos under the guise of artistic or academic pursuits.

Because so many here are able to remember the legendary, Rifts need to be careful about what they reveal in public. It's a small community where everybody knows each other and what they are, even if little is said explicitly. This makes the Old Quarter less suitable for the insidious operations of the criminally-minded Rifts simply because their victims are too savvy. Instead, the Old Quarter is a melting pot of Rifts of all levels of awareness who clash or collaborate to bring their Mythoi's legend to life.

Another theory could be that the Mist is not weaker in the Old Quarter; it's the Mythoi who are stronger. Beneath the cobbled streets burn the most primordial of Mythoi, myths and fables about the forces that created the world or the essential sins of Man which made it what it is now. Such powers could be strong enough to reach even beyond the capacity of the City's mystic veil. It is all the Mist can do to keep the City intact above ground.

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PLACES OF INTEREST

THE MUSEUM is an impressive edifice of stone and marble, erected in a time when history and culture still mattered. Today, most of the City residents regard it as a dull activity reserved for tourists and intellectuals. Others, of a less savory nature, see it as a big pile of money waiting for the one who can bypass its state-of-the-art security systems. They're not wrong; the museum is loaded with famous works of art and ancient artifacts that are worth a fortune on the black market. But that is not what makes this place so special.

What most City residents naturally overlook is that the museum is the largest repository of Relics in the City. Sure, the most powerful Relics, if they ever made it to the Museum, have been stolen or sold long ago. But there are still so many minor Relics stored within the marble-coated walls of this institution that it's practically a mythical armory. Even the mundane exhibits in the museum are so incredibly charged with past and emotion that they make perfect candidates for awakening as new Relics. Most of the personnel working at the museum have no clue about this, but rumor has it that a handful of Rift preservation experts, archaeologists, and even a security guard have banded together to protect the museum from any potential threats to the exhibits. They may have even incorporated some of the Relics into the security measures of the museum.

Interestingly enough, the Relics' true value doesn't lie in their Mythos powers; it's in their history. Relics are Rifts, and as Rifts, they *remember*. Unlike human Rifts, they can endure for centuries and millennia, meaning they could retain authentic knowledge about the history of the City, perhaps even predating the Mist. Such knowledge would only be accessible to the chosen bearer of the Relic, or to someone with enough mystical know-how to wrest it out forcibly.

THE UNIVERSITY is the center of higher learning in the City. Established hundreds of years ago, this educational institution has long spearheaded scientific research and the study of the humanities. Unfortunately, a shrinking budget, faculty scandals, and staunch competition from private research facilities have damaged its long-standing prestige, losing it some of its foremost scientists. Still, this well-respected establishment remains the home of some of the best minds in the City, perhaps ones who are driven more by a passion for knowledge than by self interest and greed. Some academics here will tell you that while they love striding the echoing marble halls and working late in the lab, it is the passion for teaching that truly keeps them here.

The expansive campus, with its many buildings and facilities, takes up a good chunk of the Old Quarter and in fact the newer additions to the university, as well as the residential neighborhoods that house the staff and students, are creeping out into other districts. Still, the beating heart of the university is its centuries-old main hall and the lawns in front of it. Not far from it stands the old library: the largest collection of books, texts, and records in the City. Nerdy researchers and inquisitive reporters are often seen here brooding over piles of books and microfilm readers, while in the back of the library colorful mystics flick through dusty tomes. The university's top-notch lab facilities have also featured on the news recently, with some strange accidents and possible break-ins reported in the genetics lab.

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THE COBBLED STREET is the heart of the Old Quarter. Possibly the first paved street in the City (or the first worth mentioning), this rather narrow main street has been renovated countless times, but has kept its historical look all the same. Mysterious street performers perform magical tricks that defy logic while musicians play long-forgotten tunes that evoke old memories from before you were born. On both sides, stone townhouses stand crookedly shoulder to shoulder in two rows, penetrated occasionally by a shadowy arched passageway. Some of the houses are used as homes, containing anything from cramped attic apartments to plush residences laced with antiques. Some are businesses, from outrageously expensive restaurants to cheap dens where you can get tarot card readings. Others stand empty, abandoned for some ungodly and unspoken reason.

At night this street takes on an otherworldly appearance. Mist creeps in and coils around the lampposts, their lights like hovering lanterns. Silence washes over, seemingly covering the entire quarter, except for the faraway sounds of medieval music. Few walk about, their footsteps muffled and their figures dark and blurry. You get a feeling that something could emerge out of the night and spirit you away to another place, another life, and no one would ever know.

Old buildings and locations dot the streets of the Old Quarter. **THE HISTORIC RESIDENCE** was once the home of a prominent figure in the City. Whether a founder of the City or of one of its institutions, an industrial tycoon, or a celebrated author or artist, this person has perished long ago and now only his or her estate remains. Most furniture is covered in white sheets, except for a few rooms maintained for public display. There is much to be revealed here about this famous personality: who they were outwardly, what they dabbled with in the privacy of their own home, who they cohorted with, and what else took place during those years. The walls could be hiding stories of ages past or horrible secrets that were taken to the grave.

THE RUIN juts out from the quaint old streets, forlorn and forsaken. In some cases, it is a relatively modern building, abandoned after a catastrophe. In other cases, it's an ancient and macabre place: a church, a castle, a stone circle, or a fort. Many such places are Enclaves, showing their ruined version on the outside as a facade intended to fool inquisitive guests. Inside, however, you may find nothing at all or a place carved out of legends – such as a fully-furnished castle hall ready for a feast – depending on whether the Enclave wants to let you in or not. Anything might be buried beneath the ruin: a treasure, a body of ancient knowledge, or an abomination that must never be awakened.

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LOCALS

OLD MIRNA

BABA YAGA

Old Mirna is a ubiquitous elderly woman living on the streets of the Old Quarter. Everyone in the area knows she's absolutely mad and tries to stay well wide of her. Unkempt and disheveled, she wears multiple layers of clothes and her peppered hair is matted into natural dreadlocks. Her breath smells rancid, likely a product of her rotting teeth. Known to hiss away any handouts offered, she seems to respect confidence and courage, not mealy-mouthed kindness.

No one ever sees Mirna set up her tent in the dark of night, it simply appears one day in a courtyard or a small park: a confusing conglomeration of canvas and cardboard put together with surprising stability and roominess. Inside, a tacky battery-powered plastic skull with glowing eyes is fixed over the flap. Scraps of carpet and old newspapers cover the ground. Talismans created from refuse and trash adorn the walls. Piles of old clothes hide who-knows-what under them.

Mirna's piercing stare has a way of terrifying people such that only the boldest or the ones most desperate will approach her; even the police of the area generally stay clear of her. Those who manage to exchange a few words with her and are invited into her tent must be clear about what they want and be willing to pay for it, lest she send them away cursed. Once past her gruff exterior, she is known to help those she finds worthy by reading their palms, telling their future, or providing talismans to bring luck. Mirna is particularly fond of self-assured women and many of the scions of the wealthiest families of the Old Quarter carry special items she gave them: a dirty ragdoll, a bag of poppy seeds, a bundle of tied chicken bones, or a crooked stick. Of course, these debutantes would never admit where they acquired the talismans. Mirna knows, though. She knows and she sees.

FADI MALEK

THOTH, EGYPTIAN GOD OF KNOWLEDGE

Fadi Malek, perpetually red-faced and frowny, is everyone's favorite librarian. As he patrols the library with his unique swagger, usually balancing up to two dozen books on his belly, the heavyset burly man huffs and puffs at anyone who might be breaking the library rules. Most just choke down a giggle and let Fadi pass by; they know the librarian is harmless and they let him do his routine to help keep the library a place of learning. This is fine for Fadi, who would rather maintain an innocuous facade; it makes it easier for him to do his job. He knows that some of the less frequented wings of the library contain not only sensitive historical records but also tomes of dark and forbidden arts. There isn't a night goes by that the round librarian isn't fighting off mythical burglars, arrogant Legendaries who think they can just drop in and pick up a copy of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead / Director's Cut*, or cultist zealots who seek the ritual that will restore their banished god. No, knowledge is given to those worthy of it, to those who seek to learn and grow wiser. Everyone else goes on the waiting list. Until now, Fadi's struggle remained mostly clandestine. Recently, however, a handful of university students dabbling in mysticism snuck into the library at night and saw him in action, or more correctly, saw his shadow: he had grown into something huge and furry, with a long tail, bearing his teeth at what seemed to be the shadow of a little girl. Fadi knows who this group is but he has bigger worries. That little girl almost got what she came for, and she left him weakened. No matter, he is the keeper of knowledge, and keep it he will.

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ELLA KIRKY

CIRCE THE SORCERESS

Ella Kirky, the attractive 39-year-old owner of Hart Bistro, grew up in the Quarter and is a fierce proponent of its charms and uniqueness. People from across the City seek out her cooking, which has gained her celebrity status; her cookbooks are all bestsellers. Hart Bistro is known for a rich menu of delectable comfort food, particularly her fabled cornbread laced with a bit of red wine, cheese, and honey, which the locals oddly seem to avoid. The restaurant is located in an aging building surrounded by a sizable yard lined with cypress trees and dotted with statues of wolves, lions, and pigs, an inspiration to Kirky who often talks publicly about drawing inspiration from people's animalistic drives and passions. But that's just for the media.

Few know that Ella is the wife of an admiral and daughter to a long line of naval commanders and seafarers. Fostering a nostalgia to the refinement of ages past (as she sees it), she abhors nothing more than lack of dignity and decorum. If her patrons aren't properly respectful, she is more than willing to call on her extensive botanical skills to add a little "something" to the recipes, especially her famous cornbread. There is a strange and of yet uninvestigated correlation between people who misbehaved in Hart Bistro and missing persons reports in the Old Quarter. Ella doesn't feel like she's hurting anyone, she's simply revealing what's there. If they want so much to behave like animals, let them.

THE DUMONTS

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE-DAME

The Dumonts are both blessed and cursed; sometimes it's hard to tell which. A powerful family of the Old Quarter, the Dumont bloodline is as old as the City itself, but it's a well-known secret they have gypsy blood as well flowing in their blue veins. This is perhaps the source of all of the Dumonts' problems. On the one hand, this family is rich and influential beyond belief, capable of manipulating even the highest rungs of policy makers to do their bidding. This natural knack for foresight, planning, and pulling of strings has allowed the Dumonts to scheme and gain power for generations. On the other hand, there is the affliction that comes with it. Every prodigious leader of the family sires or births a cursed child: a baby made of stone. The Dumonts know the grey pigmentation is just a skin condition but the curse goes deeper than that: whenever one of the afflicted tries to go out in public, whenever they so much set their foot on the street – scandals ensue and the family ends up stripped of its power. As the private chronicles of the Dumonts reveal, this has happened at least half a dozen times in the past. The current leader of the family, **Ralph Dumont** (Frollo) is trying to prevent that from happening again. Adamant to secure his family's power, he has locked up his son, **Paul Dumont** (Quasimodo), who is afflicted by the family curse, in their mansion in the Old Quarter. But unbeknownst to Ralph, Paul has found the shared diary of the previous afflicted and discovered the secrets and the purpose of the curse. He prowls the night as a masked vigilante, eager to battle the corruption promoted by his father, but never, ever touching down on the street.

PROF. SAM BALDWIN

SLEEPER

Professor Sam Baldwin is just about ready to pop. For his entire career, he has seen his peers achieve inexplicable scientific breakthroughs again and again, using science that he just could not grasp. The first few times he tried to figure out the theory behind their experiments, whose results were nothing short of miraculous; but their papers were cryptic to him. He used to be sure the enlightenment he was seeking was within reach, that it was just a matter of time, and that with enough hard work he would eventually make a discovery of equal or greater proportions. Those days have long gone. Prof. Baldwin has recognized that he is simply a mediocre scientist compared to the geniuses of his time and that no matter how much he tries, he will never have that *special something* that allows a scientist to truly shine. This realization has devoured him. Now, every news report about a new breakthrough and every comment in his classroom set him off. It's just a matter of time until he finds a way to settle the score.

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THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE

"I told her, 'Lady, you gotta believe me! These people are moving some dangerous shit, chemicals or something. They have trucks unloading the goods into a hangar by the refineries. You need to write about this!' She wanted to know how I got into the refineries; said it was a restricted area. What was I going to tell her? That I am wherever water is? That my children in underground pools told me about the chemicals? That I am a god of rain and of rivers? Forget it! I just told her, 'Come with me and I'll show you.'"

–Tlaloc

Every day and throughout the night, the Industrial Zone continues its mechanical march. It chugs down copious amounts of raw materials alongside a steady stream of blue-collar workers from the nearby residential districts. Its many workshops and factories, each louder than the other, churn and grind and fuse parts together, and then regurgitate them over to another facility for the next step of the production line. Its tall chimneys and winding pipelines spew out fumes, smoke, and waste, while congested roads slowly push out tired employees and draw in fresh ones. Out of all this ruckus comes an endless variety of products, some mass produced, some crafted with care, some for the zone's own use, others packaged and shipped all over town. When you think about it, the whole district is just one big machine.

Once you get used to the noise and pollution, however, the finer details emerge. The district's area is divided between hundreds of businesses and facilities. In the light industry zone one can find small workshops and garages run by tattooed burly men in wife-beaters and rough ladies in overalls, offering quick repairs and custom adjustments to your wheels and machinery. In the commercial zone, massive hardware outlets sell construction supplies while in their old-fashioned shops, fish-eyed craftsmen work on delicate clockwork or electronics devices behind a magnifying glass. Derelict factories with saw-tooth roofs and filthy skylights house outdated production lines that operate with a skeleton crew, waiting for the inevitable modernization. Rows of storage units and warehouses seem to go on forever. Behind them, vast corporate production complexes and government-funded refineries stretch over miles, some covering an area greater than all the smaller zones put together and housing only god-knows-what.

The nights here reveal a well-known fact: the Industrial Zone is the City's no-man's-land. Though police and environmental compliance inspectors scout the district around the clock, they are regularly understaffed compared to its sheer size, their operations stinted due to lack of public interest (except for a few cheap housing projects for employees working shifts, the district has no registered residents). The underground scene is thriving, with anything from delirious raves to violent pit fights available to the thrill-seeking visitor. Strange gangs and secretive brotherhoods set up their makeshift headquarters around burn barrels in abandoned hangars, spraying their SMGs into the night sky and howling like wolves. Above all that mayhem, the wind blows silently amid silos and cooling towers studded with bright red aircraft warning lights. From way up there, one could easily see that it's not the noisy parts of the Industrial Zone the police should be worrying about – it's the quiet ones.

BEYOND THE MIST

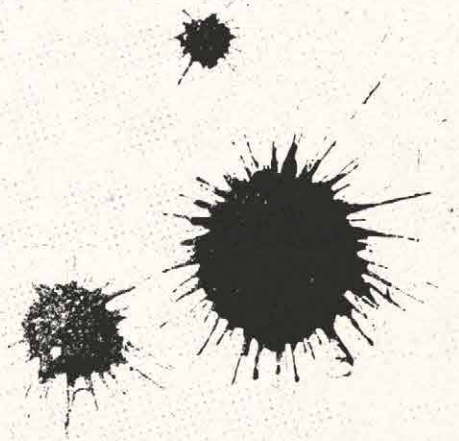
There is no district more sidelined, neglected, or desolate than the Industrial Zone, so Rifts just love this place. Whereas in the Old Quarter the Mist's degree of involvement is vague, here it is crystal clear: the Mist doesn't care about the Industrial Zone. It seems to operate here at minimum capacity, masking Rifts barely enough to keep the workforce oblivious and to maintain a steady flow of products into the City. Some have theorized that this is a devious ploy by the Mist to lure Rifts away from the population centers where they can be dealt with permanently without danger of awakening others. But the fact remains that Rifts here feel a release from the burden of the Mist, setting aside their ordinary lives and living free as the agents of their innermost mythical desires. Visiting the Industrial Zone regularly can certainly open up a Rift's awareness; sometimes this awareness even endures when the Rift returns to districts where the Mist is heavier.



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This state of affairs has turned the Industrial Zone into somewhat of a wonderland. You never know what you are going to bump into around here. Most Sleepers are terrified of hanging out here at night, especially near the gargantuan factories where there's not a soul to be seen. All over the district, Enclaves have taken root. Doors opens into snow-covered pagodas and chutes lead down to cobwebbed spider lairs. Monstrous mythical creatures, either Familiars or products of some mad Rift's conjuration, prowl the streets like rabid dogs. Sometimes even Rifts wish they had stayed under the comforting blanket of the Mist.

The most expansive of all districts, the most thinly-populated, and the least guarded by law enforcement, the Industrial Zone is also the perfect location for Rifts to set up facilities for their operations. Hidden away in a warehouse or an empty silo, a Rift's secret lab or base of operations might as well be invisible. It's from here that powerful Rifts operate and to here that they retreat when the going gets tough. Deep in the Industrial Zone there are quite a few lairs of the City's mightiest legends, some even unaware of each other's presence.



PLACES OF INTEREST

THE WAREHOUSE is a must-have location for every operation, mundane or legendary. Whether you are a smuggler trafficking arms, a cartel manufacturing drugs, or a sorcerous Rift torturing your enemies, everybody needs a workspace. Amid crates with strange labels and dormant heavy machinery, one can set up a workshop, a lab, a training center, or even a labyrinthine complex of rooms, each with its own deathtrap for one's unwelcomed visitors. A warehouse offers a quiet, under-the-radar place to work and prepare for your next hit. The chances of being found in the Industrial Zone are slim; without the right intel, your pursuers will have to comb through thousands of storage units across the district.

One of these warehouses, **the warehouse on 44 Killory Ave.** (Mayan Razor House), is actually owned by the police, but not for the right reasons**.** Seen from the broken cement curbs and potholes of the road, it seems a rather unremarkable building. A second glance, however, reveals the relatively robust security measures, a telltale sign that something is out of place. Inside the dimly-lit building is a treasure trove of evidence from hundreds of cases of police investigations gone bad. It is here that these crooked old-boy cops house anything linking them with suspect mistreatment, police brutality, and even enraged killings on the beat. Stacked and piled with no rhyme nor reason are hundreds of batons, knives, guns, bloodied pieces of clothes, documents, tapes, and whatever else the officer might feel is too hot to have circulating in the City. When anyone who has not been initiated to "the Warehouse" comes in, all the evidence would float in the air as if by invisible hands and bludgeon, stab, shoot, or smother the interloper to death. It is the perfect way to identify and silence any undercover Internal Affairs cop or other unwelcome guests. To become initiated, one must first present the Warehouse with their own incriminating evidence of violence. Recently, however, the senior leadership of an unnamed precinct, who is in-the-know about the Warehouse, is noticing that what was once a solution meant to protect the City's 'finest' is now becoming a problem in and of itself: the Warehouse's bloodthirst is infecting their cops.

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THE SCIENCE HUB is a cluster of privately owned labs and medical facilities. It is here that corporations run intensive research in a race to find the next miracle drug or technological game changer. The staggering worth of the minds working in these facilities combined with the corporations' mutual distrust drives them to keep their own security details as well as some very creative intrusion countermeasures. Each security force not only tackles threats to the company's interest on the premises but also actively investigates, pursues, and shuts down possible risks across the City. One of the most heavily-guarded facilities in the complex is indirectly owned by Helix Labs, a pharmaceutical giant more publicly known through its many subsidiaries, such as Global Genetics or Particle Core. Needless to say, the police have no effective authority here; the scrubbed white walls reek of lawyers and payoffs.



THE UNDERGROUND CLUB is where you want to go to blow off some steam. Set up in decommissioned industrial facilities (like boiler rooms, basements, and emptied out factories) these are spaces of exposed concrete, obscure graffiti, and dark corridors and stairwells that reek of piss and chemicals. Some clubs sport a chain-link fence ring or a fighting pit where combatants – canine, human, or something else – rip each other to shreds or beat each other to a pulp to the roaring cheers of drunk spectators. Others are nefarious drug dens, where the air is laced with smoke and hallucinogens, connected to chill out zones or thudding dance clubs via hidden underground passages. This is where the lowest of lowlifes congregate, criminals of any sort and kind, who use these clubs for recreation as well as for networking. Here, with the right connections, one can buy black market goods, hire a hitman, or send a message to an obscure underworld leader.

One of these establishments, **the Bowl**, is a Rift-only fight club. Nobody wants some boozy spectator to awaken in the middle of the fight, so the jacked-up bouncers at the entrance test for Sleepers (it's easy when you have a big Unicorn horn on your head that only Rifts can recognize for what it is). Below, Rifts gather around a 20-foot-wide and 10-foot-deep concave dip in the bare concrete floor to watch two angry fighters unleash wild and mysterious powers and clash in a deadly no-holds-barred match. Face masks are common, and the crowd loves them; it's the ones that live a lie that have the most pent-up rage.

THE SHOPPING LANE is where professionals go to buy gear. It's a decrepit row of low commercial buildings that light up like a neon christmas tree at night, arrows pointing at divey bars and stripper clubs. Those who can resist the temptations can instead call into one of the many workshops and stores around. These usually have a drab and undistinguished facade, offering second-class equipment and weaponry as the first line of defense against assassin wannabes. The second line of the defense is much less subtle, often involving a Rift of some kind. If your street cred checks out, you'll be invited to the back room, where you'll be offered customized, top-grade, and sometimes extremely illegal gear. Each piece is a work of art, but it's also expensive so you better be able to front the money. Further back or below is the workshop of the truly gifted artisan who makes the gear: a gunsmith, a technician, a mechanic. Hanging on the wall or stashed in a crate in the master craftsman's workshop is the best piece he or she ever made: one of a kind, not for sale, and most definitely a Relic.

Tokugawa Blades is one such store, where master swordsmith **Nico Tokugawa** (Masamune, the legendary swordsmith) sells her wares behind the front of a moneychanger, where her associate **Pravat Khan** (Sleeper) vexes any snoopy intruders. Tokugawa's most praised creation is her own sword, Still, a Relic that supposedly can cut through anything. If you ask Tokugawa, she and Still are the only protection the workshop needs.

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LOCALS

EDDIE DREAMTIME

ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME

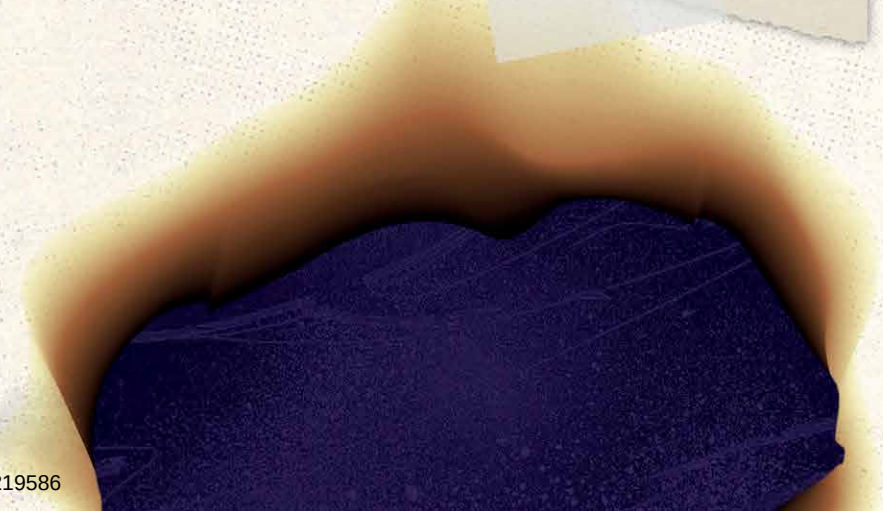
Eddie Dreamtime is the big kahuna at the Bowl. A middle-aged veteran of the Rift underworld of the Zone, Eddie is nonetheless a lean-and-mean fighting machine, well-capable of tackling opponents much bigger and stronger than him. It's not just his top athletic condition; Eddie is a renowned and highly-skilled reality bender and has only ever been overpowered in a fight twice. These days, however, he is more concerned with the operation of his club. He wants Rifts to have a place where they can be themselves without having to hold back or apologize for their abilities, not even to each other. He believes all Rifts are reality benders and that they are limited only by their modern conditioning and indoctrination. According to Eddie, Rifts are meant to shape reality and partake in the recreation of the world. For now, he is content to run the club and give his fellow Rifts a neutral place to blow off steam. Eddie often employs his powers to patch up the loser in his pit fights; it's a part of the agreement. Sometimes, however, the fights are so violent that someone dies and then it's the end of the line for them. It's not like he can't do it, but Eddie just doesn't want to mess with the wrong people. In the current milieu, bringing people back from the dead will mess up his neutrality and pitch him against more than one major power in the City. He's good, but he's not that good.

LILY CHOW

THE PRINCE FROM IRON HANS

Lily Chow is on the run. She has stolen something from the safe in her mother's office – a Mythos – and she's not giving him back. Daughter to a high-flying city official and a corporate executive, Lily always knew her parents were involved in shady business but she never suspected their downtown penthouse was the prison of a remarkable being: Iron Hans. When she first met him, she was horrified; nine-foot-tall and covered in long shaggy hair, she could describe him in no other words save "a monster". But Iron Hans made a deal with her: if she set him free, he would show her the world. Since then, they have been running from her parents, who are trying to get her and Hans back, and shacking in different dumps and abandoned spaces around the Industrial Zone. The iron-skinned magic-wielding churl serves both as a bodyguard and as a big brother for Lily, who is both scared and exhilarated by life in this part of the City. Whenever she needs him, she just calls out his name three times and he appears. Hans got Lily to change her rich downtown garb for jeans, a tee, and a leather jacket, but underneath the outfit she is still just a rich girl in a wild land.

Meanwhile, Lily's parents are desperately looking for her and have hired the best professionals money can buy. The psychological profile on her father's desk says Lily is delusional and schizophrenic; the profiler, a member of an organization called **Mending the Broken** who secretly specialize in Rift psychology, thinks Iron Hans doesn't exist on his own; he's just a projection of Lily's powers created due to Lily's inability to accept her own strength.



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DAISY COLT

SLEEPER

Daisy Colt has been bartending in working-class bars and pubs around the district for over 30 years. Her parents both worked in the factories, as does her brother. A butch hulk of a woman, Daisy brandishes faded tattoos all over her arms and neck, and can outdrink any fool who is willing to part with his money. She knows every bar and club around, as well as any bartenders working here, so when rumors start circulating you can be sure she's already heard about it. Most of this stuff is bullshit, drunken blathering fairy tales that Daisy has learned to filter out. The other stuff is worth money; one, because people who come ask for it really want it, and two, because it's verified information about business that Daisy heard about, but would rather not get involved in. She knows big underworld players have operations running in every other abandoned space in the district, but she plans to steer well away from them. Right now Daisy is more focused on the owner of Patrick's Bar & Grille where she works. If that wormy slimeball misses a payday again, she'll punch him in the face and go tend at the place across the road.

COLM "SPIDER" JAMESON

SPIDER GRANDMOTHER

Colm "Spider" Jameson is a bounty hunter who specializes in bringing in wanted Rifts. A little rough around the edges, Spider initially comes across as a brute, which often leads his targets to think they could outsmart him. His biker look, his tattoos, and the sawed-off shotgun he carries around only reinforce this perception. But nothing could be further from the truth. Spider works with alarming cleverness and precision, closing in on his mark in an inward spiral that eventually leaves them nowhere to run. What really makes Spider's face one of the most hated in the Zone is his reputable dreamcatchers: glowing starlight spider patterns he can draw in the air, in the dust on the floor, or even using the nets he shoots from his shotgun which have an effect that is completely unique to him, as far as anyone knows. The dreamcatchers suck out a Rift's ability to express their Mythos powers. Once Spider has a prey in his dreamcatcher, he has been known to decommission their Mythos powers for weeks or even months. This ability has led some fugitive Rifts to consider him too dangerous to live and they react with extreme violence at the mere sight of him. So far, Spider has worked mostly with the police and the court system; he's trying to make a living, nothing fancy. However, his work and especially his abilities have drawn the attention of a number of parties who would love to get a closer look at him. It's just a matter of time until they figure out how to snag him and then the hunter will become the prey.

LISA MONROE

THE BIG BAD WOLF

Lisa Monroe is hungry. A forewoman in one of the district's largest food factories, she has been battling her drive to devour everything edible in sight for over a year now. She has tried to satiate her unstoppable hunger many times. One time she chugged down several dozen gallons of corn syrup from one of the factory tanks (secretly hoping to kill herself); she just passed out and lay there with an inflated stomach for a few hours, and when she was up her stomach was as good as new.

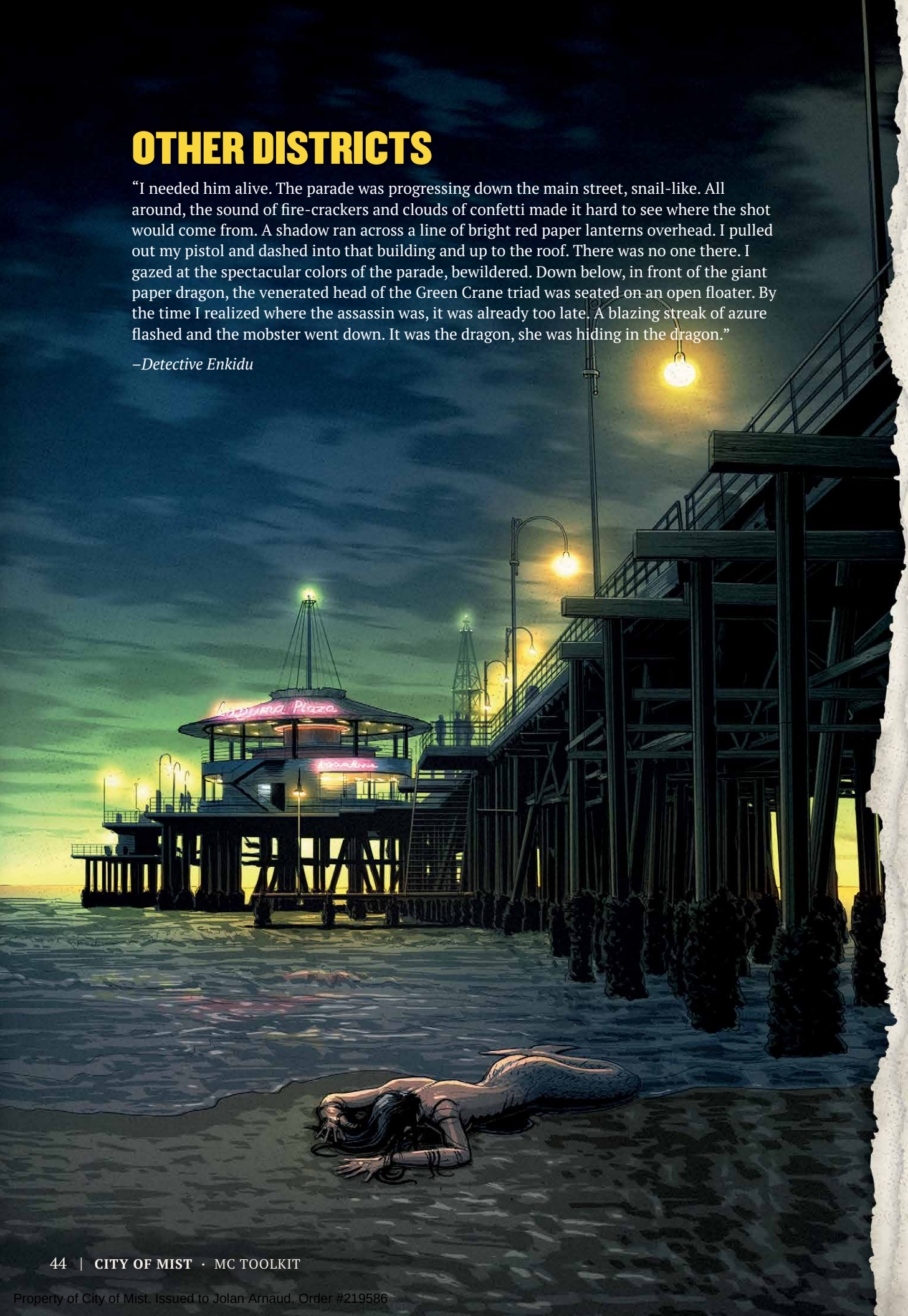
Corn syrup wasn't really cutting it; she knew what she craved. At some point, she couldn't resist any longer and ambushed a fellow worker late at night, by the grain silos. Once she tasted blood and the thrill of a kill, the battle was lost. Lisa gave in to the wolf and, with her newfound sense of smell, she caught a whiff of something she craved even more: Rifts. Old scents like the Boy Who Cried Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, the Huntsman, or the Three Piggies tantalized her taste buds and made her drool over her long yellow teeth more than ever before. All she has to do now is follow her nose.

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OTHER DISTRICTS

"I needed him alive. The parade was progressing down the main street, snail-like. All around, the sound of fire-crackers and clouds of confetti made it hard to see where the shot would come from. A shadow ran across a line of bright red paper lanterns overhead. I pulled out my pistol and dashed into that building and up to the roof. There was no one there. I gazed at the spectacular colors of the parade, bewildered. Down below, in front of the giant paper dragon, the venerated head of the Green Crane triad was seated on an open floater. By the time I realized where the assassin was, it was already too late. A blazing streak of azure flashed and the mobster went down. It was the dragon, she was hiding in the dragon."

–Detective Enkidu



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The City is a bustling metropolitan that is constantly growing and expanding. New neighborhoods are built while others are renovated; some quarters are gentrified while others fall into disrepair. There are numerous little spots in the City, each with its own style and subculture. Here are a few more locations around the City you should check out.

THE ETHNIC BOROUGH

(Examples of ethnic boroughs include Chinatown, Jamaica Town, Japantown, Koreatown, Little Italy, Little Greece, The Spanish Quarter, etc.)

The cultural life in this small residential neighborhood revolves around the traditions and heritage of a specific ethnic group. Often close to the inner City, the streets here are busy and cramped and the buildings are far from new, with some areas well-cared-for and others run-down. Overhead, colorful signs in a foreign language are clumped on top of one another, hidden by national flags and decorations for an upcoming or recent festivity. The smell of mouth-watering signature dishes fills the air and often you can find a nearby open-air market swarmed by locals and visitors alike who are shopping for street food, fresh produce, meats, and delicacies. The ethnic borough is a close-knit community; everyone here knows everyone or knows someone who does.

The ethnic borough is home to a variety of practitioners of the ancient arts, such as healers, fortune-tellers, and witch doctors, sometimes operating in the open and other times only reachable through local social connections. One such practitioner is **Vanessa La Bruja** (Ixchel, Mayan goddess of midwifery and medicine), a young shaman who operates in a small apartment in the borough, shrouded with strange incense and speckled with jaguar icons and carvings. Vanessa mostly helps relieve the local elders of nagging pains but occasionally she gets a real case. She recently treated a juvenile delinquent who was afflicted by a supernatural illness as part of a local gang war. While Vanessa is tempted to investigate the origin of the dark curse, she is also hesitant as her intuition tells her she might be facing more than she can handle on her own.

Preserving the faith system of its ancestors beneath a brittle veneer of modernity, the borough also needs a constant supply of suitable traditional medicinal herbs, good luck charms, tools and symbols of worship, etc. **Wong Lo Trading Company** runs a large store full of everything Asian. Jars of expensive roots, dried leaves, mushrooms, and other ingredients line the dusty shelves along with a staggering array of instruments and decorations: bells, bowls, cauldrons, tea sets, calligraphy brushes, ritual knives, pigment, feathered bone necklaces, crystals, and coins, as well as tapestries, scrolls, tomes, statues, figurines, and much more. If anyone gives the middle-aged owner, Steven Wong, any trouble, the two obsidian Chinthe statues at the entrance (Relics of Burmese guardian lions) will come to life and scare away the intruders – or do away with them.

THE BEACHFRONT

Dark, gray-blue waves billow against the City's shoreline, leaving behind strands of seaweed and the occasional pile of plastic refuse. Sea spray blows into rows and rows of aging hotels, their paint corroded by salt and sand. Every mile or so a boardwalk stretches into the water, covered in electric lights and funfair rides. During the day, surfers brave the rolling waves and speedboats zoom by with skiers trailing behind. After sundown, the black sea is lit up by massive cruise ships making their way to the docks. People come here to relax, take romantic walks at sunset, and have a drink while looking at the misty horizon; sometimes that doesn't go as planned, when skater gangs like the **Junks** (Peter Pan's Lost Boys) or the all-girl **Harpies** (you guessed it) loiter about and disturb the peace.

In the nearby marina, fishing boats and yachts wobble in separate ports, surrounded by seafood restaurants, both traditional and trendy. A luxurious member-only boating club takes up a considerable portion of the beach. Further up the beach, amid the rotting, barnacle-covered posts of a decommis-

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sioned dock, secret trysts take place, sometimes ending with a body washed upon the shore.

All manners of oceanic Rifts operate here, from giant octopus-like monsters to sirens and mermaids. Rifts of marine or journeying Mythoi may also feel an attraction to this place: it's the edge of the City and the beginning of something else. The call of the unknown is strong here, accentuated by the salty air and the cries of the seagulls, and many come here to contemplate their questions. **Heath Lark** (Captain Ahab from *Moby-Dick*) is carefully watching those who come from his regular seat on the beach bar **Nautilus**, with a glass of neat rum in hand. He is seeking recruits for a vendetta against one of the most powerful Rifts in the City, someone who has inflicted an unforgivable grievance upon him.

THE CRIME-RIDDEN SLUM

Police sirens wail day and night in this godforsaken neighborhood. It's all for show; the police have long given up on this community. Gunshots are heard regularly from a few blocks over, and sometimes you can catch sight of armed gangs exchanging live fire on the streets as frightened mothers pull their children closer and run for cover. Local business are all protected by grilles, locks, and bars, but owners still open the door when gangsters want to come in for fear of later retribution. Schools use metal detectors and body searches to curb addiction and violence but still kids manage to smuggle in drugs and weapons. Economically, this place is a black hole, as poverty prevails and the only ones making a buck are criminals that are unwelcome anywhere else; this has the neighborhood on the verge of humanitarian crisis and a subsequent violent intervention by the army. Life in the Blue-Collar Residential can be an uphill battle; here it's a living hell.

Still, those whose hearts are in the right place always find a compassionate way to share life with others. **Sister Mary** (Cinderella's fairy godmother) is a flamboyant and often scantily-clad transgender woman as well as a designer extraordinaire who has set up shop in an abandoned church in the neighborhood. She is rallying the youth of the neighborhood to help her build a factory for a clothing brand, hopefully keeping them out of trouble and creating new opportunities for them. Evoking responses ranging from disgust to amusement among the gangsters, Sister Mary nonetheless commands respect and her church, while open to all, is a gun-free zone. However, her unremitting ideals have recently pitched her in direct conflict with the gangs recruitment efforts, fighting over the future of one **Tony Salucci** (Sleeper) and one **Diamond Davis** (Sylph, the alchemical air elemental), both runners for local gangs. She doesn't want to aggravate the gangs and put her operation at risk, but she just can't give up on these kids.

THE GATED COMMUNITY

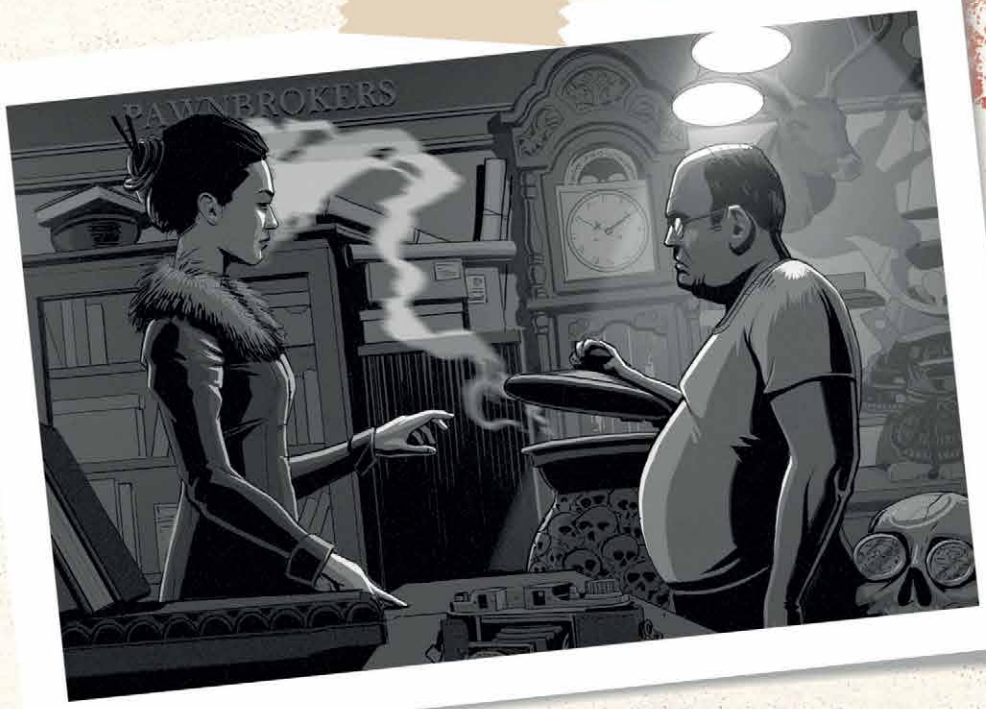
There is a part of the City that is surrounded by a high stone wall. Security cameras along the wall ogle anyone moving in the street below. Behind the wall, you can see treetops swaying in the breeze and hear birds chirping. If you follow the wall, you will likely be stopped for questioning by local security before you even reach one of its few openings. If you're lucky, you'll be able to glimpse some of the driveways and neat lawns through the ornamental golden gate before they drag you away.

The gated community is home to high-value properties, some of the City's finest residences. The affluent residents of this neighborhood work in different areas of the City, but prefer to live and raise their families in a secure environment, shielded from the crime and misery of the general population. Every day parents drive expensive cars through the gates to their workplaces and back. The kids go to a private school inside the community or are driven to their schools in the City. Meanwhile, friendly constables in neat uniforms patrol the streets, a part of a top-grade private security firm employed by the community. Life is good, and every amenity one desires is easily accessible. Isolation, however, is not without a price. Cut off from the rest of the City, people here develop all forms of social alienation and anxiety as the image of the other is gradually demonized, becoming a threat beyond the wall.

Graham Morgan (Sleeper) is the leader (or technically, the CEO) of one of the most luxurious gated communities in the City. He likes it when things

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are quiet, but years on the job proved to him that there is no such thing. The best of the best, he and his team foil attempted kidnappings, burglary, and vandalism on a regular basis. Last month, however, the unbelievable happened: he was outsmarted. He still doesn't know how the kidnapper got in or out. Fortunately for him the kidnapped lady was returned unharmed by some ragtag crew of private investigators from downtown. Still, the incident will very likely cost him his job (a third-party investigation is still underway). Having gone over the details of the event again and again, Morgan now suspects more than just foul play. He's been going outside off-duty and asking around. If he awakens, he may have new ideas about how to protect his community.



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JUST OUT OF TOWN

"Through the door, he asked me 'Are you sure you're not a salesman?' and I mean, look at me – do I look like a salesman in these overalls? I told him no, I was there to check the water main. As soon as I walked inside, something triggered my amphibian senses. Like second sight, I could tell there was a large body of water underneath that innocent-looking white-picket-fence house, but it was contaminated: thousands of little creatures were crawling around it. 'You got termites here?' I asked the old man. He locked the door behind me and grinned. 'Pixies,' he said as he put his spell on me, 'and they're hungry'. God, I hate the suburbs."

–Salamander

The City stretches over miles and miles, a dense concrete jungle of buildings, power cables, and street lamps. Eventually, though, skyscrapers and high-rise projects give way to lower buildings and then to private homes. The sky seems to open up above you and the air seems fresher. You're just far enough to see the City glisten in the night or, during daytime, looming out of the smog in the distance. This far out of the City, you feel like you fell off the face of the Earth. This place feels deserted, like no one ever comes here, even though you know people live here. It's a place in-between, enshrouded in mist and dreamlike. Whatever it is you came here to do, you do it quickly and head back to civilization.

Just-out-of-town locations are special. While technically outside the City, they are just close enough to be incorporated into your story without disrupting the **Nothing Beyond The City** effect (see page 17). They represent a narrative respite (whether forced on the lead characters or voluntary) from the hustle-and-bustle of City life, from the imminent threats hovering over the crew, and from the lead characters' inner struggles. They allow the lead characters to take a sidestep from the main plot and momentarily experience something completely different and reflect on the state of affairs in the series. Still, just-out-of-town locations should not be used regularly in your series or they will lose their appeal and shift the focus of the series away from the City proper. At most, the lead characters should solve a single case here once per season.

SUBURBIA

Precious cookie-cutter houses with white picket fences stand silent in empty circles and estates. In the playground, the swings quietly screech as they pendulate back and forth. The laughter of children is heard all around, but it always seems to come from the next street, out of sight. A doll is lying on the pavement, next to a tricycle. Before nightfall, honest breadwinners drive their cars into their garages and are welcomed into their houses by their loved ones. A dinner is waiting at the table and everyone eats together. Some superficial teenage drama ensues but it quickly blows over. It's an idyllic simple scene not easily found in the City, but it's almost robotic. The people here are polite and kind when they greet visitors, but many City folk can't shake the creepy feeling that suburbanites are playing a scripted role. Could there be skeletons in the perfectly-made wardrobes of this neighborhood, or is it simply that the Mist is flaking here at the edge of town?

Colette Jenkins (Sleeping Beauty) is a suburban housewife whose life is falling apart. A stranger broke into her home while she was alone, an unkempt fugitive in rags who the police later said had escaped from a mental institute. She said Colette had been sleeping for a very long time, that she had to wake up from the dream she was living in. Then, as if remembering all at once what was pursuing her, she took off, leaving both Colette and her glass front door shattered. Since then Colette has been haunted by a disturbing feeling like there's something she forgot to do. She started noticing strange things about the neighborhood, like a black car with tinted windows parking regularly outside her house. For now she is keeping up appearances for her husband and children. She still hopes this will all blow over, even though she knows it won't.

THE CHEAP MOTEL

When people get in trouble in the City, they skip town. But in truth, no one really leaves; life in this City is everything for its residents and sooner or later they all come back. Runaways just need a place to lay low for a while, which is exactly what the cheap motel is for. Often located in a perpetual downpour of rain, the motel can nevertheless be recognized by the flashing roadside neon sign. The apathetic guy or gal at reception has seen it all and without a second glance welcomes the usual suspects: fugitives, vagrants, dead-men-walking. A

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handful of vending machines provide pissy coffee and snacks to keep you company. Other than that there is nothing to do here.

Inside the room there is an unidentifiable strange odor. The mattress is stained, on both sides, with what appears to be dried blood. There are cigarette burn marks on the furniture and the crumbling walls, which are thin enough for you to hear whatever is going on in the next room. The days here are rainy, empty, and boring. Sometimes, time does not seem to go by at all.

Existing in limbo has its advantages. When you're out of time, the past and the future are just as close as the present – and there is someone here who can help you make use of that. **Rodney** (Witch of Endor) can be found in the lobby, strangely illuminated by red lights. A preppy man in his late 20s, Rodney will tell you he is a very old soul. He offers his help to visitors who maybe want to get some closure on their past. For a price, he can conjure anyone you name to appear before you. More interestingly, he can conjure their past or future selves, at your request. Whether these people later have memories of their meeting with you is hard to tell; most people choose to talk to those they'll never be able to see again, or to versions of people who no longer exist or may never exist. It could also be that Rodney is a charlatan who spikes people's drinks with a dangerous psychoactive drug. But hey, if it makes them feel better, he's happy to help.

THE OFF-LIMITS FACILITY

There's a back road that leads out of the City, studded with signs that first warn you not to take any pictures, then not to come near if you are pregnant or have a pacemaker, and finally instruct you to turn your car around. Tunneling through a tall cover of trees, this road ends in a perimeter made of several electric chain link fences, crowned with barbed wire and security cameras. Sometimes military jeeps or slick black government SUVs patrol here, turning back (or bringing in, according to some rumors) any curious individuals who wander around. Those who venture further are taking their lives in their hands.

Nobody knows what is inside the complex. Neither satellites nor any form of airborne reconnaissance can get a visual on this location from above and any city records of it are classified. There is no doubt that something big is happening here; City officials clearly know about this place but keep it under wraps, a sure sign that the true use of the facility is potentially scandalous. Tin-foil capped conspiracy busters have produced some fuzzy photos taken from a treetop of what may be antenna and a dome-like structure, but it's hard to make out the details or ascertain the authenticity of the photos. One fabled brave soul managed to penetrate the perimeter fence while radio broadcasting a report of what she found. She was starting to vaguely describe the second line of defense and some of the visible complex buildings when a shrill scream took over the broadcast. Heaving and shuddering, the courageous interloper was last heard mumbling, "Where is it? Where is it?! This thing, it splits up… there must be at least twenty of them" and then "Oh no–". All recordings of this broadcast have since mysteriously disappeared.

THE MANSION

Sullen bare trees and a high stone wall mark the beginning of the grounds owned by the proprietor of this estate. As you drive by, an unkindness of ravens takes flight; when the feathers settle down, you see an old manor house on the hill. The closer you come to the building, the more you're taken by a strange gut feeling, though you know not why. From the courtyard, the grey mansion seems somber and foreboding. When you knock on the door, a peculiar butler will try to drive you away, kindly or with a death trap, but will eventually show you inside.

Every mansion has an owner, either living or dead. The owner is a unique individual or group: a powerful Rift, the awakened ghost of a deceased Sleeper, a bizarre family of Mythos-worshiping cultists, or a mysterious transcendent entity completely beyond the City's game of sleep and awakening. Whoever the owner is, they have something that cannot be normally obtained in the City, a game changer: knowledge of the origins of a powerful villain, a solution to an impending monumental

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threat, or a Relic that could set things straight. Whether they share it with the lead characters and for what price remains to be seen.

One such mansion, **Starling Manor**, sits atop a hill overlooking a lake. It's owned by the little known but ridiculously rich **Edward Winters** (Sleeper?), once a celebrated filmmaker. Winters' films, while poignant and personal, often broached philosophical and metaphysical questions. Some say he has travelled the world to research the subjects of his films, while others insist he has never left Starling Manor. In old newspaper photos, you can see something truly rare in the cinematographer's eyes: a glint of contentment. And in all of them, in every single photo of him, you will find the same old, dusty typewriter.

THE VILLAGE

On the other side of town, one of the roads leads to a village. As the view changes from industrial to agricultural, the road bends and turns up a small hill until it ends in a little quaint hamlet hidden in a labyrinth of greenery. Stone cottages start few and far between and gradually huddle together as you near the main square. Each of their windows boasts a colorful and well-tended flower box, but still the place looks *wild*. Behind the wooden gates and fences, you can see vegetable gardens and sheds where home-brew alcohol is fermenting. Sometimes you see a sheep, a goat, or a few chickens guarded by an ominous-looking black housecat.

City folk who think suburbanites are weird will find the villagers utterly deranged; they don't even pretend to be normal. Although the village neighbors the City, they seem to have their own dialect, overflowing with words and expressions that mean nothing to City slickers. The attitude towards City folk is a mixture of amusement, suspicion, and superiority; it always feels like villagers are savvy to some profound secret or some obscure mystical truth that City folks are oblivious to. Whenever a City resident walks into one of their drinking holes, they all hush as if they were talking about something urbanites won't understand. When you meet them around the village, they wipe sweat and dirt off their forehead and it's clear they have been toiling to some mysterious end, but they would tell you that they were just having tea and would you like to join them. Something sinister is happening here.

The Woods behind the village are hazy on warm days and misty on cold days, so that you can never quite see what's on the other side. A stream flows nearby, but the gurgle of the water is muffled by the dense foliage. Crows caw from gnarled trees with trunks covered in moss. Some fallen trees have primitive symbols etched on them, while ritualistic fetishes of bones, beads, and bright ribbons hang from branches. Somewhere there lies the **Wishing Well**, older than anyone can recall. What lies within is impossible to describe; it is the heart of the unknowable.

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WHAT THE LEAD CHARACTERS DON'T KNOW YET

It's time to bring you up to speed on what is really happening in the City. Up to this point in this chapter, the City is described from the perspective of the lead characters, relatively new Rifts who are only beginning to discover the secret world around them. At least some of the characters know that there are other Rifts in the City, people like them who have legendary powers. And like the lead character's own powers, those legendary powers are hidden from the larger population by the mystical veil of the Mist. What the characters don't know is that the City is the playground, or warzone, of two types of arcane and timeless forces: the Mythoi and the Mist.

THE MYTHOI, THEIR AVATARS, AND THEIR OPERATIONS

The Mythoi have been using the City as their sandbox for as long as anyone can remember. For as long as the Mist has existed, the Mythoi sought after those precious mystical gateways which allowed them to manifest their stories in the City: the Rifts in the Mist. The Mythoi cultivated their Rifts, calling them to abandon the distraction of ordinary life and open up to the legendary reality beyond the Mist. Every Mythos aspires and conspires (whether consciously or figuratively, no one knows) to elevate its Rift to become its Avatar, its living manifestation in the City. But all this is nothing new. What may be news to you is that some Mythoi have reached their goal a long time ago.

Rifts are not just individuals living in the City; they run the City. A small number of Mythoi have succeeded in cultivating Avatars so strong, that they are practically immortal. These Avatars are dedicated to the mission of manifesting the story of their Mythos in the City over and over again, on every level of existence. The Avatar of Hades holds power of the City underworld and bargains with the dead, or soon to be dead; the Avatar of Ywain fosters true love and brings ruin to false lovers; the Avatar of Peter Pan aspires to set the City free of laws and rules; and so on.

Avatars are not gods. Every Rift, even Avatars, must still conform to the reality of the Mist, so Avatars are always real flesh-and-blood people. The Avatar of Hades, for example, is a renowned mobster, while the Avatar of Peter Pan is a spoiled rich brat. Having said that, the powers of these Avatars extend a great deal beyond the powers of other Rifts, so for all intents and purposes they are indestructible. Some are even able to come back from the dead. The longer an Avatar exists in the City, the deeper his or her power grows and the more ingrained his or her influence is in the tapestry of the City.

Avatars don't do all the work themselves – they have an operation. Over the years, Avatars build organizations that help them promote the agenda of their Mythos. These operations can take any form: a drug cartel, a chain of fast food joints, or a mysterious social movement whose name is whispered on the street. The longer they are around, the deeper these organizations infiltrate the social, economic, and political fabric of the City.

Avatars mostly rule from afar, leaving the dirty work to their minions. Hidden deep in the Mist, Avatars rarely come in contact with Rifts outside their operation; even when they do, they are unlikely to be recognized simply because no one knows what they look like or that they even exist. For the regular Rift on the street, an Avatar is a story, an urban legend about someone powerful behind the scenes. Rifts like the lead characters have no way of ascertaining information about Avatars, not unless they start digging into the Avatar's operation in an investigation that could be the subject of a season or even an entire series. Unless their operation is at risk, Avatars stay focused on the grand scheme of things and their power struggles with the other Avatars and the Gatekeepers (see below).

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This leaves the street-level "free" of their direct influence, and therefore available for the more personal and local cases that the lead characters are involved in, at least at first. This way, the lead characters can make a real impact on the City without necessarily bumping into Avatars, perhaps even without knowing that they interfered with the work of a greater power or organization. Avatars are far too busy in their politics to be bothered with such small incidents; they have an entire operation that can respond *for* them, including other Rifts with varying levels of awareness and power (Legendaries, Borderliners, and Touched) as well as hordes of Sleepers who don't even know who they work for.

Chapter 3: This is MY City! reveals more about the Avatars and their operations, including some sample Avatars, and explains how to create them and use them in a series. The Avatar council known as *the Truth* is described in the *Shadows & Showdowns expansion.*

THE MIST AND THE GATEKEEPERS

Strong as the Mythoi and their Avatars may be, they are still bound by the Mist. Had it not been so, they would have probably turned the City into their canvas and painted a reality as bloody as their ancient tales. According to legend, that's what it was like before the Mist. The Mist prevents this catastrophe by making the larger population oblivious to the Mythoi, averting an awakening on a massive scale. This can in fact help existing Avatars, since as a side effect, the stronger an Avatar is, the more his or her true identity is kept from public knowledge and the deeper the cover the Mist provides to his or her shadow operation. The Mist tolerates this because its top priority is to ward off the Mythoi for the sake of the survival of the City; everything else is secondary.

The agents of the Mist are called the Gatekeepers. No one but the oldest and strongest of Rifts knows of their existence. For those Rifts who have an inkling about the Gatekeepers' purpose, they pose the most terrifying adversary imaginable: one who can make you forget what you are, and with the blink of an eye, doom you to an existence without meaning. Whispered rumors and deranged accounts from centuries past portray them as masters of some ancient form of hermetic magic, but that could all be noise introduced by the Gatekeepers themselves to fool and snare anyone investigating into their origin.

It is unclear whether the Gatekeepers serve the Mist or if they are its makers; their organization, its workings, and its motives are by far the most obscure secrets in the City, given the fact that they can simply make people forget them. If the Mythoi are the underground organizations of the City, the Gatekeepers are its secret government agency. They are the Men in Black (grey, actually), suits working to maintain the status quo using the powers of the Mist: distraction, cover-up, and induced obliviousness. They track down Rifts that draw too much attention or who pose too big a threat to the Mist and seal them, permanently.

The Gatekeepers have a tenuous relationship with Avatars, clamping down with all their might on those who challenge the current order but only gently curtailing the operations of those older and more insidious Avatars. They are planners; they know all too well that some Avatars are even beyond their ability to seal, at least not without risking an open war which will tear the City and the Mist apart. And so, a brittle equilibrium and an intricate political system have formed between the Gatekeepers and the Avatars; this serves as the background of the entire *City of Mist* setting. It's a conspiracy on a metaphysical scale. Needless to say, this state of affairs breeds countless forms of corruption, from the Gatekeeper agent on the street overlooking dangerous Rifts for money to the Gatekeeper leaders and their dealings with the Avatars.

The field units of the Gatekeepers are detailed in Chapter 3: This is MY City! The Gatekeepers organization and the Mist are further detailed in *the Shadows & Showdowns* expansion.

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FORTUNE - TELLER
ANTIQUES
LET IT GO, MR. L'ESTRANGE.
IF YOU TRULY WISH TO UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERY INSIDE YOU, YOU MUST ABANDON YOUR ORDINARY SELF.
LET THE VOID FILL YOU...
"...HUH?"
GLUMP!
HA!
PEOPLE IN THIS CITY WILL BELIEVE ANYTHING.
GET HIS WALLET.



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-- THEY'VE JUST FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING.
AND BY THE TIME I'M DONE HERE, SO WILL YOU.



HOW TO CREATE AND RUN CASES

BEHIND THE SCENES

CHAPTER 2

RUNNING A SESSION

SESSION STRUCTURE . . . . . PAGE 65

- **Session Start:** One player makes the **Voiceover Monologue (Session Start)** move.
- **Play through scenes, downtime, and cutscenes** according to what the lead characters do, according to the case, and according to cinematic considerations.
  - » **Scene:** Follow the scene flow below.
  - » **Downtime**: All players make the **Montage (Downtime)** move.
  - » **Cutscene**: You set the mood, foreshadow, or reveal information yet unknown to the players.
- **Session end:** All players make the **Geek Out During Credits (Session End)** move.

PLAYING A SCENE. . . . . PAGE 67

- **Set the scene:** Narrate the opening shot. You can make a soft MC move.
- **Give the spotlight** to the players by asking: "What do you do?"
  - » **During player spotlight:** Listen and **intrude** when the rules require you to.
  - » **On a miss:** Make a hard MC move.
  - » **After a player move:** Narrate how the scene responds to what just happened. You can make a soft MC move.
- **When everyone is waiting:** Narrate what happens next. You can make a soft MC move.
- **After each MC move or narration:** Pass the spotlight back to the same player, forward to the next player, or generally to the group and ask again "What do you do?"
- **When the scene is exhausted:** Cut to the next scene, downtime, or cutscene.

NARRATION . . . . . PAGE 78

- Emphasize the atmosphere
- Make your characters real and human
- Keep it a mystery
- Ask provoking questions
- Stay consistent
- Make the City feel alive

MC MOVES

MC INTRUSIONS. . . . . PAGE 70

At any point in the game, even when a player has the spotlight, you may intrude to...

- **Translate the story into rules**, e.g., add a story tag.
- **Reveal a custom move** that has been triggered.
- **Ask for more details** about a player's action.
- **Tell a player which player move** their action triggers.
- **Intervene when a player determines Power**, e.g., invoke a weakness tag.
- **Choose, describe, and resolve the outcome of a move**, when the choice is yours or when the player foregoes an option.

THE SOFT MOVES . . . . . PAGE 71

- Complicate Things
- Hit Them After A Fair Warning
- Optional: Activate Their Weakness Tags as Flaws

THE HARD MOVES . . . . . PAGE 73

- Complicate Things, Bigtime
- Deny Them Something They Want
- Make Something Horrible Happen
- Turn Their Move Against Them
- Give a Status
- Reduce or Remove a Status
- Burn a Tag
- Force Them to Choose

ADJUSTING THE CHALLENGE LEVEL . . . . . PAGE 82

- Adjust the severity of statuses
- Adjust the range of actions affected by satuses
- Adjust how statuses are removed
- Apply the Grit Mode or Tag Cap optional rules (Player's Guide, pages 176 and 208)



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WRITING A CASE

1. CREATE THE BACKSTORY . . . . . PAGE 90

? What happened before the crew got involved in the case?

STORY SEED

? RIFT(S): WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS CASE?

- What is the Mythos of the main Rift(s) involved?
- Who is this Rift in her everyday life in the City?
- How and when did this Rift awaken?
- How awakened is this Rift? (Awakening, Touched, Borderliner, Legendary, or Avatar)
- What drives this Rift more: her Mythos or her ordinary life?
- What does her Mythos want from her?
- What is / was her mundane motive?

? THE TRUTH: WHAT CRIME, WRONG, OR PROBLEM IS AT THE CENTER OF THE CASE?

See a list of examples on page 91.

? THEME: WHAT TYPE OF STORY WILL THIS BE?

Scope (personal, neighborhood, city, etc.), common tropes, and format (whodunit, cold case, clock is ticking)

? HOOKS: HOW DOES THE CREW GET INVOLVED?

- How does the crew hear about the case?
- At what point in the progression of events does the crew come in?

DEVELOPMENT

Think of additional major characters and further complications.

DETAILS

Your final backstory should have a **character roster**, a sufficiently detailed account of **the whole truth**, and **the timeline**.

2. CREATE THE BREADCRUMB TRAIL . . . . . PAGE 97

CREATE THE ICEBERG

The case Iceberg is made out of locations and people who lead from **the hooks** to **the truth**. It is divided into **Depths**; the greater the Depth, the closer this location or person is to the truth.

- Break down your backstory into the possible locations and/or characters.
- Place all the Hooks at Depth 0.
- Place the locations directly connected to the Hooks at Depth 1.
- For every other location ask yourself:
  - » How can this location bring the crew closer to the truth?
  - » What follow-up location would the clues lead to?
  - » Is this follow-up location significantly closer to the truth? (If so, it should be deeper down the iceberg).
- Place all the other locations on the Iceberg based on your answers.

CREATE THE LOCATIONS

For each location, create:

- A description
- A short list of characters present there
- A list of clues: physical evidence, information gleaned from characters, observations and deductions, paper-trail, or information obtained by legendary means

3. CREATE THE DANGERS . . . . . PAGE 101

? Who or what could endanger the investigation or interfere with follow-up actions?

See also the Danger creating rules on page 131.

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LET THE GAME BEGIN: THE EXPOSITION SESSION

The Exposition Session (Player's Guide page 43) is where your series is born. As the MC, you have the role of running cases for your group. To do so, you will need to prepare locations, characters, and clues or adapt published materials to your series. You will also become the lead characters' biggest fan, so you'll want to know them well. During the Exposition Session, you will gather all the information you need to start your prep work for the series. Therefore, in addition to directing the conversation, you have several other responsibilities in this session:

1) Don't prepare game content in advance. It's recommended to immerse yourself in books, films, TV series, and comic books of the neo-noir genre. However, this session works best when you, the MC, arrive with no plans about the series. This book contains enough series concept seeds to get the discussion started (see page 46 in the Player's Guide). Furthermore, your group has more than enough creative power to provide everything you'll need. Try collaborating with the rest of the group to create the series's concept and elements, rather than dictating them. Be open to the players' suggestions about the series, hear them out, and suggest counter-ideas. Build upon one another's suggestions. Remember, this is the players' most significant opportunity to influence the direction of the series, since later on they'll mostly be investigating the cases that you'll write.

2) Take an equal part in the discussion about the series. Even though you're the MC, you are a part of the group, which means you should feel free to suggest ideas about the series (just don't come with anything in advance, see point 1). Since you are going to be the 'showrunner' of the series, it's vital that you agree with the concept that is eventually decided upon and be excited by it. Suggest your thoughts and opinions about the characters, their lives, the crew, and the environment in which they operate.

3) Take ownership over the series, for everyone's enjoyment. As the 'showrunner' of the series, you're in charge of directing the flow of this brainstorming session. Make sure the series concept is clear, coherent, and engages everyone. Make sure any new details match the chosen concept and style of play and that its details or ideas don't contradict or conflict with one another. If it appears the group is leaning toward a different direction than originally agreed upon, let them know and adapt the concept as necessary, together.

4) Ask interesting and provocative questions. Help the players create the details of their crew and characters by **asking them for details**. When someone presents a concept or an aspect of their character, help them make it more granular and real by asking questions about it. For example, when a player describes their character as a slob living in a crummy downtown apartment, you can ask questions like:

- Do you have any roommates?
- Who collects the rent? Who pays it?
- What kind of a street do you live on?
- What is the worst thing about your apartment?
- What is crawling in the walls?

If the group decides the characters are all members of an ancient order, you can ask:

- What is the purpose of your order?
- How much do you know about the order's history?
- Who is your mentor or superior within the order?
- Where do you meet with your mentor?
- Are you an independent cell within the order or are you spread out across the organization?

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While anyone can ask these questions as part of the collaborative process, the players are usually busy with creating the details of their characters. Stay attentive to anything that catches your interest, any detail that might seem "missing". Work off your natural curiosity about the characters and the crew. When a player asks you a question about the setting, make a suggestion or turn it back to them:

Player: Is the City located by the ocean?

MC: I don't know — is it?

Player: Yeah, I think it would be best, because my character is based on the Siren Mythos. I need some space to swim in, and boats to sink.

MC: Great. Then oceanside it is.

Shooting questions across the table gives the players great opportunities for honing and developing their ideas. Note, however, that the conversation should stay interesting, so avoid going into *too much* detail. A rough outline with a couple of interesting facts or anecdotes is enough to start the game with. Many things will remain unclear, but that's okay – you can discover them during the game, as explained under Play to Find Out (page 8).

5) Fish for interesting story hooks. The Exposition Session contains a plethora of interesting details that can turn into cases and even entire story arcs. During the session, think like a showrunner who's in charge of planning the plot of the season ahead and write down interesting questions and ideas you may have about each character and the story as a whole. For example:

- When a player shares their Mystery, "How can I return to Neverland?" you can jot down in your notes: "What or where (or who) is Neverland in its modern form? Who knows a way back? Who else wants to get there?"
- When a player shares their Identity, "I'll never sell my store to the syndicate." you might write "What are the syndicate willing to do to get the store? What is the real reason they want it?"
- When the players decide to play a private investigation firm and mention that they have an office, you could make a note of possible story hooks such as "Office space. The building has a middle-aged Sleeper caretaker on the verge of awakening. Every time they do something unusual in the building they bring him closer to becoming a Rift. Is he going to be their arch-nemesis? What is his Mythos?"

These **story seeds** will later serve you in writing or adapting the cases and story arcs for the series.

6) Take notes, take a ton of notes. As the 'showrunner' of the game, you should have all the details about the lead characters, any non-player characters involved, locations central to the series, etc. Write down important ideas, names, and facts. Throughout the Exposition Session, note down ideas about the future of the series, such as concepts for villains, possible plot developments, etc. Read more about how to organize your notes into categories (burning questions, story elements, plot ideas, and style guides) using the Series Resources Sheet under Designing a Series (page 104).

At the end of the session, make a copy of each of the player characters' themes and the crew theme for yourself. Fill out the MC Tracking Sheet at the end of the book, which will help you keep a handle on the game elements that you can use, such as weakness tags, Mysteries, and Identities.

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RUNNING A SESSION

Your group's session is where it all happens: the cameras start rolling and the lives of the lead characters become real, for a while. They walk the dark rainy streets of the City and follow a trail of evidence to the answers they seek: the truth about crime, corruption, and the wrongdoing of men and gods, ordinary people and legendary powers. They protect a vulnerable witness, exchange words and blows with people of influence and their henchmen, and then discover they were betrayed when the witness turns out to be the Rift behind it all. And by the time the magic of Rifts is finally exposed, it is usually too late for anything but the most desperate of measures.

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While the players portray the lead characters, you as the MC are the world around them: you set the scene with descriptions of dramatic locations; you describe the actions of all other characters (villains, witnesses, allies, and bystanders); you provide the clues that drive the case forward; and you use all of the above to deliver shocking story developments. This section explains the role of the MC during a session, focusing mainly on the MC's role as a narrator and related rules. For more information on the other MC roles, see page 7.

PREP & GEAR

To run a session of *City of Mist*, you will need a **case** for the crew to investigate (you can either write your own case or use a published one). A single case could take one or more sessions to complete, depending on how involved it is and on the pace of your game.

You will also need a copy of the Player's Guide as well as this book as reference, at least two six-sided dice, some *City of Mist Tracking Cards*, your copy of the *MC Tracking Sheet* for this series, and markers, pens, or pencils. The players will need their character and theme cards (crew, extra, etc.) as well as a copy of the *Player Moves Sheet* each.

Some scrap paper can be good for taking notes and doodling location maps. Alternatively, you can use the illustrated *City of Mist Location Maps* with some tokens.

THE CASE

A **case** is a playable investigation. It contains the story elements and details you need to run a session or several sessions of the game. Think of a case as a narrator's toolbox: it has compelling dramatic **locations** where you can set your scenes, **characters** with different agendas and motives that you can populate your scenes with, a detailed **backstory** that connects all these characters and locations, and lists of individual **clues** that can lead the crew to a cinematic climax: a shocking discovery, a gut-wrenching dilemma, or a clash of mythical forces.

Your role as the narrator is to use the different components of the case to create the scenes the lead characters star in:

- set the scenes based on the case's **locations**
- portray the **characters** present at those scenes, describing what they do and say and how they respond to the lead characters' actions
- when the players **Investigate** and spend Clues, answer their questions with the **clues** given in the case

After the lead characters exhaust one location, they move to the next, playing through different scenes (that you narrate). With every scene, they start putting together the clues and crack the case, until eventually they reveal the sordid truth, confront the villain, etc. If you're running a series, the aftermath of one case could have clues that lead to the next case, and so on.

IMPROVISING

A good case covers most of the locations, characters, and clues needed to complete the investigation. However, since *City of Mist* is an open-ended game, sometimes the players want their characters to go to places that are not given in the case, meet characters who are not described in the case, or investigate avenues that do not have clues in the case. When this happens, you refer to the **backstory**, which describes the events that took place before the investigation (e.g., a heinous crime committed by a Rift). Based on the backstory, you can come up with new locations, characters, and clues that will complete the missing parts and connect it back to the core of the case. Sometimes you will need to improvise small details, like the name of an unimportant character, and sometimes you will need to improvise entire locations and scenes. This can be done with the help of the players.

DANGERS IN THE CASE

Non-player characters, objects, places, and forces which pose a threat to the crew or their investigation are called **Dangers**. As part of their investigation of the case, the lead characters may get into trouble and face different Dangers. The case describes these challenges in game terms, including what sort of statuses they cause, what special moves they have, etc. The rules for using Dangers in the game are explained in Chapter 3: This is MY City!

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CONSIDERING THE SERIES

Some story elements, like characters and locations, recur throughout the series. This includes Defining Relationships, Allies, Bases, Nemeses, and characters appearing in tags; it may also include recurring enemies of the crew, characters from the crew members' private lives, the crew's regular meeting places or haunts, an employer or mentor, Rifts the crew has encountered before, Enclaves controlled by powerful players in the City, shady organizations, familiar faces in the neighborhood, and more.

In addition to all this, the lead characters have ongoing investigations that may span an entire season or series: their personal Mysteries, their crew and extra theme Mysteries (if any), and any other residual questions from previous cases, or questions related to a major story arc. Some of these investigations may receive little airtime in each session – perhaps just a short scene or a reference during downtime – but they build up in the background of the series until they are ready to pop.

While the crew is working on cracking a case, elements from the series may become involved. You can use such elements in the scenes you initiate and in the story developments you choose, just as you would use elements from the case. Whenever the text below refers to decisions based on the information in the case, it refers also to materials belonging to the series as a whole. In other words, even if series elements are not specifically written into the case you are playing now, you can still introduce them in your sessions. This allows you to adapt the case to the series. You can, for example:

- Make a Nemesis show up in an unrelated scene and attack a lead character at the least convenient time.
- Have a recurring character of a police inspector show up in every session, slowly beginning to suspect the crew's true nature.
- Bring back a petty crook that the crew acquitted from murder in a previous session to help them in this session.
- Weave an organization central to a player character's Mystery into the case, as a third party with limited involvement.

When you design a series, you collect all the necessary materials and list them in your Series Resources Sheet. During the session, you can refer to your Series Resources Sheet for ideas on what story elements and plot twists to introduce. Read more about collecting materials for a series under Designing a Series (page 104).

CONSIDERING THE LEAD CHARACTERS' DEVELOPMENT

City of Mist's character development system allows players to put their characters through trying decisions and dramatic life events (see Dramatic Moments, page 248 in the Player's Guide). However, the players depend on you to provide them with interesting opportunities to do so within the story. On your part, this mostly boils down to creating the conditions that will allow them to trigger the move **Make a Hard Choice** (page 254 in the Player's Guide). Sometimes, you also take part in creating the details of the answers they find to their Mysteries with **Finally, Some Answers** (page 251 in the Player's Guide).

Make a Hard Choice happens when a character has to choose between any one of her Mysteries or Identities (including crew and extra themes) and something else (which may also be a Mystery or an Identity).

To incorporate **Make a Hard Choice** in your game, follow these guidelines:

- **Plan it:** Before a session begins, choose one player character to focus on this session and plan how she *might* be forced to **Make a Hard Choice**. Decide which Mysteries or Identities you are going to try to trigger and what situations you will use to do so. Pick a new character in every session so you keep cycling through everyone in the crew.
- **Seize it:** During the session, check the *MC Tracking Sheet* (which lists all the PC's Mysteries and Identities) whenever you think a situation may evolve into a hard choice for one of the player characters. If you spot an opportunity, take advantage of it and change your narration decisions to steer the situation there.

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- **Discuss it:** At the end of the session, when you **Geek Out During Credits (Session End)**, listen to the players describe how they see the evolution of their characters and ask them what's most interesting to them to explore next time.

Remember that you cannot trigger **Make a Hard Choice** nor can you create a situation that would compel a player to do so. This aspect of the game's rules is entirely in the hand of the players. Players will probably act differently than what you expected (players always do). Instead of trying to force the players into dramatic moments, allow them to choose if they want to take it or leave it and continue with the game. Instead of planning the outcome of a character's dramatic moment, plan a dilemma with several possible outcomes without knowing what the player will choose. Allow yourself to be surprised.

You can only help the players make **Make a Hard Choice** by creating interesting dramatic moments and dilemmas in which they can use the move. Such moments can include:

- Occurrences in the character's **personal life competing with her legendary life**
- **A deadlock situation** where two or more of the character's commitments or liabilities conflict
- **A dark or indecent proposal** by a non-player character offering to promote one theme of the character at the cost of betraying another or offering an appealing reward in exchange for betraying one of her themes
- **A forced choice**, whether orchestrated by someone who wants to hurt the character or make her grow, or completely accidental, the result of an unlucky (or lucky) turn of events

Alice the MC is preparing to start a session with the pond crew. She picks Sullivan as the character she will focus on this session and reviews his Mysteries and Identities. She comes up with a possible conflict between his Identity "The people of this neighborhood deserve to know" and the crew Identity "Get to the bottom of the pond." She plans to introduce an informant who can give the crew some valuable information about the pond only if they promise never to go public with it. Accepting the offer would go against Sullivan's reporter Identity, while rejecting it would go against the crew Identity.

During the session, Lamar, who plays Sullivan, may or may not bite on this scenario. He could make use of the dilemma to advance his character's story or, conversely, say that Sullivan doesn't mind promising not to go public because he plans to do it despite his promise to the informant (in which case he is lying and may be **Sneaking Around**). Alice is open to whatever comes; she only plans to put Sullivan in an interesting situation and let Lamar take it from there.

THE SESSION STRUCTURE

A game session of *City of Mist* is played as follows:

- **The session begins** with the **Voiceover Monologue (Session Start)** move.
- **Play through scenes, downtime, and cutscenes** according to what the lead characters do, according to the case, and according to cinematic considerations.
  - » **When you play a scene**, follow the scene flow below.
  - » **During downtime**, have everyone make the **Montage (Downtime)** move. Then move to the next scene or cutscene.
  - » **In a cutscene,** use dramatic flair to foreshadow, to set the mood, or to reveal to your group information yet unknown to the characters. Then move to the next scene or downtime.
- **The session ends** when you're almost out of time, when it's a good place to stop, or when the case is concluded. Have everyone make the **Geek Out During Credits (Session End)** move.

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INITIATING SCENES

As the narrator of the game, you declare when scenes, cutscenes, and downtime start and end.

At the beginning of the session or **whenever a scene concludes** and everyone is looking at you to drive the story forward, you can (a) ask the players where their characters would like to go next or where they are likely to be, (b) suggest a few scenes and let them pick, or (c) initiate a scene you already had in mind, telling the players where their characters are at the start of the scene. Alternatively, you can start describing a cutscene or declare some downtime.

Many times the decision of what comes next is in the hands of the players: if they go after the crooks, an action scene starts; if they go home to rest, it's downtime; if they prefer to ask around the crime scene, it's an investigation scene, and so forth. Sometimes, though, it's not up to the players. If a character was taken captive, you can initiate a scene where she's being held, etc.

THINK CINEMATIC: COLD OPEN

A "cold open" is a dramatic opening in a TV show, movie, or comic book, designed to set the tone for the rest of the story and to entice the audience to continue watching or reading. You can use a cold open in your sessions in two ways, either as a scene or a cutscene, depending on the mood you're aiming for.

When you start a session with a **cold open scene**, your narration joins the characters as they are already in the middle of an action or drama scene: a fight, a predicament, a dilemma. This situation should be a plausible result of events that happened in the last session or a flash forward to the future of the characters. It could also be a dream or a vision that you play out as a normal scene. Ask yourself:

- **? WHAT SITUATION WOULD MAKE FOR THE MOST DRAMATIC OPENING?**
- **? WHAT MOMENT IS THE BEST MOMENT TO COME IN?**

A cold open scene naturally makes assumptions about actions the characters have taken to put themselves in this situation. Try to minimize these assumptions, work them out with your players, or get them to give you a *carte blanche* to do whatever is coolest. At the end of the cold open scene continue the story as usual, or, if it was a flash forward, return to the point in the story where you left off.

When you start with a **cold open cutscene**, you describe a short scene in which the lead characters are not present. Ask yourself:

- **? WHAT CAN I REVEAL TO THE PLAYERS THAT WILL PIQUE THEIR INTEREST WITHOUT SPOILING THE INVESTIGATION?**

While a cold open scene opens the episode with a bang, a cold open cutscene can be used to create suspense or evoke a specific emotion.

> Alice the MC wants to give the episode a creepy opening. Knowing that the case includes the murder of a young woman by something that came out of the pond, she decides to start with a cold open cutscene that will set the tone for the session and provide a bit of foreshadowing. Without revealing too many details, she describes a young woman being followed by something or someone as she walks by the pond park after dark. The woman looks over her shoulders nervously, but she can see nothing; all she can hear are occasional squishy footsteps, as if someone was walking in shoes full of water. Alice plays a suspenseful tune in the background as she describes this. When the cutscene ends, she cuts over to the characters sitting in Louis' diner, hearing the murder called out on Det. Enkidu's radio.

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Note that while players mostly have control over where their characters go, you have control over *what they find there.* For example, the lead characters could be going to the house of a witness to get information, but you can decide that the witness is already dead, revealing a new threat and branching off to a side investigation.

The decision on what scenes to introduce or what to introduce into a scene is based on the actions of the lead characters, the information in your case (e.g. what is found at a specific location or a character following the crew), **and your cinematic considerations.**

Once a scene started, it can go in any direction. Both you and the players can take actions that change the nature of a scene: a wild car chase can turn into an investigation if the fleeing vehicle crashes into a lamppost and a conversation can easily become a fight if someone gets aggressive. However, a scene can never turn into a downtime or a cutscene.

PLAYING THROUGH SCENES

Once you have the location and the time of the scene established, play the scene out as follows:

- **Set the scene:** narrate the opening shot. What do we see? What does the location look like? What is the atmosphere? Who is there and what are they doing?
- **Give the spotlight to the players** by asking "What do you do?"
- **When the players have the spotlight**, listen and **intrude** when the rules require you to.
- **When one of the players misses a move**, make a **hard MC move** and narrate it.
- **After each player move**, or **when everyone is looking at you, waiting**, narrate how the scene responds to what just happened or what happens next. At your option, and given cinematic considerations, make a **soft MC move**.
- **After each MC move or narration**, pass the spotlight back to the same player, forward to the next player, or generally to the group and ask again "What do you do?"
- **When the scene is exhausted**, cut to the next scene, downtime, or cutscene.



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THINK CINEMATIC: WHAT SHOULD COME NEXT?

Deciding on the contents of the next scene is a cinematic decision that you'll make several times every session. Even if you don't decide where the characters go next, you can decide what they find there, keeping it plausible within the story and without taking away from the experience of the players. For example:

> Jerry, Megan, and Lamar decide their characters are going to the apartment of a suspect in their case, a dangerous Rift. While Alice the MC doesn't know what the characters will do, she can speculate that if the suspect is at home, the scene would quickly escalate into a fight or a chase. However, if he's not at home, the scene could involve a tense and stealthy investigation.
>
> Since the characters don't know whether the suspect is at home, either option is plausible. Alice the MC can choose between the two based on cinematic considerations, because nothing else is forcing her hand. Had the players chosen to stake out the apartment until the suspect arrives, Alice would have had to work with that.

When you think about the next scene you want to initiate, consider the entire session as an episode of your TV show or an issue of your comic book, and ask:

? WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR? WHAT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO WATCH NEXT?

Use your answers to choose the next scene. For example:

> We just concluded a long fight scene. Another clash could be boring.
>
> We spent the last two hours of the session investigating. It's time for an action scene!
>
> We haven't touched base with the character's private lives. The next scene should include one of their supporting characters.
>
> No Mythos powers have been activated in this session yet. Better introduce a Rift into the next scene.
>
> Things have been developing quite linearly. It's time for a shocking turn of events.
>
> The last hour has been an emotional rollercoaster. It's time for some downtime where the characters and the players can digest recent developments.

Next, decide how to implement your choice. Ask yourself:

? WHAT ELEMENTS CAN I USE TO SET UP THE NEXT SCENE?

To carry out the next scene based on your cinematic considerations, you can use locations, characters, and Dangers from the case; you can conjure up recurring characters from the series like Defining Relationships and Nemeses (or any supporting characters); or you can improvise, as long as your improvisation is consistent and plausible considering all that happened so far in the story.

THINK CINEMATIC: AAAND… CUT!

To CUT means to switch between two occurrences happening in parallel or one after the other. It's a cinematic device you can use to build suspense and create that specific cinematic (and especially *noir)* aesthetic in your story.

CUT OUT OF A SCENE

You can declare the end of a scene abruptly, switching sharply to the next scene for dramatic effect. This can be appropriate after an emotional, comic, or shocking moment takes place, narrated either by you or one of the players.

> **Jerry (playing Det. Enkidu):** … and I say to Gilgamesh, "I'm sorry, friend… but the next time I see you, I am going to kill you." And I walk out of his office into the dark, rainy night.
>
> **Alice the MC:** Aaand… Cut!

The scene ends when you say CUT. Any player who wants to take further actions should do so in the next scene or downtime. For this reason, this technique should be used elegantly, and with care. If you

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keep cutting out of scenes before players take all the actions they want to take in the scene, you'll only frustrate them. As a soft alternative to CUT, you can also choose to FADE OUT of a scene. FADE OUT is played out like a CUT, but makes for a more mellow transition, which evokes a sentimental effect.

CUT INTO A SCENE

When you cut out of a scene, aim to describe the next scene in a way that creates contrast or a relation between the two scenes, producing a dramatic effect. For example, you can cut between a violent scene to a peaceful scene, between one crew member to the other crew members who are elsewhere, or between two related scenes whose connection you want to emphasize.

Jerry (playing Det. Enkidu): … and I say to Gilgamesh, "I'm sorry, friend… but the next time I see you, I am going to kill you." And I walk out of his office into the dark, rainy night.

Alice the MC (cutting to a cutscene): Aaand… Cut. We cut to a glimmering white corporate conference room, its walls covered with engravings of winged lions with human faces. Seated in silvery executive chairs are the council of the Annunaki. An elderly woman in a white sari speaks out, "it's time to put an end to Enkidu and her companions. She should have died when we commanded so. Now, they must all bear the consequences of defying the gods."

CUTTING BETWEEN PARALLEL SCENES OR DIFFERENT ACTIONS IN THE SAME SCENE

When the crew splits up, you can cut back and forth between the different scenes they are involved in. This keeps the tensions high and prevents players whose characters are not in the scene from waiting too long between actions.

Before leaving a scene, make sure the players of the current scene got enough spotlight to advance their scene. Then, consider the right moment to cut over to the next scene. One recommended option is to cut in the middle of a player move, after Power was calculated but before the dice are rolled. It leaves players on edge in anticipation to the result – but don't wait too long before returning the spotlight to them. Another good option is to cut away from a player right after you narrate a dramatic development, e.g., after an MC move.

This technique also works when implemented within a single scene. If the lead characters are dealing with different threats or challenges, you can go back and forth between the characters to create a more dynamic sequence, and keep the spotlight moving. This produces the effect of cutting between different shots.

Post-Mortem and Kitsune are fighting off a monstrous shark-like Rift on the deck of a rusty docked ship, while Flicker is searching the cargo hold for an important crate. The beast has Kitsune pinned, so Post-Mortem drops into a firing position and takes aim with her sniper rifle.

Grace (playing Post-Mortem): I want to take out sharky. Putting all my tags and statuses together, I have a Power of 4!

Matt (playing Kitsune): This better work, or he'll snap my neck like a matchstick.

Grace: I say on the radio, "I have the target in my sight. Going to take the shot." I squeeze the trigger.

MC: Aaaand…. Cut. Let's see how Flicker is doing in the belly of the ship. Flicker, you hear a shot from above, but you don't have the time to concentrate on that now — despite what you thought, it looks like you're not alone down there...

Players: !!!

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WRAPPING UP SESSIONS AND CASES

A session ends when you're almost out of time, when it's a good place to stop, or when the case is concluded. The end of a session is like the end of an issue of a comic book or an episode of a TV show. It may or may not be the end of the case, and it can end with any sort of final moment: a discovery that sheds a new light on the investigation, a solemn moment where the heroes contemplate the meaning or meaninglessness of life, or a cliffhanger waiting for the next session to be resolved. In addition, it may or may not be the end of the case. Finish off with a CUT or a FADE to the credits, and let the players know the session ended. Then have all the players make the **Geek Out During Credits (Session End)** move.

When a case concludes, play through some resolution scenes or downtime, showing how the characters emerge from recent events. Perhaps they return to their loved ones, happy to be back but with a heavy heart over what they saw. Maybe they continue to investigate, driven to discover the truth even more than before, etc. Narrate the aftermath of the investigation and the events that followed: the conclusion of the threads that were tied up, the state of those involved, the implications for the City. Highlight the threads that were not solved, and maybe finish with a cutscene building on those loose ends and foreshadowing things to come later in the series.

MC ACTIONS DURING A SCENE

There are three types of actions you can take during a scene, each with its own timing and rules:

MC intrusions are actions you take when a player has the spotlight.

Soft MC moves are actions you take when you have the spotlight, at the beginning or end of a scene, and between player spotlights.

Hard MC moves are actions you take when a player misses a player move or when other rules allow you to do so.

MC INTRUSIONS

The rules require that you intrude into a player's spotlight in a number of situations:

TRANSLATING STORY INTO RULES

At any point in the game, when something happens in the story but is still not reflected in the rules, you can introduce new story tags to reflect it (remember to set their duration, as explained under Story Tags, page 212 in the Player's Guide). For example:

> When the MC describes a scene in a collapsing underground temple, she introduces the temporary story tags *falling debris* and *unstable ground*.

> When the lead characters finally persuade Old Yarna to give them a charm, the MC grants them an ongoing story tag *charm of protection*.

You can also give a willing player a status, Clues, or Juice to reflect a development in the story, although these should usually only be generated as a result of a player move, a hard MC move, or the other specific rules.

TRIGGERING MOVES

- When a player names a move without describing an action, get him to describe his action by asking "Okay, but what do we see?"
- When a player takes action that triggers a player move, but doesn't name the move, ask if he's making a move, e.g., "Are you **Investigating**?" "Are you **Making a Hard Choice**?"
- When a player takes action that triggers a **custom move** or when a custom move is triggered by circumstances in the story, tell the players what move was triggered and read the move out loud. (Read more about custom moves in Chapter 3: This is MY City!)

DETERMINING POWER

When a player makes a Core Move and is determining his Power:

- If necessary, rule which tags can or cannot be invoked.
- At your option, invoke weakness tags.
- If necessary, rule which statuses apply to the action.

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DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF MOVES

- **MC choice**
  When the outcome of a player move requires the MC to choose from a list or give the player a choice, you do so and narrate the outcome. See examples under the player moves **Investigate**, **Sneak Around,** and **Take The Risk**. This applies also when you control the character making the choice, for example under the move **Convince**.
- **A player foregoes a move option**
  When a player makes the moves **Go Toe to Toe** or **Hits With All You've Got**, after they choose, you narrate what happens based on the options *they didn't choose* and give them a status if appropriate (they have the option to **Face Danger**, if they can).
- **A player asks a question**
  When a player asks a question about the scene, describe what is easily perceptible or knowable to them or ask them to **Investigate** and spend a Clue. When a player spends a Clue to ask a question, you answer his question according to the rules (which determine what kind of answer you must give), according to the case, and according to what you wish to reveal at this point, as explained under Clues (page 227 of the Player's Guide).

MC MOVES

Your moves represent story developments that you can introduce at specific points. Each move describes a different type of development or a different application of the rules (e.g., give a player character a status or burn one of her tags). The exact nature of a story development represented by a move is up to you: you choose it based on the current situation in the scene, the information given in the case, and your cinematic considerations.

Hard MC moves are dire complications and predicaments; you can only make hard moves when a player scores a miss (six or less) on a player move, or elsewhere where the rules say so specifically. Note that this does not apply to the player move **Face Danger**, which, when missed, does not trigger a hard MC move.

You can make **soft MC moves** casually as you are narrating, e.g., when there is a pause in the conversation or in between player moves. There is really only one soft move: **Complicate Things**. The other soft moves allow you to make a hard move when you would normally only be able to make a soft move, that is, without waiting for a player to miss a player move.

THE SOFT MOVES

- Complicate Things
- Hit Them After A Fair Warning
- Optional: Activate Their Weakness Tags as Flaws

THE HARD MOVES

- Complicate Things, Bigtime
- Deny Them Something They Want
- Make Something Horrible Happen
- Turn Their Move Against Them
- Give a Status
- Reduce or Remove a Status
- Burn a Tag
- Force Them to Choose

THE SOFT MC MOVES

COMPLICATE THINGS

You introduce a new problem into the story. As of now, this problem is not a burning one, but it's an opening for trouble: if mishandled or neglected, it can evolve into a significant threat. Such complications are always an obstacle or a threat on the way to the lead characters' goals: information, friendship, victory, survival, moral integrity, obtaining an item, keeping their Identities intact, etc. Overcoming this new obstacle usually requires at least one successful player move.

Obstacle in the investigation: Kitsune and Post-Mortem sneak into the morgue to take a look at the body of a high-profile businessman who was murdered. As they slip by the guards and into the refrigerated room, the MC lets them know the specific fridge they want is locked with a padlock.

Obstacle to secure an item: Flicker and Mitosis are in the office of a renowned art collector, trying to convince him to lend them a specific Polynesian Tiki mask they need to fight an insane

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Rift. The MC, playing the collector, says "The mask is a unique artifact, my friends. It will cost you a great deal, in cash or in services."

Threat to survival: Declan L'Estrange and Excalibur are in the sewers, standing over the carcass of a monstrous creepy crawler they have just slain, with great effort. The MC lets them know that they hear the sound of many more crustacean legs tapping on the walls of the sewer tunnel. Soon the place will be overrun.

Threat to Identity: Salamander, the friendly neighborhood plumber, has the Identity "I need my job to survive." As he's been out all day fighting crime with his crew, the MC says his boss called him and left a message: "Hey, where are you? We have a burst pipe on Fifth street. I need you here."

HIT THEM AFTER A FAIR WARNING

If the characters ignore or neglect an approaching threat for long enough, you can make a hard move against them instead of a soft move to reflect the threat becoming a reality. This assumes that you let the players know about the approaching threat using **Complicate Things**. When you play **Hit Them After a Fair Warning**, you don't have to wait for the players to miss a move; you can play it whenever you have the spotlight.

Threat to survival: When Declan L'Estrange and Excalibur continue to investigate the carcass of the creature they slew, ignoring repeating signs of its approaching kin, the MC narrates how the creatures pour from every direction and **Gives Them a Status** *overrun-2*.

Threat to Identity: If Salamander neglects to talk to his boss and continues to ignore his messages, the MC can narrate another message where his boss makes an ultimatum, **Forcing Him to Choose.**

The number of warnings you give the players with **Complicate Things** before **Hitting Them After a Fair Warning** can vary. Depending on your cinematic considerations and the pace of the game, you can go for shock and hit your players with a hard move after even a single warning, or spread it over several warnings, allowing the players time to handle other threats or creating a suspenseful atmosphere of something approaching. However, if you plan to hit them with a hard move, make sure your narration of **Complicate Things** divulges the severity of the situation. In other words, this move requires a fair warning, as the name denotes.

The use of this move does not have to be limited to a single scene; it can spread over several scenes or even sessions. For example:

Alice the MC has been warning the Lakeside Drive crew about a series of arsons around the neighborhood. Every session, someone from the crew hears of another place going up in flames. However, having their hands full, the characters never get around to investigating the arsons. After a few sessions, the MC starts the session by **Hitting**



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Them After a Fair Warning: she makes the hard move **Give a Status**, imposing an *in-flames-5* status on the crew's meeting place: Louis' diner!

OPTIONAL: ACTIVATE THEIR WEAKNESS TAGS AS FLAWS

If your group is using the optional rule Weakness Tags as Flaws (see page 209 in the Player's Guide), you can use a soft move to invoke a character's weakness tag as a flaw. This allows you to then make a hard move against her without waiting for a missed roll. The player marks Attention on the theme to which the weakness tag belongs.

The crew is investigating a public crime scene in a plaza, surrounded by hundreds of bystanders, several police squads, and floodlights. Mitosis, the growth-covered giant freak, walks onto the crime scene together with the rest of the crew, wearing a great yellow rain cape. However, Mitosis has the weakness tag *monstrous* and the MC seizes the opportunity and makes a soft move, invoking it as a flaw. The player marks Attention and the MC makes the hard move **Complicate Things**, **Bigtime:** "It's the killer, he's a freak!" someone shouts, and the plaza descends into mayhem as many of the bystanders are fleeing, others are attacking Mitosis with cups of coffee and water bottles, and the police edge closer to detain the suspicious hulk.

THE HARD MC MOVES

When a player misses a move, things go south for the crew: you make one or more of the MC hard moves. The consequences can affect the character that missed the move, one or more of her crewmates, the entire crew, or other characters and objects in the scene. While most of the time a single hard move is quite enough, you are not limited to just one hard move per missed player move. The more hard moves you make, however, the more extreme the consequences; make sure you do not frustrate your players with consequences too grave for every missed move.

COMPLICATE THINGS, BIGTIME

You introduce a new crisis into the story or escalate an existing problem into a crisis. The crisis is a real and immediate threat to the lead characters; it can cost the characters a great deal in the very near future. This crisis can affect the wellbeing of the lead characters, their lives, characters around them, the course of their investigation, the state of things in the City, etc. Mitigating the crisis usually requires several successful player



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moves and/or forces the players to sacrifice game resources (e.g., mark Fade or Crack, burn tags, spend Juice, etc.).

Kitsune and Post-Mortem sneak into the morgue to take a look at the body of a high-profile businessman who was murdered. As they sneak by the guards, Kitsune slips (missing his move) and the guards spot them. The MC tells the players the guards set off the alarm, calling for reinforcement from the nearby station. Soon the police will barricade and then storm the morgue.

Declan L'Estrange and Excalibur are in the sewers, standing over the carcass of a monstrous creepy crawler they have just slain, with great effort. Declan tries to **Investigate** the dead monster and misses the move. The MC tells them the creature thrashes one more time, hitting the floor of the tunnel with immense force and collapsing it beneath them. The two crash into a cistern beneath the tunnel. As the pair dust themselves up, they find themselves in a nest swarming with the creature's spawn!

Sullivan and his lover Margo Falls are being held at gunpoint in the metalworks factory by his ex-partner, Ale Sánchez. Sullivan tries to disarm Sánchez by **Going Toe to Toe** but misses. The MC says that while Sullivan gets the gun, Sánchez knocks Margo out of balance and holds her over the railing, above a giant glowing pot of molten steel. "One more step, Sully, and she's fried!"

DENY THEM SOMETHING THEY WANT

You declare that something that the characters want is no longer within their reach, at least not within the scope of the current scene. For example, a witness could get away, an item could be stolen, or a course of action could be revealed as dead-ended or impossible.

Denying an item: Flicker and Mitosis are in the office of a renowned art collector, trying to **Convince** him to lend them a specific Polynesian Tiki mask they need to fight an insane Rift. When Flicker misses the roll, the MC, playing the collector, says "I already sold the mask. To your enemy!"

Denying information: Hitting the Ambrosia club for information about a murder case, Det. Enkidu asks around for anyone who knew the victim. Missing her **Investigate** move, the MC tells her that the lips of everyone in the club are sealed and that the detective understands the clubbers are fearful of something far worse than getting in trouble with the police. Two bouncers close in on her on the dancefloor and, upon discovering she has no warrant, escort her to the back door.

MAKE SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAPPEN

Describe a shocking development for emotional effect. This could be the tragic loss, gruesome injury, or even sudden death of a non-player character, a personal loss of a lead character, a tragedy or catastrophe in the City, etc.

Sullivan and his lover Margo Falls are being held at gunpoint in the metalworks factory by his ex-partner, Ale Sánchez. Sullivan tries to disarm Sánchez by **Going Toe to Toe** but misses. The MC says Sánchez fires, but Margo protects Sullivan with her body and takes a bullet to the heart. Lamar, who plays Sullivan, gets to play out the tragic final moments.

As the Big Bad Wolf is about to unveil his evil scheme at the dog pound, Goodfellow leaps at her and tries to pin her down, missing the move. The Big Bad Wolf slams the retired man against a wall and laughs madly as she remotely unlocks all the doors in the kennels. Instead of cute puppies, a horde of grizzly werewolves breaks out of the kennels and pours out into the City, hungry and violent.

TURN THEIR MOVE AGAINST THEM

Describe an outcome that is similar to what the character was trying to achieve in her action, but has negative implications instead.

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During a charity gala, the glamorous Excalibur tries to beguile a dashing middle-aged oil tycoon in order to glean information about his business, which the crew suspects is connected to criminal activity. When she misses her **Investigate** move, the MC decides that the tycoon is not just beguiled by Excalibur — he's enamored! From now on, this powerful man tries to spend as much time as possible with Excalibur... which might be a problem, seeing as she spends a lot of it taking part in clandestine activities against him and his business associates.

TRIGGER ALERT?

Before introducing developments that can shock, disgust, or disturb your players, make sure you know what your players are comfortable with. Different players enjoy different stories, and it's up to you to adjust your storytelling to your group, or find other players to play with. Without getting into the specifics of the case, you can warn your group about any potentially triggering content that might be included and get their approval or make adjustments as necessary.

GIVE A STATUS

Give a status with a tag and a tier of your choice to a player character, an ally or an object belonging to a player, or a non-player character or object. You can affect a single target, multiple targets, anyone within an area or who meet specific conditions, etc.

Narrate the development that inflicts the status and describe it. Name the **tag** and the **tier** of the status; they should describe the nature and severity of the condition the target would suffer if hit by the *full power* of the effect.

The nature of the effect defines how difficult it would be to defend from the status: whether a **Face Danger** move can be attempted and which tags, if any, may be relevant. For example, defending from a punch that causes a *bruised-2* status would require different abilities from those required to defend from an ancient curse that causes *turned-to-stone-5*.

If the recipient of the status is a player character or one of her allies or objects, the player of that character may **Face Danger** to reduce or ignore the status, assuming the character is able to do so. You may also rule that the character is in a situation so deadly, hopeless, or dead-ended that she cannot **Face Danger**.

If the recipient is a non-player character or object, they take the status in full. If they have relevant Danger moves that modify the status, they apply. You can also use this move to give a Danger which is competing with the lead characters a positive status, such as *cover-2*. Read more about statuses and Dangers in Chapter 3: This is MY City!

Read more about Statuses on page 218 of the Player's Guide.

Sullivan gets into a knife-fight with a Red Cap hooligan on the docks. He misses his **Go Toe to Toe move**, so the MC describes the Red Cap swinging swiftly on his heels and cutting Sullivan under his ribs, noting that the full effect of the stab would be a *bleeding-gash-3* status. Since Sullivan still has his *spectral armor* and *worn-out leather jacket*, the MC rules he can **Face Danger**.

Not far from there, Post-Mortem is not so lucky. She is sneaking through a labyrinth of shipping containers to try and get the drop on Stanislaw the Vile and his smugglers. Unfortunately for her, she misses her **Sneak Around** move. The MC determines she is *surrounded-3* and that she cannot **Face Danger**, because by the time she discovers her predicament, the smugglers are already in position, aiming their SMGs at her.

REMOVE OR REDUCE A STATUS

Reduce the tier of any status in the game by any number of tiers or completely remove it, if appropriate. This could affect positive statuses that the crew members possess or negative statuses on Dangers.

Goodfellow is hiding from the Rift of the Ogre who is looking for him in a storage unit. He successfully **Changes the Game** to get some *hidden-2* and hides inside a cardboard box. He then **Sneaks Around** and exits the storage unit while the box is still on him — and fails. As the Ogre's fingers tear through the cardboard, the MC takes away Goodfellow's *hidden-2* status.

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You can also use this move to remove any number of Juice points a player has banked. Describe an appropriate story development that explains why the advantage previously won by the player is no longer relevant.

> Declan L'Estrange is caught in a gun-slinging fight to the death with the Rift of Artemis, the goddess of hunting. At the beginning of the fight, he uses his *mysterious reality bending*, *premonitions*, and *subconscious reaction speed* to **Change the Game** and gain 3 Juice, which he banks. Later, he fails to **Hit With All He's Got.** The MC rules that he takes an insignificant flesh wound, but that the hit throws him off so his advantage on Artemis is not as significant as before; his banked Juice is reduced from 3 to 1.

THINK CINEMATIC: WHICH MC MOVE TO USE?

A central part of narrating *City of Mist* is choosing how to use MC moves and intrusions to shape the narrative, and a big part of that is choosing an MC move that creates the effect you want. Just like the decision of which scene to play next and what to include in the scene, the use of MC moves and intrusions should be guided by cinematic considerations. As before, the guiding question you should keep in mind is:

? WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR? WHAT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO WATCH NEXT?

Use your answer to decide how to develop the scene, for example:

> The suspense is building up, but it's not there yet. Let them investigate some more…

> The suspense is crazy and they are wired; it's time to roll out the horrifying truth.

> This conflict is a little dry. Let's raise the stakes by creating a hostage situation.

> This character is making them laugh when it should be making them scared; I'll make the character do something violent so they know she means business.

You can use MC moves and intrusions to dramatically start or conclude a scene, control its pace, change its nature (e.g., from action to investigation), control its challenge level, etc. Here are a few suggestions on how to do so:

First and foremost, not every hard MC move should introduce new story elements and developments into the scene. Most of the time, the scene is unraveling just fine and you don't need to make any adjustments. For example, if a fight scene is already taking place, sometimes there is no need to add further complications. Use **Give a Status** or **Burn a Tag** to challenge the lead characters without adding new story elements. Narrate the move cinematically and then lean back and let the players take the lead.

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Complicate Things and **Complicate Things, Bigtime** introduce a threat that increases the tension and/or raises the stakes of a scene, while increasing its challenge level. They should be used to build up suspense in a scene or when a scene is too slow or resolves too easily and you feel your audience – that is, the players and you – wants something exciting to happen (but first try to assess: do they?). The type of complication you introduce can propel the story forward in the current direction or completely pivot it to a new direction.

> While Post-Mortem and Kitsune are fighting the monstrous shark-like Rift on the deck, Flicker is snooping around in the dark cargo hold looking for the crate. Unfortunately for her, she misses her **Investigate** move.
>
> The MC decides to **Complicate Things, Bigtime.** She thinks about several options: (a) unleash another shark-like monster in the cargo hold, revealing that there is more than one of them; (b) say that the ship starts moving, leaving the port; or (c) introduce one of Flicker's Nemeses into the scene, taking it in a new direction.
>
> She eliminates the latter option: the scene is already involved as it is, so there is no need to make it messier with a Nemesis. Between the first two options she chooses to have the ship start moving. It puts a time pressure on the crew and has the potential of separating them if they don't hurry up.

You can choose the complications you introduce out of the details of your case, such as existing features of a location or a Danger, or improvise them based on common sense.

Deny Them Something They Want can be used to create an instant dead-end, which is useful for ending scenes that draw out too much. It should be used only after the characters had a chance to pursue an avenue, but screwed it up; be sure there are still open avenues of investigation elsewhere, as to not to bring the plot to a halt. This move also gives the players a taste of failure, giving the story a grittier mood as opportunities are missed and assets are lost.

Make Something Horrible Happen can be used to shift the session to a darker, more serious tone. If the story feels too breezy or comical, use this move to make the lead characters face some truly harsh implications of their actions. This move also gives the players a chance to experiment with some immersive role-playing and reveal a more emotional side of their character, if they want. Don't overdo it, though; your audience might build a resistance, making the horrible seem ridiculous.

Force Them To Choose can be used as a cliffhanger by making the lead characters and the players sweat as they sacrifice something valuable to get their way. Depending on what you put on the scales, this could be a nice challenge showing the characters' determination or fortitude, or it could be an impossible dilemma which gives your series a pessimistic and gritty outlook. This move can also be used as an opportunity to put a character in the limelight and get her to reveal her true colors, even to herself. Give the stage to the player so he can make the most out of this moment.

Depending on the implications you attach to it, **Turn Their Move Against Them** can either be comical, ironic, or outright depressing. Make it comical to lighten up the mood when it gets too dark or intense. Make it ironic or dark if you want to turn up the grit factor in your series, showing fate to be cynical and cruel.

Burn A Tag can also be used to temporarily kill the airtime supplied to an overused feature of a lead character. If a player keeps invoking his character's revolver, dashing charm, or stealthy sidekick over and over again, taking it away will allow the audience to see how the character deals with challenges in a different way.

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BURN A TAG

You burn one of the player characters' power tags or story tags or a crew or extra power tag. Tell the player to mark the burn icon (🔥) next to it (or discard it, if it's a temporary or an ongoing story tag). The burnt tag can be recovered normally. Burning a tag represents an ability, item, ally, or resource that is rendered temporarily unusable (see Burning Tags, page 209 in the Player's Guide).

> During a fight with Morgana, Excalibur smites her mortal enemy, **Hitting With All She's Got.** Unfortunately, she misses the move. The MC says Morgana blocks the attack with a dark spell that attaches itself to the Excalibur's bracelet (her Relic) and prevents it from changing into a weapon. The MC has the tag *can change into any weapon* burnt.

FORCE THEM TO CHOOSE

Describe a development that forces a player to choose between two undesirable outcomes, each a hard MC move in itself. For example:

> Sullivan is chasing a hitman on the roof of a speeding subway car. He misses the **Go Toe to Toe** move. The MC says a lower tunnel approaches and the hitman slips under it; Sullivan could do it, but he has no time to orient his shotgun. He can choose between dropping his *sawed-off shotgun* (**Burn a Tag**) or jumping off the train and losing the hitman (**Deny Them Something They Want**).

> Det. Enkidu is fighting the Big Bad Wolf's werewolves out on the City streets. She fails to **Take the Risk** to push a man away from a werewolf in time, so the MC gives her a choice: take *gruesome-bite-4* without **Facing Danger** (**Give a Status**) or watch the man being devoured by the werewolf (**Make Something Horrible Happen**).

If the choice given to the player is based on the circumstances alone, they make the choice and suffer the undesirable outcome.

If one or more of the options involves the character's or crew Mysteries or Identities, the player decides whether to invoke **Make a Hard Choice.** Read more about Mystery and Identity dilemmas under **Make a Hard Choice**, page 254 in the Player's Guide.

> Salamander tries to **Convince** his boss to let him off the hook one more time (so he can save the City). When he misses the move, the MC, playing the boss, gives him an ultimatum: "Be here in exactly one hour, or you're fired." Salamander must choose: if he neglects his duty to the City, a City-wide crisis will take place (**Complicate Things**, **Bigtime**); however, if he doesn't, he will lose his job (**Deny Them Something They Want**). Tyrone, who is playing Salamander, decides that Salamander is **Making a Hard Choice.** In addition to the effects of the MC's hard move, he also marks Attention or Crack on his Routine theme according to his choice.

Note that a hard MC move is not required for the player to **Make a Hard Choice** or for you to orchestrate a dilemma. Sometimes, the soft MC move **Complicate Things** can be enough to put the character in a position where she's facing a difficult choice. However, using this hard MC move allows you introduce more pressure, putting the character on the spot and forcing her to choose.

HOW TO NARRATE CITY OF MIST

City of Mist's tone and atmosphere are inspired by the comic-book neo-noir genre. The following narration guidelines help you capture the essence of *City of Mist* when you narrate your game.

EMPHASIZE THE ATMOSPHERE

When you introduce a scene in *City of Mist*, give extra attention to the atmosphere.

Instead of simply naming a **location**, start with a dramatic description of the location *as it is now*, even if the characters already know it. A dramatic description doesn't have to be grandiose – it's the words you choose that matter, not the length of your speech. Places like the Royal Plaza Hotel or the Downtown Cabaret should be described with flair. Forsaken or derelict buildings can be creepy

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or forlorn. Prosaic places like a bus stop or a diner can be described as plain, everyday, and faded, giving them a touch of melancholy.

If the characters are outside, just coming inside, or standing close to an opening, let the players know what the **weather** is like. Pouring rain is a special favorite of the noir genre. Describe the **air**: fog, steam, and smoke are common ways for the Mist to hide what it doesn't want you to see. Smog and air pollution give your scene an urban feel. **Smells** may not be a part of a movie, TV series, or comic book, but they do wonders to increase immersion in a role-playing game. When entering a new scene, let them know what scents are wafting in the air: the perfume of a woman, wisps of cigar smoke, the overflowing sewers, or the acrid smell of burnt gunpowder.

Lighting is another chief feature of the noir genre; the scenes you describe should be mostly dark, with harsh lights and deep shadows creating high contrast. For example, a character can be seated behind a desk at night, with the neon light illuminating only her eyes and her hand holding out a gun. What you do see makes you wonder about the things you *don't* see, increasing the tension.

Use **sound effects** or describe sounds to immerse your players in the scene. Hurried footsteps, the click of gun safety, or someone trying to break a lock all build up suspense when the characters can't see what is actually happening. Melancholic background music, especially old jazz songs, can really set the mood.

Sometimes even **textures** can contribute to the atmosphere: when a character touches something in the scene, e.g., when she is lying on the asphalt road with her face in a puddle of water or when she dances with the man in the white linen suit, let the player know what it feels like.

MC: You take a short flight of stairs down from the street level, leaving the stormy night behind as you close the small wooden door. Chirpy traditional Celtic music, wafts of cigarette smoke, and roaring laughter overwhelm you from the very first moment. The smell of beer and smoky whiskey fills the air. Looking around the room, it strikes you as a cozy working-class pub, but you don't feel cozy at all. In the corners not lit by the faint ruddy light, you see dockworkers and red-haired thugs eyeing you suspiciously. There's a revolver on the shiny bar, next to a box of bullets, and a vicious looking pocket knife. It looks like you found the Red Caps, alright.

MAKE YOUR CHARACTERS REAL AND HUMAN

When you introduce a character into the story, help the players imagine her by emphasizing her **ordinary persona** over her legendary aspects (if she has any). In other words, describe what sort of person the lead characters see at first glance: Is she a homeless but wise hobo? Is he a slick, but penniless politician? Are these gangsters from the concrete jungle waiting to see how you react to them?

Give your characters emotional layers. Film noir characters are often flawed and vulnerable, even while presenting a strong self-image. While outwardly they can be emotionally impervious, inside they are harboring intense emotions. Alternatively, they could be cold-blooded sociopaths faking emotions to hide their true intentions, so the players never know what to believe. Make your police detective a violent or depressed woman and your drug lord a perfect gentleman; have a witness cry her eyes out but tell the players her outburst feels too calculated; sow fear, lust, or cunning in the hearts of the residents of the City and describe it in their eyes, their voices, their fidgety hands – but not so much in their words. Be careful not to divulge any clues this way; consider saving a few details for when a player spends a Clue to ask about it.

MC: Officer O'Rielly looks like a young man who has already seen too much. The bags under his eyes tell you that he has not been sleeping; maybe there's a new baby at home. He cautiously studies you from behind the sergeant's shoulder, his silver blue eyes sad like the rolling waves.

Player: I'm going to spend a Clue and ask: is he hiding anything?

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MC: You take a hard long look at him, and realize: these are not the eyes of a sleepless father. These are the eyes of someone who has seen something they can't get out of their head. Something horrible.

KEEP IT A MYSTERY

To create a sense of mystery in the game, pay attention to what you reveal and how much you reveal. A good mystery never unveils everything at once: the revelation comes in little drops, hint by hint. This dropping of hints can stretch out for an entire session, or even a season or a series, before the truth is finally exposed. Always give your players the minimum amount of information needed to pique their interest and the maximum amount of time to wonder about it; make them sweat for the rest.

Make it feel like nothing is at it seems. The City of Mist is a veneer, a reality pulled over people's eyes to hide a greater reality. But little things always filter through the Mist: reflections in the storefront windows, murders of crows behaving strangely, the wind howling among the skyscrapers. Rather than emphasizing such details, make a passing comment about them, as if you only mention them offhandedly. By forcing your players to fish for these easter eggs, you repeatedly confront them with the fact that the Mist is masking the truth from them.

Candidly describe the player characters' gut feelings and intuitions. It's not just about what they can perceive with their five senses; it's also about what they *can't* perceive yet still experience with other faculties. Perhaps the hairs on his arms bristle or her gut churns when they enter an office building, even though everything seems normal there. Or maybe they feel inexplicably drawn to someone.

Hint at a Mythos, but never reveal it. When a new Rift enters the game or reveals her powers, do not let the players know right away what her Mythos is. In many cases, a Rift's powers could be the result of any one of several different Mythoi, and players tend to enjoy trying to figure out which one it is. The player characters certainly don't know for sure, so not revealing the Mythos helps in keeping things vague. Even when they decide "this must be the Tin Man", do not confirm or deny it; keep referring to the Rift with the terms you've used so far, or by using "the person you call 'The Tin Man'..", without ever stating it as fact.

Never talk metaphysics in-play. People in the City mostly don't know what the Mist, Mythoi, and Rifts are; even when they do, they don't use game terms to describe these things. For them, it's all one big mysterious phenomenon. Even an all-aware Avatar is more likely to call her Mythos "the god within me" than "my Mythos", and no one at all is going to use the word "Logos" to describe their mundane lives. When you narrate non-player characters, describe their vague feelings and perceptions rather than a technical understanding.

Furthermore, the noir genre does not deal with metaphysics. Keep your stories close to the ground (or gutter) and avoid elaborate discussions about the cosmological nature of the City of Mist. Street-level characters tend to focus on their lives and their problems, not this mystical mumbo-jumbo.

ASK PROVOKING QUESTIONS

Noir is all about the individual, their dilemmas, their journey. When it's apt, ask the players questions about their characters. Each question should reveal a detail that has meaning in the story, so it interests the group as the audience.

- How does your character feel about this?
- What do you think will happen to the neighborhood after this?
- Who takes care of your kid when you're gone?
- Who would your character want dead?

Out-of-character questions build up the suspense by making the players think, "why is the MC asking this now? What is heading our way?"

Build on their answers. Use the details to create a stronger bond between the characters and your case.

MC: Running away from you, the mentally-unstable fire-breathing fugitive barges into Louis' diner, which was just renovated, and grabs one of the waitresses by her arm, making her his hostage. Jerry, who is Det. Enkidu's favorite waitress in Louis' diner? If you don't have one, make one up.

Jerry: Oh uh… I guess that would be Aimy. She always has a smile for me even when I'm frowny.

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MC: Great, so Aimy it is. Of course, this fugitive doesn't know that she's your favorite; it's just not his day.

When the rules tell you to ask the players a question, make it count. When a player **Investigates** and scores 7-9, you can choose to ask them a question; in this case, not only the audience knows the answer but also one or more of the characters in the scene, case, or series. The non-player character knows this information as if she had investigated the lead character.

When you ask this question, think of the non-player character (or force) who is investigating and what she would most like to know about the lead character, the crew, their plans, etc. You don't have to name the non-player character who is investigating, but you can, if it serves your dramatic purposes. You can use this information provided by the player to inform your upcoming decisions about the plotline: which scenes to initiate, who to target, what specific developments to narrate with MC moves, etc.

In the above example, if Det. Enkidu had scored a 7–9 on **Investigate** and the MC had chosen to ask a question, the fugitive himself would know Aimy was the detective's favorite.

MC: The fugitive noticed your expression as he drew near Aimy, so he came to the obvious conclusion and chose her as a hostage. Too bad for him.

Alternatively, the MC could decide that Det. Enkidu's nemesis, Gilgamesh, is watching the diner from afar through binoculars. Without naming Gilgamesh, the MC asks Jerry which waitress is the detective's favorite, and Jerry answers the same. The scene may continue normally, but the MC notes down that Gilgamesh found a detail about Det. Enkidu. Later, the MC plans to initiate a scene when Gilgamesh abducts the waitress and uses her to lure the detective into a trap.

STAY CONSISTENT

To make your City of Mist feel real, story elements such as characters, locations, and events should remain consistent throughout the series. Repeating characters should feel familiar and predictable (even if eventually you plan to use them to surprise the crew). The things that make up the backdrop for your story, such as the regular haunts, the weather, the City services, social trends, etc. will become a memorable part of the City if they show up in your series as recurring motifs.

Take notes. Keep track of what happens in your City, even down to the little guy. When you improvise a new non-player character or a new location, write down their name and some details about them. When someone tells the crew a rumor, write it down; later, it can evolve into a case. Keep a file with the details of all the recurring characters of the series. Next time you incorporate them into the story, make sure they are consistent with what was seen in the series so far.

Draw maps and diagrams. People visualize spaces differently, so drawings help keep everyone on the same page. When you narrate a scene that emphasizes the crew members' positions, draw a few lines and put together a sketch of the place. It doesn't have to be professional, just enough to clarify who's standing where.

MAKE THE CITY FEEL ALIVE

Think of the City as a living, changing metropolis. Things change in the City, even when the characters are not there. A car could have crashed into a fire hydrant just 10 minutes before the characters arrive at a scene. Someone may have killed the mafia boss the night he was locked up in prison. There could be elections, or a huge sports game, or a natural disaster. Work these little things into your narration to make the City feel like an actual place that exists independently of the lead characters.

Think offscreen. Baddies and witnesses don't just sit in their locations, waiting for the lead characters to show up. They are living their lives, plotting and promoting their schemes or shopping with their kids. When you consider what development to introduce, think about what the non-player characters in the case (and in the series) have been up to while the crew was off doing something else. The next time the crew sees them, they could be in the midst of executing their plan, or well after.

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THINK CINEMATIC: NARRATION

You and your players can employ terms from the world of movies and comic books to give your series a more cinematic flavor. For example:

- "The camera", the point of view from which the described view is seen, e.g., "You punch the goon so hard that blood spatters the camera lens."
- PAN (moving sideways or up and down without zooming), e.g., "A big parade of cheerful residents progresses down the street around a giant dragon puppet. As the camera pans left, a malignant figure is seen in an alley, drawing a long katana."
- ZOOM, e.g., "As you observe this train conductor, the camera zooms in on his watch. It seemed cracked, and stained with blood."
- SHOT, a single continuous segment between two cuts, e.g. "Imagine one continuous shot of my character using his nunchaku and martial arts to pummel through the entire corridor of security guards."
- PANEL, a single still image in a comic book. "First panel, we both stand with our hands on our pistols. Then there's a "BANG!" in the gutter between the panels. Next panel, I put my pistol back in the holster. Third panel, he falls to the ground, dead."
- EXTREME LONG SHOT, LONG SHOT, MEDIUM SHOT, CLOSE-UP, EXTREME CLOSE-UP, e.g., "You wake up to the sound of cooing pigeons. Extreme long shot: we see an abandoned church, and in the middle of it, you, tied up to a chair." "An extreme close-up on this man reveals his veins are starting to turn green…"
- CUT, FADE OUT / IN / TO BLACK, DISSOLVE, different techniques for switching between shots or scenes. "He's lifting the car above his head, getting ready to throw it at you… CUT to the rooftops, and we're back to you guys, chasing the snake-like creature…"

ADJUSTING THE CHALLENGE LEVEL

The negative statuses you give the player characters greatly affect the level of challenge in the game by balancing their power tags and positive statuses. You can give a status by using the hard MC move **Give a Status**, or if the character does not choose to protect herself when making the moves **Hit With All You've Got**, **Go Toe to Toe**, and sometimes as part of her choice in **Take the Risk**.

If the lead characters make most of their moves with a Power of 3 or more, your challenge level is relatively low. If they mostly make moves with a Power of 0 or less, your challenge level is relatively high.

The game's challenge level is affected by many factors. If you find that your players succeed or fail too much for your liking, you should first try to track the highest negative status every crew member has at the end of every scene and compare the average of those to the following table. If you find the average does not match your planned difficulty level, use the suggestions below to increase or reduce the challenge level.

Average of the crew members' highest negative statuses	Scene challenge level
0	Very easy
1	Fair
2	Challenging
3	Tough
4	Formidable
5	Deadly or fateful

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If the scene challenge level is as expected, but the overall challenge level of the game is still too easy or too hard, it may mean your characters are generating too little or too much Power regardless of negative statuses. Consider applying or suspending optional rules like Grit Mode and Tag Cap (pages 176 and 207 of the Player's Guide).

ADJUST THE SEVERITY OF STATUSES

The easiest solution is to increase or decrease the tier of statuses you give. The **tier** you choose determines how debilitating the status is: 1 is a mild nuisance, 2 is a minor limitation, 3 is a significant setback, 4 is a severe debilitation, and 5 is an incapacitating status with the potential of becoming lethal. Giving a tier-6 status (or giving a tier-5 status to a character who has already taken the same tier-5 status) means you are trying to kill or permanently transform the player character; it should be kept for extreme cases only.

Consider the character's current ability to defend from the status. The **tag** of the status defines what the character can use to **Face Danger** (power tags, positive statuses, etc.) In other words, it determines how likely the character is to reduce the tier by one (7-9) or ignore the status completely (10+). Giving a character a status she can easily defend from or easily remove is vastly different from giving her a status she cannot defend from or is susceptible to (e.g. a status that triggers her weakness tags or negative statuses), even if they both have the same tier. Remember that you have the option to deny the character her **Face Danger** move, making a status stick regardless of her potential defenses. However, this choice must be backed with appropriate story explanation.

ADJUST THE RANGE OF ACTIONS AFFECTED BY STATUSES

The tag of the status also defines what aspect of the character is affected. Use tags that affect more actions to increase the challenge level; use tags that affect less actions to decrease the challenge level.

- Injury *(slashed-3)* or consciousness-altering statuses *(groggy-2)* affect almost all actions taken by the character herself, but not so much actions taken by her allies.
- Aspect-specific statuses such as social statuses *(humiliated-4)*, power-related statuses *(drained-of-magic-2)*, or gear- and ally-related statuses (*broken-hilt-3* or *my-partner-is-cross-with-me-1*) limit the character's use of a specific set of abilities or resources, making her favor other alternatives.
- Situational or tactical statuses (*under-fire-2* or *blocked-escape-route-3* or *oblivious-5*) can be harmless in and of themselves, but limit or block certain courses of action or represent the trouble the character is getting into. Eventually, these statuses can contribute to her failing to defend from a more harmful status if these statuses are applied to her future **Face Danger** moves. Many situational statuses also expire at the end of the scene.

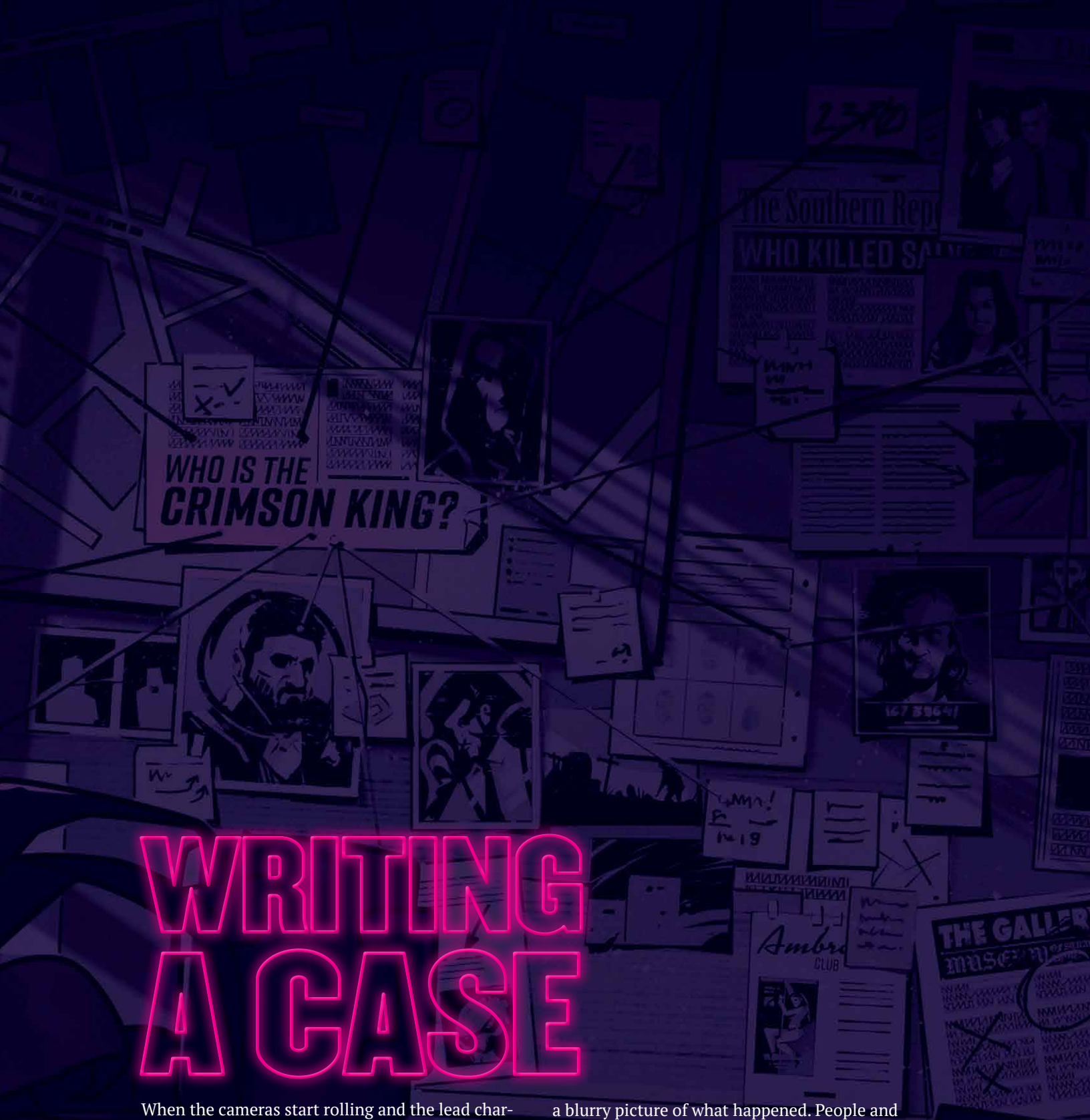
ADJUST HOW STATUSES ARE REMOVED

If the characters can easily remove statuses with **Change the Game** and **Montage (Downtime)**, it could mean less negative statuses carry over from one scene to another, resulting in an easier challenge level. Conversely, if the characters can't shake off enough statuses in and between scenes, their statuses tend to escalate and the game becomes more and more difficult.

You can adjust how statuses are removed by:

- Changing the tags of statuses you give so they are easier or harder to heal, based on the lead characters' abilities and resources.
- Tighten or relax your policy about what statuses can be healed on the go.
- Tighten or relax your policy about which statutes "fight back" and apply to the attempt to heal them (see page 225 in the Player's Guide).
- Allow more partial or more complete healing of statuses during downtime.

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WRITING A CASE

When the cameras start rolling and the lead characters hit the streets, it may already be too late for the victim: a crime has been committed or the machinations of a mastermind are well underway. The investigation ensues. Clues and evidence are collected and put together like a mosaic to give a blurry picture of what happened. People and situations put the investigation at risk and must be handled. At long last, the lead characters pull on a thread that could unravel the whole case. But nothing can prepare them for the truth that is about to be revealed.

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This section explains how to write *City of Mist* cases so that during your sessions, you have everything you need to create drama, mystery, and suspense.

WHAT'S IN A CASE?

A **case** is a *City of Mist* playable investigation. It includes two aspects that often go hand-in-hand:

- **the investigation** of a crime, a wrong, or a problem connected to a Rift
- **follow-up actions** the lead characters take once they discover the truth of what happened (e.g., to prevent that crime or wrong from recurring, to resolve the problem, etc.).

A complete *City of Mist* case is comprised of various materials you can use during the session: a detailed **backstory**, a list of **locations** and **characters** that can be investigated, a collection of ready-made **clues** for your players, and some **Dangers** to challenge them with.

Generally, a single case revolves around a single crime, wrong, or problem. However, in *City of Mist*, cases are interconnected; they often end with discoveries that lead to more questions and to a new investigation, a new case. The lead characters often discover that a specific crime (or wrong, or problem) was a part of a greater, systemized crime. Smaller cases tend to be contained by bigger cases that deal with solving a bigger version of the same problem. With each case, the lead characters reveal deeper and more sordid truths that lead them to the true source of the problem. Connecting cases into a season or a series is explained on page 104, under Designing a Series.

GREY MORALITY, JUSTIFIABLE MOTIVES

Life is complicated in *City of Mist*. In the big city, most people are apathetic to each other's suffering. Good people fall in the cracks while corruption prevails, rewarding those who make self-promotion and wrongdoing their way of life. But crime is not reserved to villains. Everyone, even the kindest soul, has a reason and the capacity to commit a crime or to stoop to immoral acts, and sometimes this reason is a darn good one, one that would make the lead characters wonder if they should intervene at all. Depending on your series concept, the lead characters themselves may be morally ambiguous and engage in criminal activity.

To add fuel to the fire, the lives of City residents are haunted by the Mythoi. Those who have awakened are driven by their Mythoi to do things they may never have done otherwise, but that now burn deep within their soul. Being awakened changes one's perception, sometime skewing it beyond fathom, eroding one's capacity to relate to others. Many Avatars set out to do good (or what they perceive is good) but lose their compassion and humanity to the intense sense of purpose instilled by their Mythoi.

Sleepers, on the other hand, are pawns used by Avatars throughout the City to reenact their legends. What may seem at first as unfortunate circumstances that drove them to do what they did can later be revealed as a result of systemic intervention of the Avatars in the lives of the City residents, through politics, culture, organized crime – you name it.

When you create *City of Mist* cases, remember that no matter how saintly or monstrous, no one is either good or bad. Everyone is a villain and everyone is a hero; your cases should help make that clear to your audience. Your criminals and wrongdoers should always have a motive that seems relatable and justifiable, if you only see things from their perspective. If your crew consider themselves to be moral, they should often find themselves wondering what exactly that means.

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THE ICEBERG

A CASE IS LIKE AN ICEBERG

To understand the structure of a *City of Mist* case, think of it as an iceberg.

At the bottom or deepest part of the iceberg, there lies **the truth** about the entire case: what started it, what really happened. **The truth of a case is always mythical: it always involves a Rift or several Rifts.** The crime, wrong, or problem at the heart of the case were caused because of how a Rift used, abused, or misused her Mythos powers, knowingly or unknowingly, or by a phenomenon or a chain reaction that emanated from a Mythos.

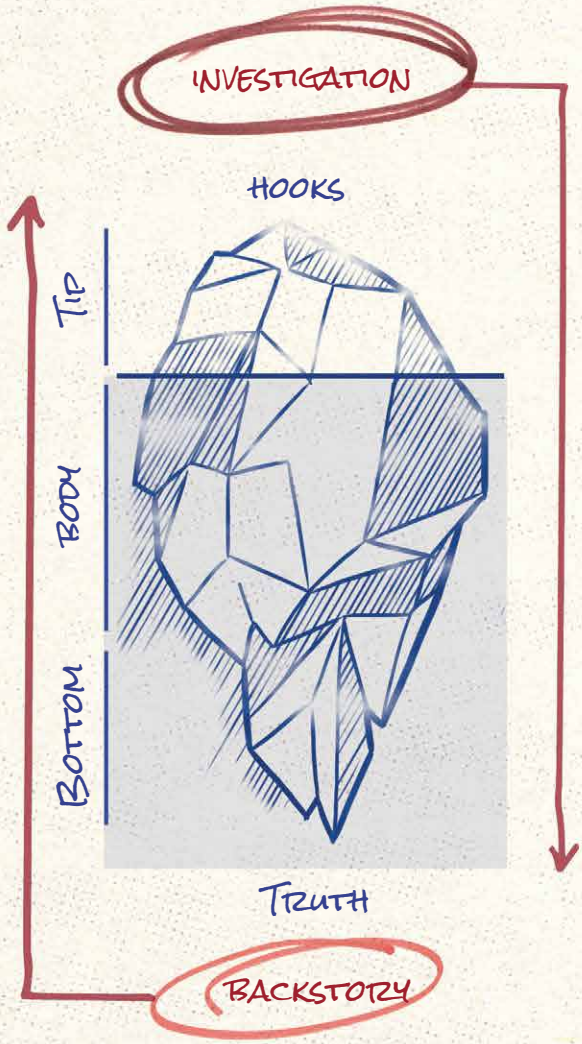
The events originating from the source Rift continue to ripple through the City. Other people and organizations, who may or may not be Rifts, become involved for different reasons and in different ways. More crimes are committed, more people are wronged, more problems arise, whether the same or different than the one directly caused by the source. The plot thickens. This chain of events is represented by **the body of the iceberg**.

Eventually, this trickles down to the street as a seemingly ordinary crime, wrong, or problem, one which may have little to do with the original issue. This is **the tip of the iceberg**: what is visible to Sleepers, what will be reported in the media, what people think happened, etc.

The events instigated by the mythical source, their progression behind the scenes, and their eventual surfacing to the Sleeper level is called **the backstory**. The backstory includes everything that happened before the crew becomes involved in the investigation.

THE INVESTIGATION REVEALS THE ICEBERG

When you play the case, **the investigation starts at the tip of the iceberg**. The lead characters hear about the seemingly ordinary crime, wrong, or problem and start investigating, seeing only the most superficial layer of the story. This visible



problem that catches the attention of the lead characters is called the **hook**. A case may have more than one hook because the original problem could have evolved into multiple problems that can interest the lead characters.

As the lead characters **Investigate**, they penetrate **the body of the iceberg** to increasingly greater depths: they reveal **clues** that connect events, locations, and characters, and lead them closer and closer to the truth.

Eventually, the lead characters arrive at **the bottom of the iceberg**, revealing the **truth** about the crime, wrong, or problem. Knowing the truth, they then take **follow-up action** to solve the problem, prevent it from happening again, benefit from the situation, etc.

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HOW DEEP THE ICEBERG GOES

A case can have different degrees of complexity, measured by its **Depths**. The tip of the iceberg (the visible Sleeper level) and the bottom of the iceberg (the truth) are constants – every case has them. The body of the iceberg, however, can vary in volume.

Each Depth is a separate layer of information in the case. It contains an exclusive set of clues that can at most lead to the Depth directly below it, but not to deeper Depths. In other words, the lead characters must first uncover clues at their current Depth before they can progress to the next Depth and get closer to the truth.

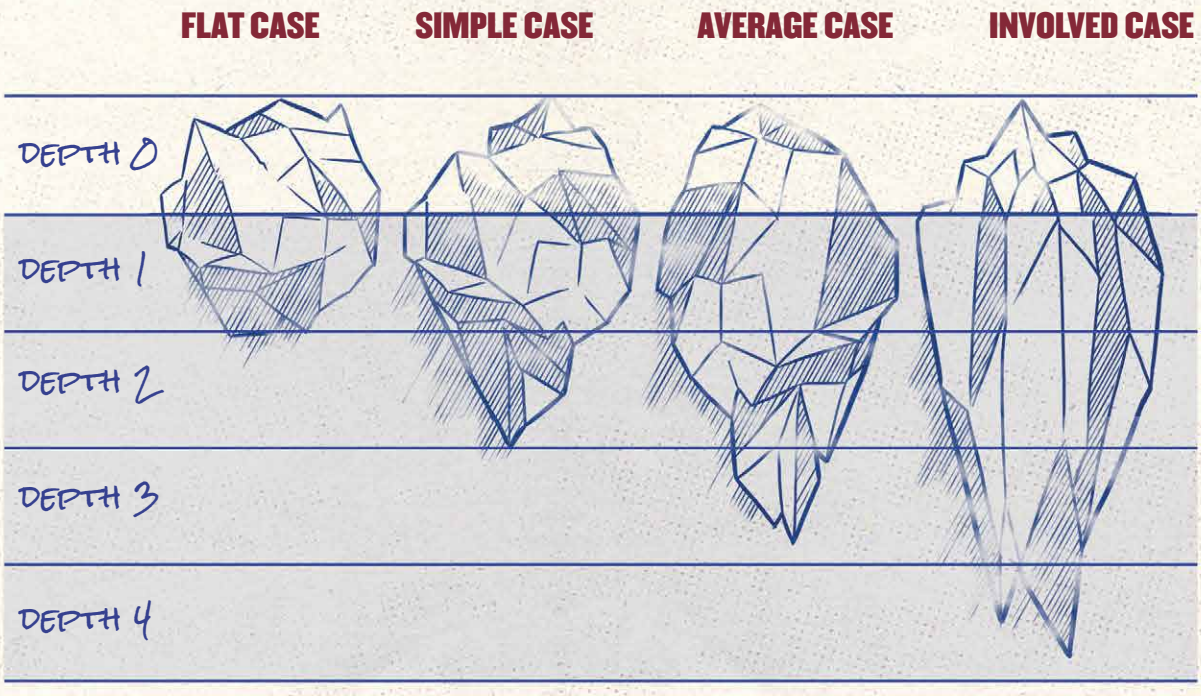
The Depths of a case are numbered. The hooks, or the tip of the iceberg, are always at Depth Zero. Any following exclusive layer of information is given a number starting from one and counting up: Depth 1, Depth 2, Depth 3, and so on. The truth, or the bottom of the iceberg, always has the greatest Depth in the case.

A case with only two Depths, or a flat case, has almost no investigation: the hooks (Depth Zero) lead directly to the truth (Depth 1). A simple case with some investigation would contain the hooks (Depth Zero), which lead to a set of clues (Depth 1), which, if investigated, lead to the truth (Depth 2, in this case). More complex cases can have multiple exclusive layers of clues that must first be cracked before moving on to the next layer. In such cases, the body of the iceberg, or the investigation, can be broken up to two or more Depths.

CASE DEPTH EXAMPLE

In a flat case, the lead characters get word of someone murdered with a sledgehammer by their employee (Depth 0) and then find the employee and discover he's the Rift of Thor, the Norse storm god, and confront him (Depth 1).

In a simple case, the lead characters could get word of someone murdered with a sledgehammer (Depth 0) and then investigate either the crime scene, the victim's apartment, or the victim's workplace (Depth 1) before they deduce it's the employee, track him down, and discover he's the Rift of Thor (Depth 2). They cannot use the hook (Depth 0) to get to the truth (Depth 2); they must first investigate and uncover the clues leading to the identity of the killer, all of which are in Depth 1.



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In an average case, the lead characters could get word of someone murdered with a sledgehammer (Depth 0) and then investigate either the crime scene, the victim's apartment, or the victim's workplace (Depth 1) before they deduce it's the employee. However, they can't find him anywhere and nothing in Depth 1 indicates where they might find him. Clues in Depth 1 only indicate *who* might know where to find him (some of his friends, perhaps); the lead characters investigate these leads, possibly dealing with other threats and Rifts (Depth 2), until they find out the murderer is hiding in the old clock tower. When they go there, they discover he's the Rift of Thor and confront him (Depth 3). The lead characters can't get to the killer's friends (Depth 2) without first discovering who he is and who his friends are (Depth 1); and they can't find him and confront him (Depth 3) without first talking to his friends who know where he is (Depth 2).

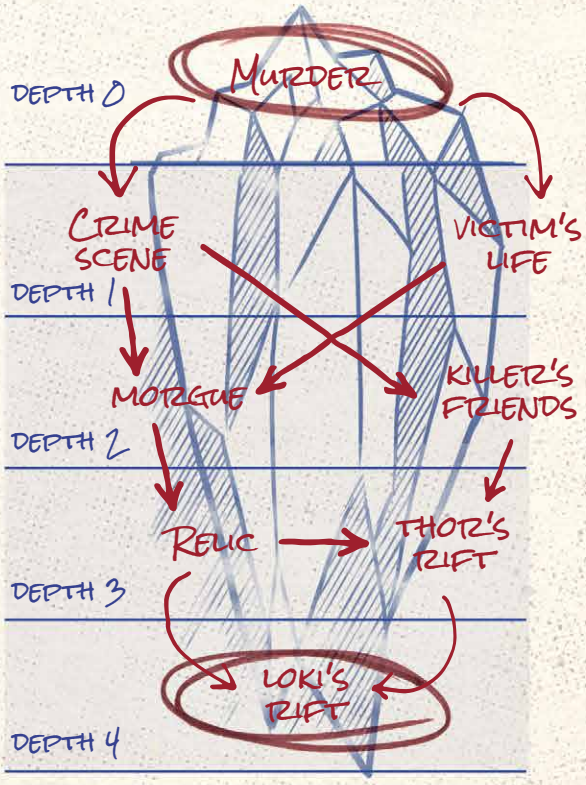
In an involved version of this case, everything could be exactly the same, except the ending: when the investigators find and confront the alleged murderer, the Rift of Thor, he insists that he was framed and that someone stole his sledgehammer, which is a Relic. Depth 3 then becomes about discovering who stole the murder weapon and whether or not the suspect is telling the truth. The crew discovers that a competitor of the victim, who also happens to be the Rift of Loki, stole the sledgehammer Relic and used it to kill the employer. The crew then confronts her and cracks the case (Depth 4). The clues in the case are designed so that without first reaching the Rift of Thor (Depth 3), the characters would never suspect the Rift of Loki. Otherwise, reaching Loki would not be Depth 4.

THE ICEBERG GOES SIDEWAYS, TOO

Sometimes a case contains multiple ways to reach the truth. Different branches of clues permeate the Depths, possibly intertwining. Branches should preferably have the same number of Depths, to avoid one branch becoming a shortcut to the truth, which could make the case easier to solve depending on the avenue taken by the players.

In the involved version of the above case, one way of reaching Loki in Depth 4 is by identifying the alleged killer (Depth 1), finding him (Depth 2), and helping him find the person who framed him (Depth 3). The MC wants to add a second branch of clues, one which relates to the Relic sledgehammer, Mjölnir. When investigating the crime scene in Depth 1, the lead characters can find evidence that the victim was electrocuted. Checking the morgue (Depth 2) they can discover evidence that a Relic is involved. This could lead them to seek out the sledgehammer (Depth 3) and find it in the basement of Loki's Rift's house, or it can connect them to the first branch by somehow allowing them to find Thor's Rift (also Depth 3). Only Thor's Rift or Mjölnir itself could lead them to Loki in Depth 4.

The case is now a Depth-4 case with two branches.



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ICEBERGS AND PLAYING TO FIND OUT

Remember that during the game you cannot control the actions of the player characters and therefore the order of scenes, nor should you try. The players should feel as if they are playing a "sandbox" game, their actions unrestricted by some invisible and impassable barriers. For example, even if unlikely, the player characters can decide to go directly to the morgue after hearing about the crime, without even visiting the crime scene or questioning people who knew the victim. If this is the case, just give them the clues available there, even if it means they skipped a Depth. Hey, good for them.

Creating a case in layers allows you to create this sandbox effect and at the same time prevent your case from being cracked too fast (which makes it more entertaining for the group as a whole). It allows the investigation to progress at a desired pace without forcing a specific path. For example, the lead characters need to identify the alleged killer in order to find his friends; they can't reach his friends without first knowing his identity. Similarly, they won't know about the Relic without getting a closer look at the body or the results of the autopsy at the morgue.

When you write a case, try to identify weak spots in your Depths. The morgue, mentioned above, is such a weak spot: if the players choose to go there first, they can skip Depth 1. The solution is to have clues in the morgue that only lead to the Relic Mjölnir (Depth 3) if crossed with evidence from the crime scene (Depth 1). This would compel the detectives to go back to the crime scene before they can move forward.

With that said, remember that Depths are not failproof. Your players can find a loophole in the case that will allow them to cut through Depths. For example, investigating the victim's life (Depth 1), one of the characters could suspect that the victim's competitor, Loki's Rift, is the one behind the murder, even as an intuition or on a whim. They can then break into Loki's Rift house and find Mjölnir, incriminating her and acquitting Thor's Rift.

When your system of Depths fails, just play along with the players and let the story evolve. Look for new ways to add drama, by examining the consequences of the characters' actions: Breaking into Loki's house without the authority to do so could alert the police; otherwise, without any proof, the crew must continue to investigate, even if they are already sure it's her. Loki's Rift could also use her powers to deceive the crew and turn them against Thor's Rift, making things much more interesting… It's all in a day's work! To allow such great creativity to take place and surprise even you as the MC, cases are not written as rigid flow charts; they only describe the given situation with all its facets (locations, characters, clues) at the *beginning* of the investigation. Anything can happen once the cameras start rolling.

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STEP 1: THE BACKSTORY

The process of writing a case starts with putting together a detailed backstory. The backstory should answer the question:

? WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE CREW GOT INVOLVED IN THE CASE?

It should explain the chain of events that started with the source of the issue and all the developments that eventually led to the tip of the iceberg.

A detailed backstory is essential for a good *City of Mist* case. Knowing exactly what happened before the investigators became involved allows you to adapt your narration to any path the players may choose and to come up with clues on the fly when necessary. Without it, you are much more likely to provide contradicting or irrelevant clues to your players, making your case feel less substantial.

THE STORY SEED

A story seed is an idea or concept for a backstory. Start building your backstory by establishing what or who is the source of the problem in your case, what did they do, and how the crew is involved. Use the following questions to help you put together an idea, which you will later flesh out. You can follow them in order or start from any question and then complete the others as you develop your story. Don't worry about the details at this point; focus on the general concept for the case.

? RIFT(S): WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS CASE?

? What is the Mythos of the main Rift(s) involved?
Choose a myth, a legend, or a story (see list of suggested Mythos sources under Mythos on page 60 and under Mythos Character Tropes on page 70 in the Player's Guide).

? Who is this Rift in her everyday life in the City?
Create the Rift's ordinary persona: a criminal, a student, a performer, etc. (see list of suggested Logos Character Tropes on page 72 in the Player's Guide).

? How and when did this Rift awaken?
An accident, an experiment, finding a Relic / Familiar / Enclave, on a very ordinary day, being a victim, doing something wrong, doing something right, etc.

? How awakened is this Rift?
Awakening, Touched, Borderliner, Legendary, or Avatar (see page 29 in the Player's Guide).

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? What drives this Rift more: her Mythos or her ordinary life?
You can choose either, or create complicated or conflicted Rifts who are driven by both their Mythos and their ordinary life.

? What does her Mythos want from her?
To reenact its story with different people in the major roles, to obtain an item from its legend, to defeat or kill an enemy from its legend, to save someone or protect something from its legend, etc.

? What is / was her mundane motive?
A wish to make something better, hatred, anger, envy, desire for peace and quiet, wanting to help someone, greed, following orders, etc.

? How did she use her Mythos powers to achieve her goal?

? THE TRUTH: WHAT CRIME, WRONG, OR PROBLEM IS AT THE CENTER OF THE CASE?

Describe the crime, wrong, or problem that started everything or that around which everything revolves (see sidebar on the next page for examples of crimes and wrongs):

- This Rift herself committed a crime, has wronged someone, or was used by someone else to do so.
- The presence or activity of this Rift put at risk something important to a resident or residents of the City: their lives, their health, their property, their own (possibly illegal) activity, their lifestyle, their quality of life, etc.
- This Rift clashed with another legendary or mundane individual or group, possibly affecting others in the process.
- The Rift has taken the first steps in a planned crime or a scheme targeting a person of importance, a group, a population, or the lead characters themselves.

? THEME: WHAT TYPE OF STORY WILL THIS BE?

Deciding on the scope, themes, and format of the case in advance helps you decide which ideas to keep and which to discard and allows you to create a more coherent experience for your group. Figure out how to make your choices work with the series concept and the nature of your crew. Some examples are:

- Scope:
  - » a personal drama or tragedy
  - » big trouble in a little neighborhood
  - » an intra-organizational investigation (e.g. police Internal Affairs)
  - » City-wide catastrophe
- Common themes and tropes:
  - » petty crime
  - » love triangle gone bad
  - » organized crime
  - » a heist
  - » corporate shenanigans
  - » political corruption
  - » police inefficiency, corruption, or brutality
  - » mystical mystery
  - » illegal or unethical experiments
- Format:
  - » **whodunit**: all suspects are present but hiding the truth for their own reasons
  - » **cold case**: digging up and putting together old evidence to solve an old case or stop someone still on the loose
  - » **clock is ticking**: uncover and foil an evil scheme before it's too late

? HOOKS: HOW DOES THE CREW GET INVOLVED?

? How does the crew hear about the case?
The victim(s) of affected party approaches the crew, someone related to them approaches the crew, someone affected by a 2nd or 3rd degree consequence of the crime approaches the crew, the perpetrator(s) or their allies approaches the crew, reports of crime in media, the crew members are witnesses, the evidence crops up during the crew members' investigation of their Mysteries or a crew Mystery.

? At what point in the progression of events does the crew come in?

- The deed is done; the crew must find the perpetrator.
- The deed is done, but the crew must stop it from happening again.
- A crime has been committed, but it's only a small step on the way to a bigger crime.
- Something is brewing, the crew must find out what and stop it.

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STORY SEED EXAMPLES

Starting with the Rift:
Mack the MC wants to create a case around the Mythos of the Mechanical Bird from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Nightingale*. He imagines the Rift as a lost soul, a young woman who is cursed to always be a substitute for the real thing, so she ends up attracting all the wrong people for all the wrong reasons. Thinking of her Mythos powers, Mack decides this Rift has the power to mimic other people's voices and appearances, and that she was entrapped by a con artist (perhaps the Rift of the Emperor from the same story) to help him pull off a heist. Mack wants to make it a personal drama, so he ends up deciding that the Rift is already dead at the beginning of the investigation: she killed herself jumping off the roof of the Royal Plaza Hotel. The crew must find out what happened to her.

Starting with the crime, wrong, or problem:
Christy the MC has an idea for a case revolving around the escape of a deranged Rift from a maximum-security psychiatric ward of a prison. No one knows how the Rift escaped or where she is now, but considering her psychiatric profile she poses an immediate threat to the citizens of the City. The crew has to penetrate the social hierarchy in the prison (perhaps going undercover), as well as the broken minds of some of the inmates in the psychiatric ward, in order to figure out the case, find the fugitive Rift, and bring her back into custody. MC Christy must decide what kind of Rift escaped, settling at last on the Rift of a Maenad, one of the ecstatic followers of Dionysus.

Starting with the theme of the story:
Drew the MC wants to create a case centered around a gang war in the Blue-Collar Residential. When the crew comes in, hostilities are already threatening to tear the neighborhood apart, with violent killings that are endangering innocent lives. The crew is invited either as a backup team summoned by one of the warring gangs or as a solution to the problem by the mayor or the local citizens. Drew looks for appropriate Mythoi for the gangs. One gang would be a Yakuza-like organization, a host of individual Rifts of evil spirits called Mononoke. The second gang would be led by the Rift of the Wicked Witch of the West (from *The Wizard of Oz*), who could turn gang members into winged monkeys. All gang members are Touched, except for the Witch, who is a Borderliner; however, everyone involved is mainly driven by their mundane motive: a turf war.

Starting with the hook:
Edgar the MC has an idea for a case starting with many small incidents that seem to be unrelated: a break-in at the museum, a ritualistic animal sacrifice, an attack on a pawnshop. He wants all of these to tie into other, more dramatic crimes, eventually leading the crew to discover a plan already in motion: a secretive cult will attempt to summon the Mythos of Kali, the Hindu goddess who destroys all evil. Whether this is good or bad for the City largely depends Kali's interpretation of 'evil'. The crew must find out more about this Mythos and how to stop (or help) her manifestation.

EXAMPLES OF CRIMES

Animal abuse · Arson · Assassination · Assault · Blackmailing · Bombing · Bribe · Burglary · Embezzlement · Espionage · Extortion · Fencing · Fraud · Hacking · Hijacking · Identity Theft · Kidnapping · Larceny · Loansharking · Loitering · Money laundering · Murder · Price fixing · Prison break · Prostitution · Racketeering · Rape · Rioting · Robbery · Sexual abuse · Shooting · Smuggling · Tagging (graffiti) · Trafficking (drugs, arms, art and antiques, human) · Vandalism

Attempted crime · Being an accessory to a crime · Conspiring to commit a crime

EXAMPLES OF WRONGS

Most crimes · Betrayal · Bullying · Infidelity · Lying or hiding the truth · Psychological abuse · Taking something belonging to another, even if lawfully

EXAMPLES OF PROBLEMS

Disagreement · Hazard to health or safety · Natural disaster · Misfortune · Suicide

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DEVELOPING THE BACKSTORY

Depending on the complexity of the case you want to write, you may wish to expand your story seed. The more involved your backstory is, the easier it will be for you to create more Depths and branches during the following steps.

Think of **additional major characters** that could be involved in the case and the role they can play (like adding Loki in the example above). These characters can be completely mundane, Rifts unrelated to the main Rift, or Rifts of characters who appear in the legend of the main Rift. Research different legends that could fill the role of a character you have in mind.

Think also of **further complications** that you can add to existing characters and their role in the case (such as having Thor's Rift go into hiding with only his closest friends knowing where he is).

You can complicate the story by re-examining your current assumptions about how things came to be. Try using the following methods:

- **"The truth runs deeper than you know":** the truth you originally chose only appears to be the truth; in fact, there is someone else behind the case, another crime, a deeper or darker truth, etc.
- **"There's always a middleman":** the actions of the Rift didn't affect the Sleeper level as directly as you originally planned. Instead, there were additional steps in the chain reaction that eventually affected the Sleeper level and alerted the crew.
- **"Remember that other incident?":** the main Rift involved is not the only side to the story – there are multiple parties involved and their actions had different consequences that floated up to the Sleeper level separately, perhaps even appearing unrelated. OR: the crimes, wrongs, etc. didn't affect the Sleeper level in just one way, they had multiple consequences that reached the Sleeper level, perhaps even appearing unrelated.

Mack the MC wants to build up the tragic story of the Mechanical Bird. He looks to further complicate the case, so he looks for a middleman. He decides that the heist she was involved in targeted a casino owned by the Rift of the Emperor, and that the con artist who used her is a Sleeper: he knew she could create incredible costumes but was never sure how she did it.

After some research into the story of *The Nightingale*, Mack figures that the case has something to do with a deal the Emperor has made with Death to let him live. Previously, the Emperor has warded off Death with the song of the real Nightingale (who is also a Rift). However, he has since lost touch with the real Nightingale and needs a replacement to try and cheat Death, which is where the Mechanical Bird came in. The Emperor was trying to use her to ward off Death, which cost her her life.

Now the Rifts at the core of the crime are both the Emperor and Death; the con artist is just a middleman. The truth at the center of the case is that the Emperor sacrificed the Mechanical Bird to save himself from Death.

PUTTING THE DETAILS TOGETHER

Once you are happy with the concept for your case, it's time to work out the finer details. Investigations are based on details, so you will need to be able to produce them quickly during the session. This does not mean you have to think about ALL the miniscule details of the case and write them down in advance. You can improvise and complete some missing details during the session; in fact, if the players go down a path you did not foresee, you will *have* to improvise (which could be even more fun). However, if you want the integrity of your investigation to survive these improvisations, you need to understand the case intimately and know exactly what happened before the crew shows up and what is happening while the investigation is ongoing. This would make any improvisation easier and will give you the confidence to allow the players to try anything they wish, rather than constrain them to a set path of investigation.

Your final backstory should include these details:

- **Character roster**
  Write down a list of characters, their mundane names, physical descriptions, personality, and

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abilities. Giving the characters their mundane identities completes the veneer of Mist the case needs: even though underneath there is a struggle of mythical forces, the case *appears* to be the story of ordinary people.

- **The whole truth**
  Now is the time to iron out all the holes and vague spots in the plot. Go over the backstory and look for missing areas or unanswered question. Answer the big questions, the ones that are fundamental to the case. Leave any peripheral questions unanswered; you can answer them on the fly during the game, if they ever arise.
  - » How exactly was the crime/wrong committed? With what tools? At what time?
  - » How did it go? What went wrong? Who witnessed it or knows about it? What critical evidence was left behind?
  - » Who else was involved? What have they been doing since? Where are they now?
- **Timeline**
  Plot the events that occurred **before** the investigation on a timeline so you can tell what happened before what. You don't need to track every minute (unless the case depends on it), but you should know roughly the time of the day. Have a rough timeline of what happens **after** the investigation begins: if you think some of the non-player characters will take action, for example try to destroy evidence or complete their scheme, define when it might happen.

BACKSTORY EXAMPLE

CHARACTER ROSTER

The Rift of the Mechanical Bird is Ashley Lind (Touched), a slender woman in her late 20s, attractive in a heroin chic sort of way, with a constant lost look in her eyes, as if she doesn't know who she is. Ashley is a hustler, trying to use her ability to mimic people's look and voice to make a buck. She has dabbled in all kinds of professions and illegal activities, but she has never really hurt anyone.

The conman is Martin "Marty" Brooks (Sleeper), a balding middle-aged man often seen in colorful suits and big seventies shades. Marty has been avoiding imprisonment for years thanks to his knack to leave the scene when his heists start going sideways.

The Rift of the Emperor is Kenny Liu (Borderliner), a relatively young (40) hotel and casino magnate.

Death is a little too big for the scope of this case, so Mack decided he will be represented by his emissary, the Rift of Cerberus (Borderliner), known on the street simply as "K9".

WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED

Mack the MC starts going over the details of the case. He decides that it was fate, not premeditation, that brought everyone together into the Royal Plaza Casino that night. Having lost the real Nightingale, Kenny Liu had a meeting set with K9 where he was supposed to pay a stupendous amount of money to spare his life for another month, not a very sustainable business. He was desperately looking for a way out, when an opportunity fell in his lap.

Marty and Ashley had been studying the casino and preparing for a heist for weeks and the showdown was on the same night. Something went wrong, and Kenny Liu's security people seized the Mechanical Bird and brought her to him. Later, during the fateful meeting with K9, Kenny Liu tried to have Ashley Lind masquerade as the real Nightingale, but for some reason K9 didn't fall for it. Instead, K9 demanded Ashley's life as payment for that month. Out of time, Kenny Liu staged Lind's suicide there and then, holding her at gunpoint on the roof of his hotel and forcing her to jump to her death. In his mind, a suicide was easier to cover up than a murder.

Mack still has some open questions that need answering. He must answer these questions to complete the backstory because they are very likely to come up during the investigation.

How did Marty entrap Ashley Lind?
Ashley was using her abilities to get away with small-time fraud and thievery when Marty spotted her. She would pretend to be someone else on the phone to elicit private information from the person on the other side or pretend to look

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like someone else and pick their personal belongings at a cloakroom. Marty started figuring her out little by little and collected enough evidence to tie her to all those little crimes; she would only be charged for being an accomplice, but that would be enough to put her away. In exchange for the evidence folder and a cut of the money, Ashley reluctantly agreed to partake in the heist.

What exactly was the plan of the heist? What was Ashley and Marty's part in it?
Marty found out that for winnings above a certain amount, the chief of security, one Carlton Cooper (Rift of the Dragon, Touched), escorts the winner seeking to make a withdrawal to a room where he personally questions the winner to screen for any potential fraud. If the winner checks out, Mr. Cooper opens the vault with his voice and retina signature, as well as visual confirmation from a security guard in an armored booth, and brings out the winnings in a briefcase. Marty planned to knock out Mr. Cooper with a drug and have Ashley take his place. Then Marty would cheat his way to winning the minimum amount required to trigger the procedure. According to his plan, Ashley, appearing to be Cooper, would then follow the procedure and let the security team open the main vault for her, but she would pack a lot more money into the briefcase and hand it to Marty.

Who else was involved?
Mack's explanation of the heist already added the chief of security, Carlton Cooper, to the mix. Mack feels there needs to be another player here: a professional card player, Théo Blanc, who could reasonably win the minimum amount. While he thinks about Blanc, Mack has an epiphany: Blanc was the one who betrayed Marty and Ashley to the casino security.

What went wrong?
This gives Mack an even better idea so he goes back on his first decision: the events that lead to the death of Ashley Lind were not coincidental — it was a setup. Mr. Cooper is no fool. When the trio (Brooks, Lind, Blanc) were scoping the casino as part of their preparation, Cooper spotted Blanc. He followed him home and beat the truth out of him: their heist was built around impersonating Cooper himself, using a woman who could dress up like him and imitate his voice. Thinking about his employer's problem and the real Nightingale, Cooper threatens Blanc to help him snag his colleagues (and get paid for it) or be turned over to the police. On the night of the heist, Cooper and Kenny Liu are already waiting for the team. Cooper abducts Ashley when she transforms to appear like him, but when he tries to pretend he is Ashley transformed, Marty figures it out and flees. Cooper then brings Ashley to Kenny Liu and the drama with K9 ensues.

TIMELINE

Mack finishes his backstory by putting together a timeline:

- 8 months ago: Kenny Liu lost his real Nightingale and started paying a large sum of money to Death, via K9.
- 3 months ago: Marty started following Ashley Lind.
- 1 month ago: Marty approached and entrapped Ashley Lind and they started working on the heist with Théo Blanc, scoping the Royal Plaza Casino.
- 10 days ago: Chief of Security Cooper spotted Blanc and forced him to double-cross his colleagues.
- Last night: The heist took place, Cooper snagged Lind, Kenny Liu unsuccessfully tried to use her to ward off K9 and was eventually driven to make her jump to her death.
- The case starts late at night or the next morning, when word of this suicide reaches the crew.

Since the case focuses on investigating the past, Mack can't think of many fixed future events to put on his timeline. Eventually, he simply adds:

- In the next few days: Marty and Théo Blanc, who are now laying low in their respective hideouts, will try to skip town; knowing they are the loose threads, Cooper may hire a hitman to silence both of them, or do it himself.

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STEP 2: THE TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS

Once you have the backstory down, you have a good grasp of the chain of events that led from the original crime, wrong, or problem to the hooks. In the second step of writing your case, you will be going the other way, from the hooks to the truth, focusing on the crew's investigation path and how they can discover what happened and what is going on.

HOOKS

Start by listing the different ways the crew can become involved in the case. A hook must fit the series concept and the nature of the crew (e.g., a gig for The Pros, signs of possible presence of dark forces for The Order, etc.). **Each hook should lead the crew to one or more related locations**, either directly or following some investigation. Hooks could be based on one of the following:

- **The crew can be informed about the case** by the victim(s), by a relative or friend of the victim(s), by person with an interest in the case, by the police, by the media, etc.
- **The crew can bump into the case** as part of their routine or daily life, when investigating their Mysteries, on their way to solve another case.
- **The crew can reach the case as a continuation of a previous investigation.**

Mack the MC lists the possible hooks for his case:

- **Watching for crimes**: If the PCs are involved with the police or seek out unusual crimes, they will learn about Lind's death from participating in or tracking police activity, from a police contact, or from the morning newspapers and news reports. This would lead them to the crime scene.
- **A concerned relative or friend** could recruit the crew to help find out what happened to Ashley Lind, or even pay them to do it. This person may not even know that she had died, so they might lead the crew to Ashley's apartment.
- **Tip-off**: An enemy of Kenny Liu could tip off the crew about a link between the suicide and some shady dealings in the casino. This could lead to the crime scene or the casino.
- **Mystical source**: Visions or omens revealed to a crew member (perhaps someone walking by the hotel) could indicate that dark forces are at work at the Royal Plaza, perhaps hinting to the nature of this Mechanical Bird. This could lead to the crime scene or the hotel reception.

BUILDING THE ICEBERG

Next, break down your backstory into the possible locations involved in the investigation and assign them to Depths and branches as explained in the iceberg example above. This may include locations that were in the backstory, locations related to key characters, 'buffer' location to provide additional layers, and even 'moving' locations, scenes that may occur in different places, depending on how the investigation unravels.

The locations reached through the hooks are in Depth 1. Those are the locations where the crew is most likely to begin their investigation.

The location where the truth is most likely to be revealed or where the main Rift is most likely to be confronted has the greatest Depth. This is the location where the crew is most likely to conclude the investigation and take any follow-up actions.

To build the different branches of investigation, pick a single Depth 1 location and ask yourself:

? HOW CAN THIS LOCATION BRING THE CREW CLOSER TO THE TRUTH?

Start thinking about clues the crew may find at the scene.

? WHAT FOLLOW-UP LOCATION WOULD THE CLUES LEAD TO?

? IS THIS FOLLOW-UP LOCATION SIGNIFICANTLY CLOSER TO THE TRUTH?

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If so, it should be one Depth greater than the current location. If it only reveals different information but does not necessarily bring the crew closer to the truth, it should be on the same Depth.

As you create new follow-up locations, ask the same questions about them. Work down the branch, assigning new Depths, until it connects you to the final location. Now you know the Depth of the final location and can better assess how close every new location is to the final truth. Go back to unfinished branches and work out how they end up tying into the final location. Finally, make adjustments either to the nature or the locations or their Depth to correct any issues in the iceberg.

Mack the MC is deconstructing his backstory, breaking it down into individual locations. He starts with the locations indicated by his hooks: the crime scene, the casino, the hotel reception, Ashley's apartment. All of these locations are Depth 1.

Then he thinks about the final location, where the characters are most likely to confront Kenny Liu. From a dramatic standpoint, he wants it to take place in the same room the meeting with K9 and Ashley took place, or on the roof where Kenny Liu forced Ashley to jump. He decides that Kenny Liu has a private suite in the top floor of the hotel. Kenny Liu's private suite has the deepest Depth because if the crew gets there, they are most likely on to Kenny Liu.

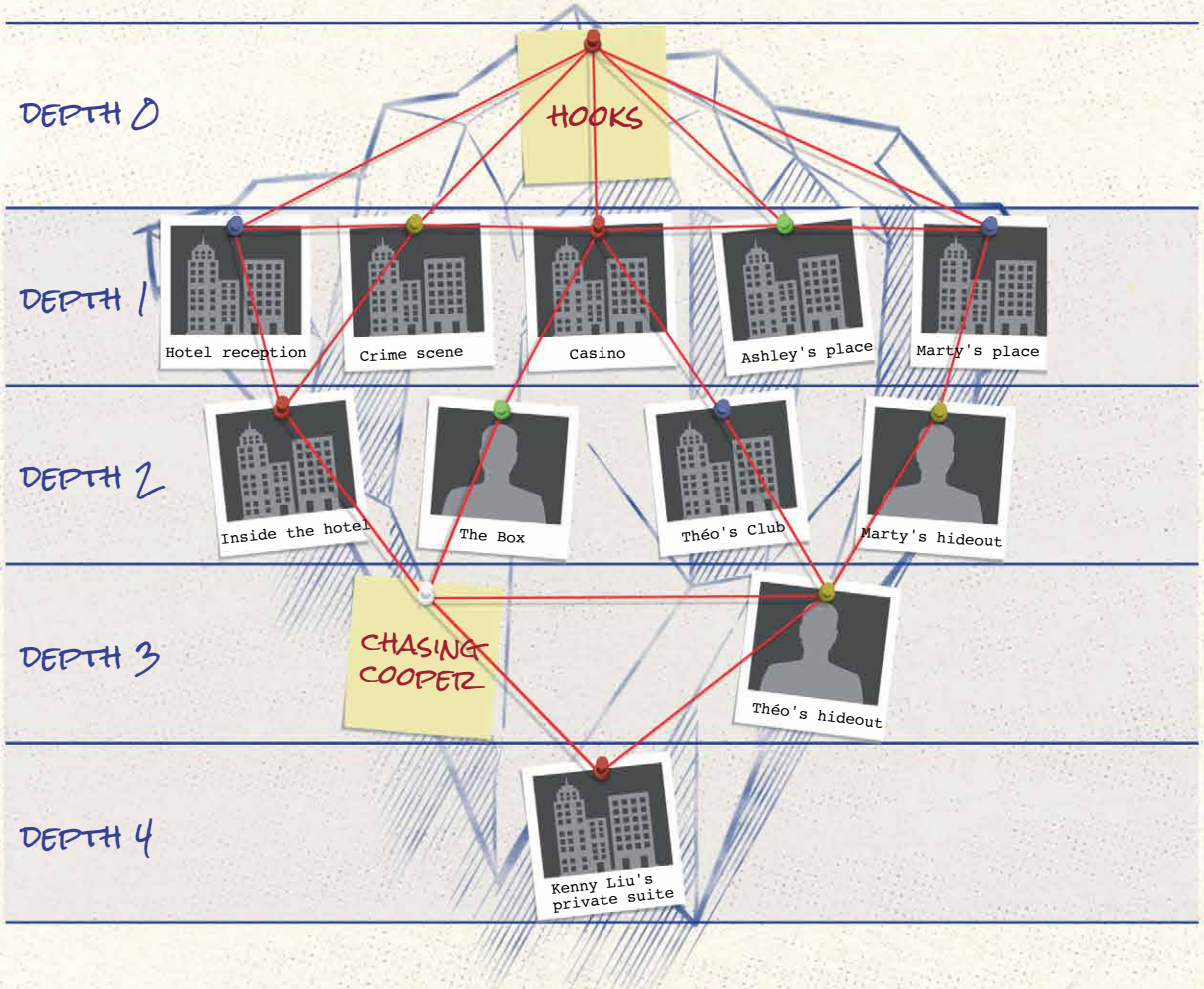
Now Mack asks himself how the crew can reach Kenny Liu. One path, or branch, would be investigating Ashley's life, mostly at her apartment or around her neighborhood, which may lead them to Marty's apartment (Depth 1 as well, because it does not bring them much closer to the truth: Marty is not there). The evidence there could expose the heist, leading them back to the casino (Depth 1) or somehow lead them to Marty's hideout. If they have Marty, he could tell them almost everything that happened up until the heist went south. That's a significant step towards cracking the case, so this location is Depth 2. Most importantly, Marty by then would have figured out Blanc two-timed them, so the characters can look for Théo Blanc's hideout (Depth 3). Interrogating the card expert could expose Cooper's interest in Ashley, tying it all back to that night in Kenny Liu's private suite (Depth 4).

Another path could be investigating the hotel and the casino. People on the floor may have seen Marty (leading to Marty's apartment, Depth 1) or Theo (leading to a gambler's club Théo hangs out in, Depth 2, because it's closer to Théo, who knows more than Marty). Investigating the men's room would reveal a scuffle with security took place there, pointing at the Box, the security center of the casino (Depth 2). If the crew gets in the Box they could learn about Cooper's actions that night from the security guards, camera feeds, etc. leading them to go after Cooper (Depth 3), which Mack wants to stage as a chase in the City streets. Naturally, Cooper will lead them to Kenny Liu's private suite (Depth 4).

Alternatively, the crew can investigate the crime scene (Depth 1) which may lead to the casino or Ashley's apartment (both also Depth 1). They may also wish to investigate inside the hotel (Depth 2): the rooftop, the security feed, the personnel. Kenny Liu and Cooper did their best to hide the evidence, but there is a chance the crew will discover a private elevator going from the Box (Depth 2) to Kenny Liu's private suite (Depth 4) or find out about Cooper's involvement and go after him (Depth 3). To avoid the crew jumping from inside the hotel to Kenny Liu's private suite, Mack decides that it's a moving location: if the crew finds it ahead of time and reveals much of the case, Kenny Liu will be in his downtown penthouse instead.

There can be many other constellations of how this investigation goes down, but Mack doesn't need to cover everything. He has the major paths of investigation covered, so he moves forward. The iceberg for the case looks like this:

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LOCATIONS

Now that you have a list of locations, go through each location and write down:

- **a description** of the location, emphasizing its dramatic potential in a scene, as well as any special features, e.g., the building is on fire;
- **a short list of characters** present there, a description of their appearance and personality, when they can be found there, etc. Put more emphasis on key characters (such as Marty in the above example); you should already have some description of them from the backstory. Group multiple characters who serve the same function into collectives (e.g., the guests at the casino); and
- **a list of clues** that may be found at this location.

CLUES

Clues are always short and specific items of information that lead to a location no deeper than the next Depth (they can also lead back to a shallower Depth or sideways to a different location in the same Depth). Specifically, clues should lead to one of the follow-up locations of the location they are found in. They can be, among other things:

- **physical evidence**
  a calling card, muddy footprints, strange marks on a car's bumper, photos, a matching gun
- **information gleaned from characters**
  eyewitness reports, rumors, a story revealing someone's kindness, alibi, confession, suspicious behavior
- **observations and deductions**
  security camera feed, stake out, crime scene analysis, a suspect showing up at the scene

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- **papertrail**
  personal files, schematics, City records, police records, company financial statements
- **information obtained by legendary means**
  (using divination powers, asking one's Mythos for guidance) what the killer's Mythos is, what the dead know about this, the contents of a locked safe

Some clues can be accessed in more than one location (e.g., a person's digital profile). Either copy them to your other locations or note that to yourself. Conversely, you can distribute clues across different locations so that the characters must piece them together to discover a fact. For example, one location may have the murder weapon while another location may have the killer's fingerprints, and the two can be cross-referenced to incriminate the killer.

Create at least some clues that can work with the abilities and resources of each of lead character. However, do not plan how each clue will be revealed. First, many of the clues you will prepare may not be used eventually because the players will not choose to investigate the locations these clues are included in. Second, keeping the planning to a minimum ensures you'll be "playing to find out", as you remain more flexible in dispensing the evidence.

While most clues point out a logical course of investigation, clues that rule out incorrect courses of investigation can greatly help the flow of your case. Remember that the players start out not knowing anything about the case you created, so eliminating possible explanations to what happened is a big part of their investigation.

Mack the MC starts by creating the crime scene location, where Ashley Lind was found dead after her 'suicide':

Location description:
At the night of the event, the entrance to the Royal Plaza Hotel is closed off entirely; mixing with the bright lights of the hotel's signs and floodlights, blue and red police lights flood the area. The rain falls heavily. Ashley's body is covered by a tarp. Police officers and detectives go around collecting evidence and questioning witnesses. The following morning, the body has been removed and only the area of impact is surrounded by police tape, with a single policeman standing watch and taking additional witness reports.

Characters at the scene:

- Detective Johnny Benson, a forensics specialist; a brusque sturdy middle-aged man, who grunts, growls, and barks more than he talks.
- Police officers (collective)
- Eyewitnesses (collective)

Clues:

- Shortly after midnight, this person's body came crashing through the glass ceiling of the hotel entrance.
- She is a dark-haired, white female, late 20s to mid 30s.
- She was wearing an evening gown.
- There was no major event at the hotel, but the casino was open.
- One eyewitness says he saw her at the casino earlier that night. She was alone (this was during the heist).
- Forensics say she died from the impact with the ground.
- Searching the body:
  - » There is a small loaded pistol tucked in her thigh holster.
  - » Stashed in a hidden pocket at the back of the dress, there are her driver's license (identifying her as Ashley Lind) and a few bank notes.
- Policemen say there is nothing on the roof indicating a struggle.
- The police thinks it was suicide.

Mack then continues to create similar write-ups for all the other locations.

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RED HERRINGS

A *red herring* is a misleading clue that points the crew in the wrong direction, that is, to a dead-ended investigation path. A red herring can enhance a case by complicating it and making it harder for the players to crack; however, it must be used with caution, keeping certain caveats in mind.

A *cold* red herring, one which really does lead to a dead-end, should be revealed as such in the location it is found or in the location it points to (that is, shortly after it is found) to avoid frustration. Otherwise, you may create an entire investigation thread that amounts to nothing. While in reality investigating a possible lead may certainly come to a dead end, cinematic investigations tend to weed out the cold red herrings quickly. Furthermore, from a game perspective, your players may be disappointed if they spend a session or two investigating a direction that ends up being completely useless to the story. Unless you wish to simulate a very realistic investigation, it is suggested to refrain from creating dead-ended branches in your iceberg. Most of the time you do not need to create cold red herrings yourself: the players will often misinterpret your clues and go in the wrong direction until additional clues reveal the truth.

A *hot* red herring is one that ties back to the investigation or reveals something else of importance to the crew, and is an enjoyable cinematic trick. While it makes the crew believe something false, it also indirectly reveals information valuable to the story. For example, in the above murder case with Thor and Loki (see page 87), the Rift of Thor is a red herring; the Rift of Loki uses him to shift the blame from herself. However, even though the Rift of Thor is technically a decoy, he is not a narrative dead-end; in fact, he may be instrumental to the investigation, depending on what path the players take. Another option is to use a hot red herring in one investigation to reveal details from another case.

If you wish to incorporate a hot red herring into your story, try to plant a clue early in the investigation that will make the players misinterpret all the other, valid clues. Later in the investigation, plant another clue that refutes the red herring and restores the players' interpretation of the clues to the right track, resulting in an "AHA!" moment and revealing a twist in the plot. This way, all the other clues collected by the players along the investigation are not worthless, they're just temporarily misinterpreted.

STEP 3: ADDING DANGERS

Your case is almost ready now. At this point, it is an investigation that the crew can engage in, with specific investigative challenges such as asking the right questions, drawing the right conclusions, following up in the right place or with the right people, etc. However, a *City of Mist* story is not complete without some action: someone tampers with the evidence, someone assaults the investigators, someone tries to get away, or someone tries to kill the killer.

Furthermore, some cases involve challenging follow-up actions. For example, if the lead characters found a factory that makes designer drugs, maybe they want to shut it down by force; or if they need to get a special ingredient for a potion that will save their crewmate's life, they may venture into a mysterious Enclave and battle whatever they find inside. These challenges should be described in game terms so you can use them in your scenes.

People and things who pose a threat to the investigation, to the crew, or to the crew's goals are Dangers. You complete your case by creating a list of potential Dangers. Ask yourself:

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? WHO OR WHAT COULD ENDANGER THE INVESTIGATION OR INTERFERE WITH FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS?

- The perpetrator or anyone trying to protect them
- A third party with interest in the case
- The victim(s) (e.g., turned to mindless zombies)
- Threats or conditions in a location (e.g., drunk bar crowd or the collapsing water tanks in the City Aquarium)
- Enemies of the crew, and particularly Nemeses you can weave into the story

Put together a list of Dangers which may participate in the case. You may want to write your own Dangers, using the rules given in Chapter 3: This is MY City!, or use some of the Dangers in the Danger Profiles directory (also in Chapter 3) or in other *City of Mist* products.

Mack the MC goes over the backstory to see who or what could be a potential Danger. He comes up with the following:

- **Kenny Liu**, hotel and casino magnate. Besides his sizeable army of private security, Kenny Liu is the Rift of The Emperor (Borderliner) and is able to supernaturally command others, overwhelming the weak-willed.
- **Carlton Cooper**, casino chief of security (the Dragon, Touched). Mack wants Cooper to have mostly the senses of the Dragon, like its fabled ability to know every coin in his hoard. Giving the ability a twist, Cooper can tell when there is money missing from the casino's safe or cashiers, and can sense the location of any chip of the Royal Plaza Casino, anywhere in the City. Mack is also deliberating some more classic dragon powers, like scales or fire-breathing.
  - » Cooper in his car, in the chase scene
  - » The hitman Cooper may have hired
- **Martin "Marty" Brooks**, a conman; while a Sleeper, Marty can certainly fool the crew.
- **Théo Blanc**, a professional gambler. Mack considers making the card player a Rift as well.
- **Casino security**
  - The casino security guards (as a collective); they can also be used as Kenny Liu's private security.
  - The Box, in case the characters get in a fight there.
- **K9**, the Rift of Cerberus, if the group somehow interacts with him. His stats are given in the Danger Profiles directory.

WRAPPING UP

Together, your backstory, locations, and Dangers make up everything you need to run your case. While the backstory gives you a broad background on the case from which you can easily improvise, the locations and the Dangers provide details that can be promptly incorporated in the game, without unnecessary pondering or deliberations. Your iceberg gives you a good grasp of how the case *might* evolve, but as you're "playing to find out", keep in mind that the players may have different ideas on how to crack this case. Either way, you are ready; you can now take your group on a broody noir investigation of legendary powers and ordinary people in the streets of your City of Mist.

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DESIGNING A SERIES

While solving a single *City of Mist* case is lots of fun, a true *City of Mist* story needs time and breadth to build up, deepen, and brew. It is then that the real magic of the City unfolds, providing you with countless cinematic moments before it culminates in a gratifying, cathartic experience. Playing a series allows the lead characters to grow and evolve, to experience achievements and downfalls, and to materialize what was dormant inside them all along: their destiny. It allows the plot to thicken, with supporting characters weaving in and out of the storyline and major villains dominating entire story arcs, with shocking revelations forcing the lead characters to choose sides, and with a slow-paced investigation finally unearthing an unspeakable truth which, once known, changes everything.

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THE SERIES CONCEPT

The series concept, established at the beginning of the Exposition Session, defines what your group (yourself included) would like the series to be about. The nature of the crew, its goals, and its modus operandi form the baseline from which everything in the series arises. Most if not all of the cases in your series should be written in accordance with the series concept, or adapted to it, so keep it in mind.

```
Alice the MC is designing the Lake-
side Drive series. Her group decided
that the series will revolve around a
neighborhood which was partly flooded
and submerged in a pond, a catastrophe
which everyone seemed to have forgotten
— everyone except the lead characters.
Most of the cases in the series will
involve investigating cases of people
who disappeared when the neighborhood
sunk underwater or people and organi-
zations involved in the catastrophe or
who are in-the-know.
```

PRIORITIZING MYSTERIES AND IDENTITIES

As explained in Chapter 4 of the Player's Guide, an important aspect of the lead characters' development hangs on dramatic moments where they must choose between their Mysteries, their Identities, and/or circumstantial considerations (such as a threat on their lives, etc.). While only the player can decide whether his character is facing a dilemma and thus is **Making a Hard Choice**, it falls to you to provide the circumstances which may trigger this move.

In a way, the players use their characters' Mysteries and Identities to tell you what they would like to explore in their character and you should respond to that by providing them with the opportunities to do so. During a session, you can create a situation that allows a player to trigger **Make a Hard Choice** by using the hard MC move **Force Them to Choose** or by orchestrating the right circumstances.

When you design your series, make sure to gather enough story elements and plot ideas that focus on the lead characters' Mysteries and Identities. Later, when you write story arcs and cases for the series, think of how to leverage these elements and ideas in order to trap characters in situations that would allow their players to trigger their Mysteries and Identities.

Read more about Mystery and Identity dilemmas under **Make a Hard Choice**, page 254 of the Player's Guide.

SERIES RESOURCES

The first step in creating your series is sifting through what you and your group have already put together and compiling a list of resources you can use in your cases and story arcs. At the end of the Exposition Session, or after your group plays through a few cases, you already have a plethora of materials to draw from:

- The crew theme, power tags, weakness tags, and Mystery or Identity
- Each character's backstory, themes, power tags, weakness tags, Mysteries, and Identities
- Each character's Mythos and the characters, locations, and plot developments associated with it
- Your notes from the Exposition Session, and specifically "A Day In The Life"

Go over all these ideas and details and divide them into four lists or "buckets": burning questions, story elements, plot ideas, and style guides. You can use the Series Resources Sheet at the end of the book.

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BURNING QUESTIONS

List here all the burning questions of the series. Burning questions are unresolved issues that your group would like to see resolved in an interesting way during the series, written as a question. If your group is not going to be interested in the answer to a question, then it isn't a burning one. The questions in your list can touch on all the different levels of the series, from the general to the specific. They can be questions that the players or the characters have asked or questions that you keep to yourself.

- **Questions at the heart of the series**, if they are known at this point, such as *Who is the Crimson King? What lies at the bottom of the pond?*
- **Story arc questions**, such as *Who is behind the new drug on the streets? Will the crew stop Vulcan before he can melt down Union Station?*
- **Crew questions** related to what matters to them (also as reflected by the crew themes and Mystery or Identity) such as *Who is watching the watchmen? How can they fight crime if they break the law? What should the crew do with their loose cannon crewmate?*
- **Individual characters questions** related to what matters to them (also as reflected by their themes, Mysteries, and Identities), such as *How high can Jack climb? Is Salamander going to keep his job? Is Excalibur going to rebel against her father?*
- **Questions about recurring story elements** including non-player characters, locations, or groups such as *Why does Caterina always wears her jacket inside out? Where does Lazy Pete work at nights? What is going down in Hangar 74? Who are the Red Caps?*

Later, when you write cases or story arcs, burning questions can be used several ways:

- **Plant clues that lead to the answers you chose:** You can answer some of the burning questions in a way that seems the most compelling to you. You then plant throughout the series clues which will lead the crew to the answers; the crew follows these clues until they reveal the truth.
- **Create situations that will reveal the answer:** Leave some of the burning questions to be resolved in the game, especially if the actions of the crew can affect the answer. For example, if you wonder at the beginning of the series, *Will the crew save the City from the Rift of Morpheus against all odds?* you can create situations that will allow the crew to reveal Morpheus' plan and stop it, and then see what happens. This is particularly true about questions regarding player characters Mysteries and Identities: you should always allow the character's actions to reveal the truth about who she really is.
- **Use a "soft" answer:** You can have a tentative answer to your question and plant some vague clues about it. When the characters take action to influence the outcome of this burning question or when you have a better idea later, you can change it.

If you are using the optional rule of Reversed Clues (see page 230 of the Player's Guide), the players can also affect the answers of important questions by spending a Clue to say what they find. You then adjust the answer to accommodate the information given by the player.

STORY ELEMENTS

List here all the elements you can use later in your cases and story arcs. Story elements are characters, locations, organizations, groups, trends, phenomena, and even abstract forces that exist in your story and that you may wish to use later in the series. You can introduce story elements in the cases you write or as part of your improvisation during a session.

Think about how often you would want to see each element in the series. Divide the greater story element list into these sublists:

- **Supporting cast or major themes:** story elements central to a story arc or to the entire series, such as *the Crimson King, the Lakeside Drive lake, the evil organization Genesis*, etc.
- **Recurring cast or themes:** story elements that appear regularly in the series, either as allies, threats, or as part of the background setting

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- **Guest appearances**: story elements which will probably appear in one case only
- **Cameos**: story elements that are referenced occasionally but not explored

Based on how the series evolves, story elements can change the scope of their role. For example, if you introduce a character as a guest appearance and the players somehow become more involved with her, you may decide to make her a recurring or even a major character.

PLOT IDEAS

List here all the ideas you have for plot developments and twists. As you go through the series materials, you may find that ideas for plot developments already start coming to mind: the possible fate of one of the supporting characters, a future attack on the crew's base of operations. Like story elements, plot ideas are developments you can use in the backstory of your cases, as potential developments in a case, or as part of your improvisation in a session.

If you prefer to "play to find out" about this aspect of the plot, it's better to phrase a plot idea as a question and move it to the burning questions section. For example, instead of deciding that *the mayor will be assassinated at the rally* you can transform this idea into a burning question, *Will the mayor be assassinated at the rally?* By doing so, you allow the players to take part in shaping the answer to that question.

STYLE GUIDES

List here all the ideas you have for the series' visual and narrative style, or in other words, elements that contribute to the cohesive *feel* of the series rather than its content and plotline. This can include thematic motifs that recur throughout the series or special effects you want to remind yourself to describe.

Alice the MC wants to give her Lakeside Drive series a creepy touch. Drawing on the crew theme weakness tag, hydrophobia, and the backstory of the crew, which involves a catastrophic event in which possibly thousands of people drowned, she decides to weave descriptions of water in a scary way: there is a constant sound of water dripping, trickling, and flowing in the series. Expanding on that, she adds that the Lakeside Drive neighborhood has a lot of water problems: burst pipes, moisture in the walls, flooded basements, etc.

Furthermore, since the series is set in the 80s, Alice watches some movies and shows that depict that period, to better represent it in her descriptions.

USING AND BUILDING UP YOUR SERIES RESOURCES

Have your series resource lists with you when you run sessions for the group and refer to them when you need some ideas.

At the end of every session, go over your notes from the session and add them to your series resources as new burning questions, new story elements, new plot ideas, or new style guides.

As the series unfolds, the crew and the lead characters evolve. Whenever the players add a new detail to their crew or individual characters, add that detail to the series resources, if it's relevant. Such new details can be:

- New crew themes, tags, Mysteries, or Identities
- New character themes, tags, Mysteries or Identities, theme improvements, extra themes, or Nemeses
- Ongoing or permanent story tags

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STORY ARCS

The most fundamental component of a series is a **story arc**: a sequence of related cases that revolve around a major threat, usually an Avatar or another type of powerful Rift. The set of sessions spent playing through a story arc is generally called a **season** (although a season may involve several story arcs or parts of story arcs), with the first session designated season premiere and the last session designated season finale.

EPISODIC SERIES

Inspired by modern storytelling, which is leaning more and more toward sequential stories, *City of Mist* is designed so the content of the cases weaves into one or more story arcs. However, you can also choose to create an episodic series, where there is no major storyline connecting the different cases. Each case in an episodic series stands alone: a single crime, wrong, or problem which the lead characters investigate and resolve. The connecting thread in an episodic series is the crew itself, for example, a police team investigating a different crime every time, or an order of hunters fighting the monster of the week. Sometimes a few cases can connect and form a mini story arc, but this does not define the series.

THE BIGGER ICEBERG

A story arc is made of cases and, like the cases it is made of, it can be likened to an iceberg.

At **the bottom of the iceberg**, there lies the **threat** who is the root of all the crimes, wrongs, or problems that comprise the different cases of the story arc. This threat is usually a powerful Rift, but weaker Rifts and Sleepers could also serve as threats if they are influential enough. The threat's influence and power determine how involved the story arc will be: a Borderliner gone rogue could keep the crew busy for a few cases at most; a well-established Legendary could be the subject of a medium story arc; while an Avatar could act as the ongoing threat of an entire series.

Every threat that lies at the foundation of an iceberg has:

- **a large-scale agenda** that she is trying to promote;
- **a modus operandi**, methods to further her agenda;
- **an endgame**, the ultimate goal which this agenda seeks to accomplish; and
- **an operation**, a real-life system of resources, facilities, and agents that promote her agenda.

The body of the iceberg represents **the operation.** The influence of the threat seeps upwards through the different Depths of its operation and spreads out to affect the City. Each Depth of the operation corresponds to a level of awareness: Sleepers, Touched, Borderliners, Legendaries, and Avatars. This serves as a rough guideline to determine how deep this aspect of the operation is hidden in the Mist. Therefore, the Sleeper Depth of an operation is its most visible aspect while the Avatar Depth, if it's a part of the operation, contains the most hidden and unknown aspects of the operation, aspects only the Avatar who created the operation knows of. (Note that this does not mean one must attain a certain level of awareness to become savvy to parts of an operation at the corresponding Depth; the Depth only indicates how well-hidden that part is.)

The lowest Depth, or the bottom of the iceberg, represents the threat, as said above. Immediately above the threat are her most loyal or powerful allies or servants, each responsible for an entire branch of activity. For example, an Avatar threat could have several Legendary-depth subordinates, each responsible for a different aspect of the Avatar's operation. A different threat, a Legendary, could have just one Borderliner-depth henchman at his service, or five, depending on how broad the operation is. This succession of power continues

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up the iceberg, with each level responsible for a sub-branch of the threat's operation.

Here too, this does not mean anyone at the Legendary-depth of an operation must be a Legendary; however, most characters running an operation (or any part thereof) at any given Depth would have the level of awareness corresponding to that level. Any deviation from that guideline mostly reflects on that individual's value to the operation. For example, non-Legendary individuals serving at the Legendary Depth of an operation may be new or subordinate Avatars with little influence or, conversely, Borderlines, Touched, or even Sleepers with considerable influence and power.

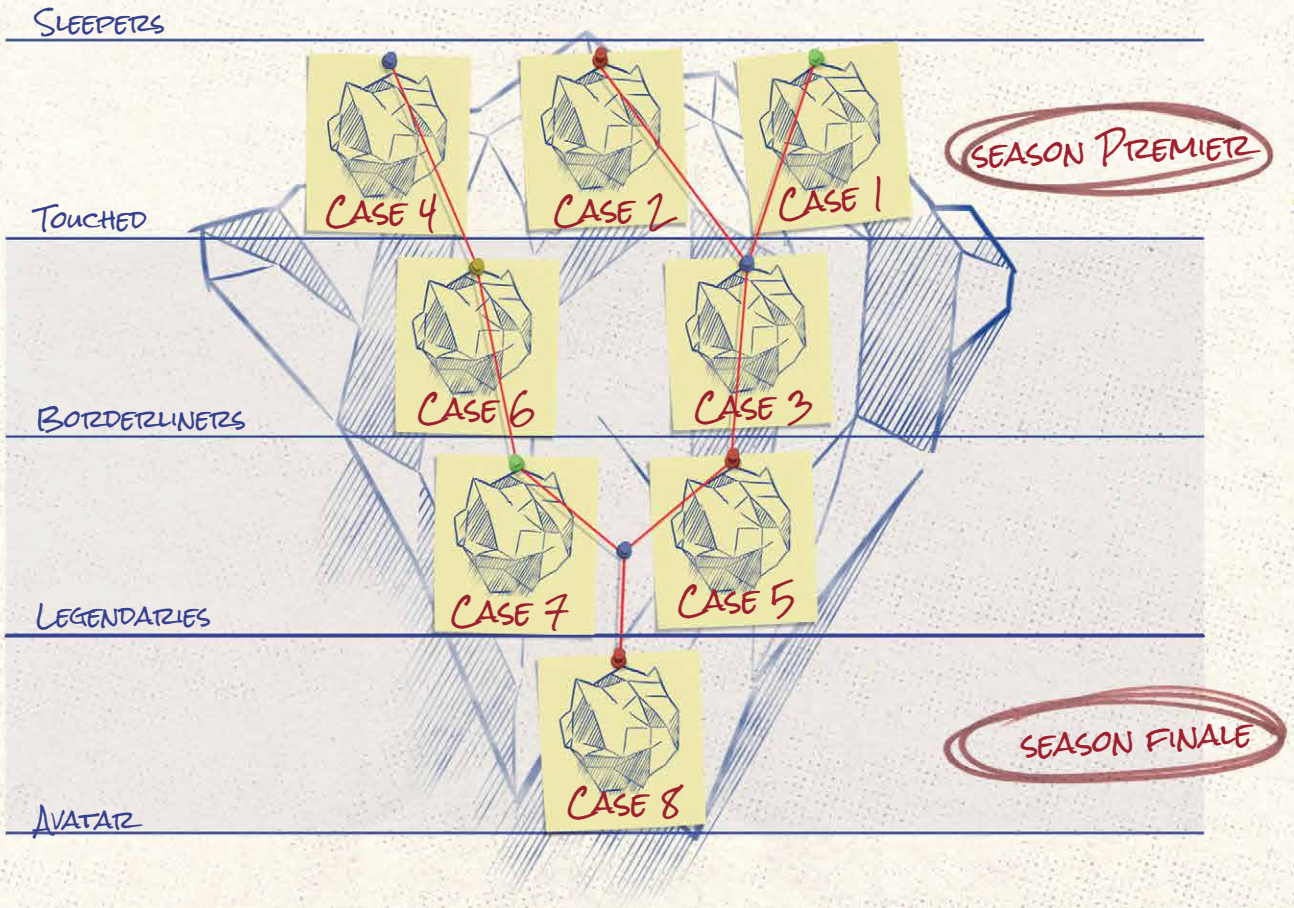
The tip of the iceberg represents Depth 0 or the Sleeper Depth, or, in other words, the visible manifestations of the various parts of the operation. If one of the branches of the threat's operation is involved with arm deals on the street, that takes place on the Sleeper Depth. If another branch promotes hatred and violence through spiked prescribed medication, that takes place on the Sleeper Depth too.

HERE TOO, THE INVESTIGATION REVEALS THE ICEBERG

In a story arc as in a case, the crew's investigation leads them from the tip of the iceberg down to the bottom. The first difference between a story arc and a case is that while a case's iceberg is made of locations, a story arc's iceberg is made of cases.

Every case in a story arc reveals more about the threat or brings the crew closer to overcoming it. It starts with information the crew obtained at the end of a previous case and ends with information leading to the next case or to several potential cases. In other words, **the truth** of every case becomes **the hook** of the following case. Like locations, subsequent cases can be on the same Depth: they help expose other branches of the operation, branches that later merge into the same root as the crew digs deeper.

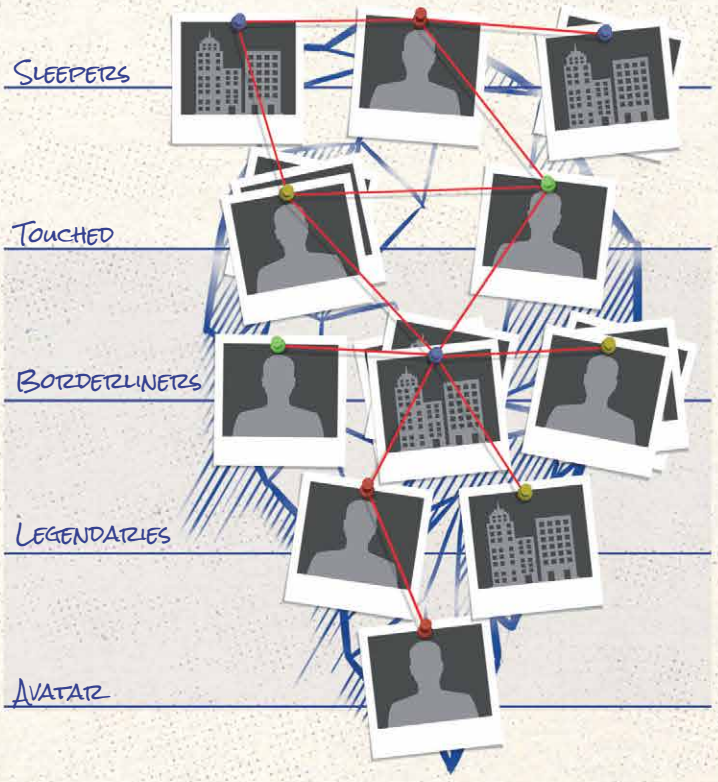
The second difference between a story arc and a case is that while in a case you write all or most locations before playing the case, **a story arc is**



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written as it unfolds, never in advance. Every case you play in a story arc can change everything (play to find out, remember?). The lead characters can reveal an important clue that brings them much closer to the threat than you anticipated; they can decide to launch an attack on one of the operation's facilities; they could take a time-out to go on a quest to restore the health of a crewmate who **Stopped. Holding. Back** and paid the ultimate price in the last case; they may be captured by the threat's operatives, and so on. You cannot and should not try to predict what the next case you play will be. Instead, you only write the next case in the story arc after your group completes the last case you wrote.

The story arc ends when the threat is eventually overcome or transformed into something else, or when the threat permanently overcomes the crew (end of the series?).



THE OPERATION ICEBERG

What you can and should have ready in advance for a series is the **Operation Iceberg**, a map detailing the various Depths of the operation at the center of your story arcs, along with the characters, locations, and groups involved in each Depth. This map of the operation, reminiscent of a "crime board" or "evidence board", keeps you aware of other possible operational activities taking place in the City parallel to what the crew is currently investigating. During sessions, it helps you improvise when the crew exceeds the boundaries of your written case and plunges deeper into or further across the iceberg. Between sessions, this layout of the iceberg let's you know what the crew will expose or confront in the next case you write and what clues to provide to lead them closer to the truth.

Chapter 3: This is MY City! explains how to create operations for Avatars and includes a handful of Avatars and their Operations Icebergs which you can use as the foundation for your story arcs.

HOW MANY STORY ARCS DO I NEED?

A series could have one central story arc or several interwoven story arcs, with the crew switching between story arcs from case to case, or sometimes, investigating a case that links two story arcs. Smaller story arcs can converge into larger story arcs; for example a Legendary-scale story arc can end up being just a remote branch of an Avatar's operation from another story arc. Even story arcs that ended can be rebooted with a new twist.

Note that having more than one story arc expands your City's "crime board" and makes the series dramatically more involved. As a consequence, it requires more cases and therefore sessions to investigate and expose. You should adapt the number and complexity of your story arcs to suit the planned length of the series and the availability of your group.

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STORY ARC WRITING PRINCIPLES

Think of the City as a living, changing metropolis. This narration principle applies also to writing cases in a story arc. Cases are usually separated by a span of time: usually a few days or weeks, although in some series cases could be months and maybe even years apart. The City does not stop during this time; it continues to change. Social trends, political movements, and natural phenomena all continue to evolve and affect the City. Most importantly, the work of the Mythoi and their Avatars, as well as the work of the Gatekeepers, never ceases. New Rifts are born, operations expand, and the Mist weakens in some areas and is restored in others. Change is constant.

Another important factor is that the actions of the characters have an impact on the City. Individuals that were saved by them seek them out to thank them personally; individuals who were harmed by their actions hold a grudge or seek revenge. What little of the crew's activity that is visible to Sleepers makes it to the media: they are linked with derailing a subway train, blowing the lid on a political conspiracy, or for being the bodyguards of the number one DJ in town. The crew also gains reputation behind the veil of the Mist: their names cross the lips of big underworld players who wish to recruit or eliminate them. Slumbering Mythoi awaken as they see in the crew members an opportunity to play out their dramas, perhaps even birthing new Rifts solely for this purpose. Everything is responding to the lead characters all the time. After all, this show is about them.

Once something is established, break it. Modern storytelling, which was greatly influenced by film noir, is all about shock. Take your time cultivating the status-quo: an annoying mayor who constricts the actions of the crew, a reliable ally who's always there when the going gets rough; a familiar landmark that seems to always crop up in the story. Then, when they least expect it, shatter the status quo: have the mayor become an Avatar, have their ally killed off or have him betray them, have the landmark swallowed into the earth so that the City skyline now seems empty and questions abound. Leave no stone unturned and don't be afraid to slaughter the series' holy cows (but not the players' holy cows). It makes for a great story.

THE DAILY

As a cinematic device, you can create one or more daily newspapers or news shows that report about developments in the City. At the beginning of each session, during downtime, or as a cutscene, share with the players what headlines have made it to the daily news. You can use this medium to share clues and hooks with the crew, to announce coming trouble (a la **Complicate Things**), to report about parallel branches or story arcs that continue to progress and stir the crew into action, etc.

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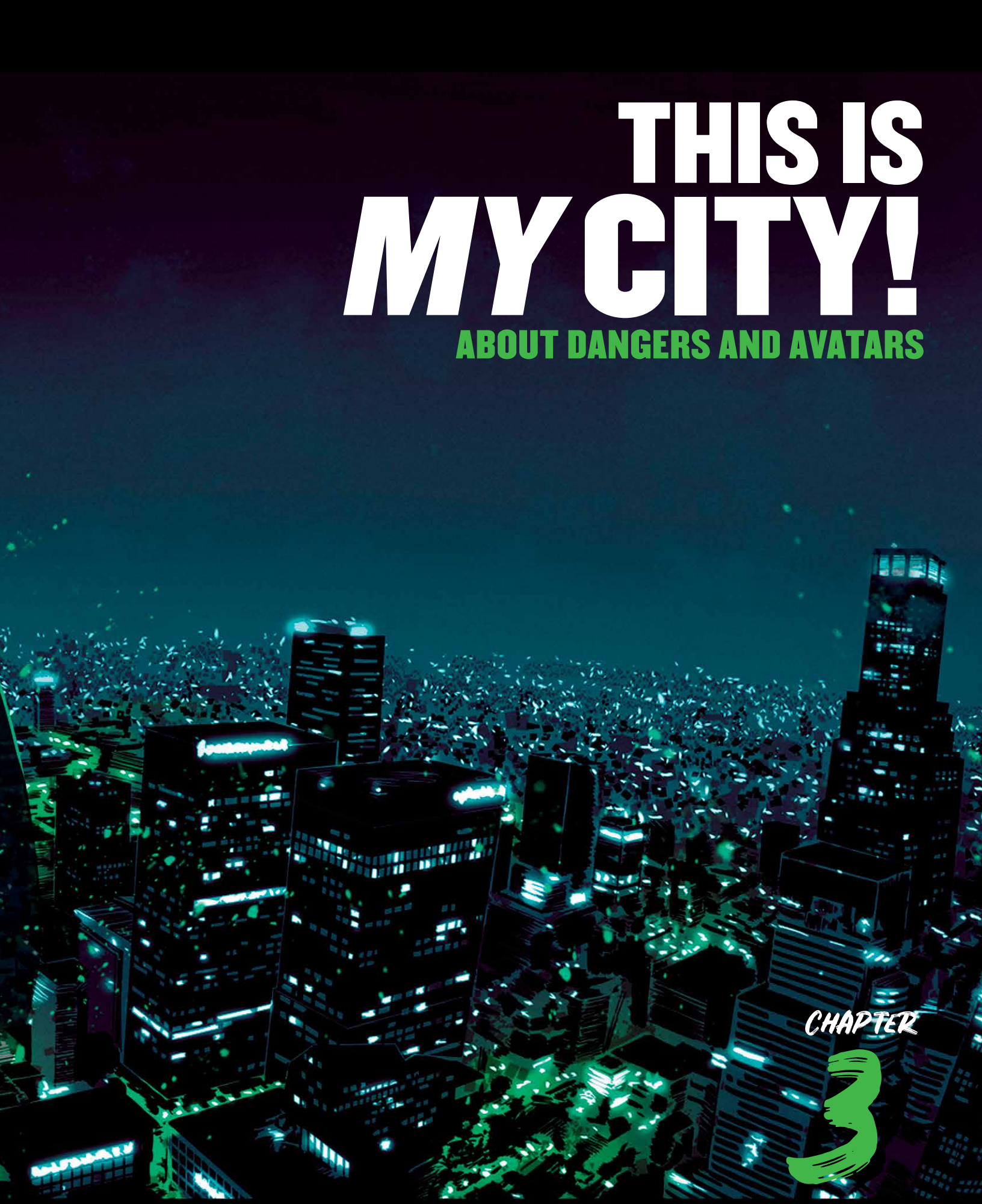


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THIS IS WHY...

THIS IS *MY* CITY!

ABOUT DANGERS AND AVATARS



CHAPTER 3

DANGER RULES

SPECTRUMS . . . . . PAGE 120

Spectrums measure how much of a given type of statuses a Danger can take before it changes irrevocably (overcome or transformed). A spectrum is made of a **tag** and a **maximum tier**.

- **Maxing out:** When a Danger takes a status on a spectrum with a tier equal to the spectrum maximum, the spectrum is maxed out.
- **Defeat:** Normally, when a Danger's spectrum is maxed out, the Danger is overcome.
- **Countdown Spectrums:** When these spectrums are maxed out, a custom move is triggered (e.g. when a timebomb explodes).
- **Immunities:** Spectrums marked with "–" indicate the Danger is immune to such statuses and ignores them altogether.
- **Off-Spectrum Statuses:** A Danger can take a status even if it does not match any of its listed spectrums.

EFFECTS OF STATUSES ON DANGERS . . . . . PAGE 128

When a Danger takes a status, choose one of the following (or more, if appropriate):

- The status counts against that Danger's spectrums to promote its defeat.
- The status applies to player moves against that Danger.
- The status applies to the Danger's own moves.

DANGER DEFENSES. . . . . PAGE 139

- **A defensive status or tag** which applies to players' attack moves
- A move which **reduces the tier of statuses** the Danger incurs (such as a Status Filter)
- **Immunities**, spectrums on which the Danger cannot take a status
- **Active Shield** (see right column), a custom move which hits the attacker before they make an attack

DANGER MOVES . . . . . PAGE 123

Soft and Hard Danger moves are suggestions for soft and hard MC moves you can make when using a specific Danger.

Custom Danger moves are special rules relating to a specific Danger.

- Most custom moves are **intrusions** and can trigger even during a player's spotlight.
- When a custom move is first triggered, you must reveal it to the players. (You can reveal it earlier than that, if you'd like)

COMMON CUSTOM DANGER MOVES . . . . . PAGE 136

- **Active Shield:** When a character attacks the Danger, the character first takes a status or faces a negative outcome.
- **Countdown Outcome:** Defines what happens when a Danger's countdown spectrum is maxed out.
- **Starting Status or Tag:** Give a Danger a status or a tag as soon as it enters the scene.
- **Status Filter:** Modify (usually reduce) statuses of a specific type received by the Danger.
- **Status Payload:** Create an additional side effect when the Danger successfully gives a status.

COLLECTIVES . . . . . PAGE 126

A collective is a single Danger representing a group of non-player characters or threats. Every collective has a **size factor** ranging from 1 to 4.

- A collective has the same spectrum and moves as a single individual, but:
  - » **For statuses taken by the entire collective:** Reduce the tier by the size factor.
  - » **For moves made by the entire collective:** Increase the effect by its size factor.
- **Target individuals:** Members of a collective can takes statuses and be overcome individually. When sufficient members of a collective are overcome, the MC reduces the collective's size factor.
- **Break apart:** You can break down a large collective into smaller collectives or individual Dangers, if the circumstances dictate so (e.g., a gang splits up).

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CREATING DANGERS ..... PAGE 131

STEP 1: CONCEPT

? CHARACTER: What are this Danger's abilities and resources?

? RIFT:

- What is its mythos?
- What is its level of awareness?
- What mythos powers does it possess?

? LOCATION: What is dangerous about this place?

? ALL DANGERS: In what ways will this Danger interact with the crew?

STEP 2: CHOOSE SPECTRUMS

? DEFEAT SPECTRUMS:

- How can this Danger be overcome?
- What statuses can bring it to an end?

? COUNTDOWN SPECTRUMS: What dangerous transformation or end is this Danger moving toward?

? IMMUNITIES: To what is this Danger immune?

STEP 3: CHOOSE SOFT MOVES

? How can this Danger make life harder for the crew, without dramatic consequences (yet)?

STEP 4: CHOOSE HARD MOVES

? IF THE CREW LETS IT:

- How would this Danger influence or hurt others?
- How would this Danger help itself or its allies?
- How would this Danger affect the scene or the story?

STEP 5: CHOOSE CUSTOM MOVES

? What can this Danger do that has not been described by its other moves?

? What quality does this Danger possess that has not been described by its other moves?

RIFT DANGER GENERATOR

CHOOSE AN EVERYDAY PERSONA (LOGOS)

CITY RESIDENTS		CRIMINALS		LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY	
City Official ★	p141	Cat Burglar ★★	p145	Beat Cops / Security Guards ★	p148
Corporate Lawyer ★★★	p142	Con Artist ★★	p145	Detective / Investigator ★★	p148
Helpless City Resident	p142	Crime Lord ★★★★	p145	Police Squad Car ★★	p150
Mob ★★	p142	Delinquent Teenagers ★	p146	Swat Team / Elite Security ★★★	p150
Mover & Shaker ★★★★	p143	Getaway Vehicle ★★	p146	Security System ★★	p150
Psyche Ward Nurse ★	p143	Heist Team ★★★ +	p146		
Radical Activist ★★	p143	Hired Thugs ★★	p147		
Reporter ★★	p144	Hitman ★★★	p147		
Social Butterfly ★★	p144	Petty Crook ★	p147		
Troubled Individual ★	p144	Smuggler ★★	p147		
Violent Drunk ★	p144	Street Gang ★★	p148		

CHOOSE A MYTHOS POWER SET

Beast + ★	p152	Leader + ★	p154	Thief + ★	p156
Creature Of Darkness + ★★	p153	Nature Spirit Or God + ★	p154	Trickster + ★	p156
Demigod Or Giant + ★★	p153	Necromancer + ★★	p154	Warrior + ★	p156
Ghost Or Spirit + ★	p153	Messenger Of The Light + ★	p154	Weapon Bearer (Relic) + ★★	p156
Golem Or Elemental + ★	p153	Sorcerer Or Witch + ★	p154	Winged Creature + ★	p156
Hunter + ★	p153	Swift-Footed + ★	p154		
Mind Controller + ★	p153				

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"I followed her into the filthy alley. A jet of steam blew out of the subway vents and I lost sight of her for a moment. I could hear the clickety-clack of her heels on the cobblestones. "Miss Rustov? You said on the phone that you had information about the Circus Brotherhood…". She laughed, somewhere in the alley, a rolling, unhinged laughter. I was starting to feel nervous. "Did I? You told everyone at the bar you were looking for them..." She stepped out of the mist, her eyes yellow like the moon, fangs as long as coffin nails protruding from her mouth, and three twisted horns adorning her head. "... I didn't want to disappoint you," she said coldly and then lunged at me with deformed fingers tapered and sharp. "I wish I could return the favor," I said. In my hand, the magnificent Shamshir-e Zomorrodnegar materialized from hilt to blade and rose to meet the demon's claws. "I found you, Fulad-zereh — and now you will die."

-Arsalan

Throughout your series, the lead characters are destined to encounter a wide range of characters, locations, and situations that will challenge them or pose a threat to their investigation – or their lives. Such threats can be Rifts endowed with legendary powers (including Relics, Familiars, and Enclaves) or mundane adversaries and hazards. They can be anything from a rickety scaffolding a police officer must scale in pursuit of a suspect to the heaving, grotesque Rift of a Minotaur guarding the door to the basement of a nightclub; a conniving little elf summoned with faerie magic by a wiccan gangbanger; or an elegant *femme fatale* Sleeper who destroys the good reputation of a brusque yet ultimately vulnerable detective.

Threats to the lead characters are described as **Dangers**: challenges that have predefined ways to influence or hurt the lead characters and predefined ways in which they can be overcome. During case creation, Dangers allow you to plan a threat in advance and control its challenge level. During a session, Dangers allow you to react faster by choosing to activate predefined Danger moves instead of improvising MC moves. You can create your own Dangers or use those under Danger Profiles, starting on page 140.

WHO GETS TO BE A DANGER?

You CAN create a Danger profile for any non-player character or entity that you control: from enemies, through self-serving neutral parties or random bystanders, to allies and series regulars. Anyone can potentially be a threat to the lead characters or their investigation: hostile or volatile characters are an obvious threat because they might hurt the lead characters, but friendly or innocent characters can also pose a threat because the lead characters might try to protect them or decide to change the course of their investigation because of them. For example, a little girl who is the Rift of Armageddon could be completely innocent but still pose a threat to the City; or the apparition that has been guiding the crew through the entire season can make moves to convince them to follow its advice and abandon other aspects of their lives, etc.

Do not create Danger profiles for the player's secondary characters (see page 236 of the Player's Guide), such as a sidekick or a riding beast. They are represented by the player's moves and statuses.

You SHOULD create a Danger only when you want to predefine the nature of a threat or a challenge. If a non-player character is unlikely to pose a threat to the crew, you won't be needing a Danger profile for her. Also, if a character *does* pose a threat but you feel you can portray it well using the MC moves alone, there is no need to predefine its moves. Danger moves are predefined MC moves and their effects are identical. The difference is that when you have a Danger profile, you have your moves ready in advance and tailored to the specific threat you want to portray.

WHAT ARE DANGER PROFILES?

A Danger profile contains all the information you need to use a Danger in a session: a brief description, its status **spectrums**, which define the ways in which it may be overcome, and **Dangers moves,** actions the Danger can take involving her abilities and resources.

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SPECTRUMS

DANGERS AND STATUSES

Dangers can take statuses just as player characters do. When a Danger receives a status, take a tracking card and note it in the same way a player notes statuses for his character: write down the tag and mark the tier. Then place the tracking card on the table where everyone can see it.

If a Danger continues to take statuses of the same nature – in other words, "on the same spectrum" – these statuses stack according to the rules for player character statuses, given under Taking Statuses on the Same Spectrum (page 223 of the Player's Guide): a higher status supersedes a lower status, an equal status increases the tier by one, and a lower status gradually builds up a higher status toward the next tier.

The effects of statuses on a Danger's abilities and the lead characters' interactions with the Danger are explained below, under Using Dangers.

WHAT ARE SPECTRUMS?

Spectrums are used to track how much of a given type of status a Danger can take before it changes irrevocably. Spectrums most often indicate ways in which a Danger can be overcome. A Danger has one or more spectrums, each consisting of a descriptive tag and a maximum.

The **descriptive tag** of a spectrum defines which type of statuses can eventually overpower that Danger and effectively end it (or transform it). Most Dangers have several spectrums, each describing a different approach to overcome or transform it. For example:

- A security guard could be physically *hurt*, *threatened*, or *bribed*.
- A celebrity performer could be *shamed* or *befriended* so she no longer poses a threat.
- A kindly old man could be *hurt* or *frightened to death*.
- In a building on fire, the fire can be *quenched* but the building can also *collapse*.
- The not-so-bright Rift of a Troll could either be *turned-to-stone* using sunlight or *outsmarted*.
- A character's best friend could be *losing hope* or *slipping out of reach*.
- An epidemic raging across the City can be *quarantined* or *cured*.
- The Rift of the Phoenix could *burn* itself to ashes and then rise again.
- A time-bomb could be *ticking* until eventually it explodes.
- An orchestrated stock exchange crash could be *stabilized* or *exposed*.
- A poltergeist could be *banished* or *appeased*.

The **maximum** of a spectrum, ranging from 1 to 6, indicates the tier of status on that spectrum required to overcome the Danger. The greater the maximum, the more punishment a Danger can take on a spectrum before it is overcome or transformed. A Danger could have several spectrums with a different maximum for each, representing easier and harder ways to overcome it.

If the player characters wish to overcome a Danger, they can try to give it statuses that fit one of its spectrums (although players don't necessarily know a Danger's spectrums, as explained below, they can still try to figure out ways to defeat it). Conversely, if the player characters want to protect a character or object represented by a Danger or stop a Danger from coming to a specific end or outcome, they should try to prevent it from taking statuses on the corresponding spectrums or reduce the tier of statuses on those spectrums.

When a Danger takes a status on one of its spectrums with a tier equal to or greater than the spectrum's maximum, the spectrum is maxed out. The Danger is then overcome or transformed in a manner befitting the spectrum. If it is overcome, it ceases to pose a threat to the crew or the investigation (whether temporarily or permanently depends on the story and how the Danger was overcome). This usually means you as the MC stop making moves from the Danger's profile. If the player characters were trying to protect this Danger or prevent it from accumulating statuses, they fail and suffer the consequences.

- A security guard with *hurt:3* is defeated after taking *gunshot-wound-3*.

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- A celebrity performer with *befriended:6* will become your friend if she takes *beguiled-5* twice, stacking to a tier-6 status.
- A kindly old man with *frightened to death:1* could be dead with even the slightest *fright-1*.
- A building on fire that has *collapse:4* would collapse after taking *molten-reinforcements-3* and *structural-damage-3*, stacking to a tier-4 status.
- The not-so-bright Rift of a Troll with *turned-to-stone:5* or *outsmarted:1* could be overcome by taking a lot of sunlight-related statuses or one little *tricked-1* status.
- A character's best friend with *losing hope:3* may try to kill himself if he takes *depression-1* four times consecutively, stacking to a tier-3 status.
- An epidemic raging across the City with *quarantined:4* could be contained if the population was *educated-3* and *medicated-3*, stacking to a tier-4 status.
- The Rift of the Phoenix with *burning:6* could take quite a few *burn-1*, *inflamed-2*, and *scorching-fire-3* before crumbling to ashes.
- A time-bomb with *ticking:5* could be slowly accumulating *tick-1*'s and *tock-1*'s.
- An orchestrated stock exchange crash could be *stabilized:5* if commerce was *blocked-at-the-mainframe-5* or *exposed:3* if it's *made-publically-known-2* and *called-out-by-politicians-2*, stacking to a tier-3 status.
- A poltergeist could be *appeased:4* after being *hesitant-2*, *hesitant-2*, and *convinced-3* (stacking to a tier-4 status).

Based on the nature of the spectrum and the statuses the Danger has taken, the MC decides the outcome of a maxed out spectrum. For example, if a *hurt:3* spectrum of a mobster is maxed out, the MC can rule that the mobster has surrendered, passed out, or died. The MC can choose to delegate this decision to the player who landed the final or decisive blow to that spectrum (if it was a player).

Depending on the chosen outcome, a Danger may permanently or temporarily cease to pose a threat to the lead characters. Alternatively, if maxing out a spectrum doesn't completely incapacitate the Danger, it may continue to pose a threat to a limited extent or in a different way that is not related to the maxed out spectrum. For example, if a City official's *legally-bind:4* spectrum was maxed out, she could not pose a legal or formal threat to the crew and would be bound by law to do what they demanded. However, she could still become violent or, conversely, become the target of an assassination attempt and therefore require protection.

SPECTRUMS AS ONGOING CONFLICTS

Spectrums are used to make a challange more involved, gradual, colorful, and difficult. Every spectrum represents an ongoing conflict or development. To overcome a Danger or create a specific outcome in the story that relates to that spectrum, the player characters must impose high enough statuses on that spectrum. For example, to kill a mobster with a *hurt:4* spectrum, they must impose high enough statuses on the hurt spectrum; to catch a burglar with a *catch:3* spectrum, they must impose enough statuses on her catch spectrum. However, if the burglar did not have a catch spectrum, it would mean catching her is not an ongoing conflict and can be done without imposing statuses at all.

Some player moves allow the player to achieve an outcome in the story without imposing statuses. Specifically, **Go Toe to Toe** allows a player to achieve a goal they set before they roll the dice. When a Danger has a spectrum that corresponds to what the player character is trying to acheive, tell the player that since they are facing a challenging adversary or situation, they must first inflict statuses before they can achieve their goal. With **Go Toe to Toe**, they should use the option "Get them good" to do so.

Jerry (playing Det. Enkidu): I want to bring down the Minotaur guy and subdue him, then arrest him. I'm **Going Toe to Toe** with the goal of subduing him.

Alice the MC looks at the Minotaur's Danger profile, seeing he has a spectrum of *hurt-or-subdue:5*. She says: Actually, since he's a raging pile of muscles, he can put up a fight. You'll need to impose a status to subdue him. You're still **Going Toe to Toe,** but

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choose to "get him good". You can use your goal to gain a secondary advantage, if you roll 10 or more.

Jerry: Okay, I got 7-9 with a Power of 3. I choose to give him *joint-lock-3*.

MC: Good. You manage to lock your arm around him, but he's putting up a fight and trying to aggressively shake you off. This one isn't going quietly!

The exception to the above rule is the move **Stop. Holding. Back.**, which allows players to achieve any outcome in the story. Furthermore, the MC may always exempt the players from having to overcome a Danger using its spectrums, for cinematic considerations. Since Dangers are the MC's tools, the hard MC moves, such as **Make Something Horrible Happen**, can always circumvent a Danger's spectrum (e.g., the MC can kill off a Danger with a single move, if she deems it cinematically interesting and plausible).

COUNTDOWN SPECTRUMS

As mentioned above, some spectrums represent a Danger's upcoming transformation or end which is undesirable for the lead characters, such as the collapsing house on fire, the exploding time bomb, or the depressed best friend. Such a spectrum is called a **countdown spectrum**.

Countdown spectrums trigger a Danger move when they are maxed out. The move represents the outcome of the completed transformation or achieved end of the spectrum. For example, a person infected with Lycanthropy could turn into a werewolf when his *transformed:3* spectrum is maxed out, becoming a different Danger (a werewolf); a bomb can inflict a high-tier status on anyone and everything around when its *ticking:5* is maxed out.

In most cases, a Danger with a countdown spectrum has at least one Danger move which allows it to give itself a status on that spectrum. This represents the Danger's progression towards its transformation or end. For example, a time bomb can give itself *tick-1* or a security system could give itself *alert-2* every time the player characters trigger a security measure. The move may be activated at different intervals depending on its nature: it might be a hard move, which is activated only when the players miss a roll (like the alarm; things get more dangerous as the players fail) or, in special circumstances, it might be played as a soft move after every time one of the players makes a move (like the time bomb; things get more dangerous with every action).

Conversely, a countdown spectrum may rely on statuses imposed by the player characters to progress. For example, a volcanic golem created by the Hawaiian volcano goddess, Pele, could explode after the player characters damage it enough. In this case, the countdown spectrum may define both how to overcome a Danger and what happens when a Danger is overcome.

SPECTRUMS AND CHALLENGE LEVEL

As a rule, it's harder to defeat a Danger with a *hurt:5* spectrum by inflicting physical harm than it is to defeat a Danger with a *hurt:2* spectrum in the same manner.

However, various defensive Danger moves can affect the way a Danger takes statuses, so the number of tiers in a Danger spectrum is not the only indication of how challenging it is. A Danger may also have other spectrums which describe alternate ways to overcome it, making it an overall easier target.

Furthermore, the difficulty of overcoming a Danger is not just in the number of tiers in a spectrum, but in its tag as well. For example, if the characters have no mystical firepower, they would have a hard time banishing even a *banish:1* poltergeist.

MISSING SPECTRUMS

A Danger does not need to have a spectrum accounting for every possible way of overcoming it. Since spectrums can be added on the fly (see below) a Danger's profile only lists spectrums for the major or expected ways of overcoming it. For example, if it is unlikely that a famous opera singer would often get involved in violence during the course of the series, her Danger profile will not have a *hurt* spectrum.

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IMMUNITIES

Some Dangers are immune to certain types of statuses. Such immunities are represented by a spectrum with no maximum. Any statuses the Danger takes on that spectrum are ignored, even if they are tier-5 or tier-6 statuses. A spectrum with no maximum is marked with – (e.g., *hurt:–*).

For example, if the troll Rift has a *hurt:–* spectrum, it could mean he is virtually impossible to overcome by physical harm – the lead characters must find another way to defeat him. The same could be true for the poltergeist, who simply has no physical body to hurt.

OFF-SPECTRUM STATUSES

A Danger can take a status even if it does not match any of its listed spectrums. This is particularly true for temporary statuses describing fleeting conditions. For example, a poltergeist can be temporarily *blinded-2* or *confused-1*, or it can be *enraged-4*, even if it doesn't have such spectrums. While off-spectrum statuses do not contribute directly to overcoming the Danger in the expected ways, they act as normal statuses that can affect the player characters' interaction with the Danger, so they are tracked normally.

DANGER MOVES

Danger moves are predefined MC and player moves that represent how a Danger interacts with the world and affects the story: what actions it normally takes, what abilities it has, etc. Most Danger moves are self-explanatory; they list in words what happens in the story and how to translate it into the rules, if necessary. There are three types of Danger moves: custom moves, hard Danger moves, and soft Danger moves.

CUSTOM MOVES

Custom moves are unique rules that represent special abilities or circumstances regarding the Danger. Like player moves, custom moves occur when the circumstances trigger their condition, no matter who currently has the spotlight. Therefore, they are considered MC intrusions. For example:

- **Made of Clay:** When the Golem of Prague enters the scene, give it *hardened-skin-1*.
- **Bodyguard:** When the mayor takes a status describing physical harm, his bodyguard takes it instead, if the MC deems it possible.
- **Brambles and Thorns:** When you try to get into the castle of the Sleeping Beauty, you first take *entangled-3* or *nick-and-cuts-2*, MC's choice.

Read more about custom moves and how to use them on page 134.

HARD DANGER MOVES

Hard Danger moves are predefined variations of hard MC moves. The effects used in hard Danger moves correspond to some of the hard MC moves. You can invoke them whenever you can invoke a hard MC move.

GIVE A STATUS

A status given by a hard Danger move is ongoing, unless otherwise stated. Tier-6 statuses are always permanent.

Give to others, negative:

- Clumsily throw a punch at someone (*bruise-1*)
- Flirt with someone to draw their attention (*distracted-2*, temporary)
- Rapidly throw three shurikens at different people (*cut-2*)
- Bind in an icicle (*frozen-3*)
- Drown with bureaucracy (*bogged-down-with-paperwork-5*)
- Withering curse (*withered-4*, permanent)
- Fatal headshot (*dead-6*)
- Put out a warrant for someone's arrest (*wanted-4* or *most-wanted-5*)

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Give to others, positive:

- Cover for partner (*cover-2*, temporary)
- "Empower my sisters!" (*confident-3*)
- Glamour others to make them look different (*glamour-4*)
- Rejuvenate and revitalize (*vitality-1*)

Give to itself:

- Give an impressive speech (*center-of-attention-4*, temporary)
- Suck up the energy from an electrical source (*charged-2*)
- Increase the intensity of its own flames (*in-flames-2*)
- Tick, tock (alternating *tick-1* and *tock-1* statuses)

REDUCE OR REMOVE A STATUS

A hard Danger move can remove both ongoing and temporary statuses, unless otherwise stated.

Remove from others or from opponents:

- Use a fire extinguisher (reduce 2 tiers of fire statuses)
- Win back control over the fight (reduce 1 tier of temporary combat advantage statuses from an opponent)

Remove from itself or allies:

- Restore freedom of movement (reduce 3 tiers of restricting statuses)
- Rally the troops (reduce 2 tiers of negative tactical statuses from the troops)

BURN A TAG

A hard Danger move can burn story tags and power tags of any theme. If a temporary or ongoing story tag is burnt, it expires, as normal.

- Banish beings not of this world (burn 3 tags of summoned creatures)
- Disarm (burn one weapon or handheld item tag)
- Sap someone's strength (burn 2 strength-related tags)
- Freeze someone's assets (burn 2 asset-related tags)

CREATE A STORY TAG
(**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)

A story tag created by a hard Danger move is ongoing, unless otherwise stated.

- Raise the dead (*zombie*, *skeleton*, or *wraith*)
- Snuff out the lights (*darkness*)
- Throw a tear gas grenade (*tear gas cloud*, temporary)
- Erect a stone wall (*stone wall*, *fortified*)

CREATE A NEW DANGER
(**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)

Bring a new Danger into the scene.

- Raise the dead (add new Danger: Host of Undead)
- Possess a bystander (add new Danger: Possessed Bystander)
- Activate an automated security system (add new Danger: Automated Security System)
- Explode into disease-carrying spores (add new Danger: Citywide Epidemic)

SOFT DANGER MOVES

Soft Danger moves are predefined variations of the soft MC move **Complicate Things**. You can invoke them whenever you can make a soft MC move. They describe an action the Danger can take to complicate things which changes the story without affecting the rules directly. The action can be cosmetic or significant but not dramatically detrimental for the crew (that would require to **Complicate Things, Bigtime** and therefore a hard move). However, the action can set the ground for a more dramatic negative outcome, building up to **Hit Them After a Fair Warning**. For example:

- Close in on the crew from all directions
- Threaten to kill a hostage
- Start to overload the bridge
- Slink back into the shadows, where the crew can't see
- Send incriminating or embarrassing photos to the press
- Beg for mercy
- Demand that you show up in time for work, or else

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COLLECTIVES

In *City of Mist*, groups of non-player characters or entities that are acting together as a single unit can be represented by a single Danger profile called a collective. To represent the size of a collective, determine its **size factor** using the table below.

SIZE OF COLLECTIVE	SIZE FACTOR
One member	0
A handful of members	1
Several members	2
Many members	3
A host of members	4

COLLECTIVE SPECTRUMS

A collective has the same spectrums as one of its individual members.

Members of the collective can take statuses independently. When a single member of a collective is the target of a status, track its spectrums separately from the collective. Whenever a single member is overcome, the MC determines whether the size factor of the collective should be reduced. For example, if enough members of a collective with "several members" are overcome, the collective may be reduced to a "handful of members".

The collective can take statuses as a group. If the entire collective is the target of a status, first reduce the tier of that status by the size factor of the collective. Then, apply any other defenses that members of the collective may have.

Statuses taken by a collective represent the condition of the group as a whole, not its individuals, so their tags should be adjusted to represent that. For example, while *black-eye-2* describes the condition of an individual, *a-few-men-short-2* is more appropriate for a group.

> Fighting a horde of malicious pixies with *hurt:2*, Excalibur transforms her bracelet into a rocket launcher and **Hits With All She's Got**, giving the horde a status of *blown-to-smithereens-5*. However, since there are so many of them, the horde (size factor 4) reduces the tier by 4 and takes only *a-few-dead-fairies-1* on the *hurt* spectrum. Another hit like that and she'll get rid of them.

COLLECTIVE DANGER MOVES

Danger moves made by the collective have a greater effect than those of an individual member. If the entire collective can affect a target, increase the effect of its moves (the tier of the status it gives, the number of tags it can burn, etc.) by its size factor. This requires the entire collective to take the same action against a single target (which may be another collective). If the entire collective cannot take the same action against a single target, break it down into smaller collectives as explained below.

> Robin Hood's band of muggers attacks Declan L'Estrange in the park. Each individual member can impose *bad-bruise-2*. Since the Merry Men have several members (size factor 2) and they can all attack L'Estrange at once, the collective can give him *broken-ribs-4*.

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BREAKING DOWN COLLECTIVES

A collective can be broken down to smaller collectives. This applies when a collective splits up or when only a part of a collective is making a Danger move or is affected by a status (or any other game effect). The MC determines how exactly the collective splits up and the size factor of the resulting collectives. As a general rule of thumb, a collective with a size factor of 2 or more should split up to two units with a size factor smaller by one (e.g. a size factor 4 collective breaks up into two units with a size factor of 3 each, a size factor 3 collective breaks up into two units with a size factor of 2 each). The collective can be broken down again and again until the size of the affected group is reached.

> An army of tin soldiers, led by the Nutcracker, overruns the City. Each soldier can cause *stab-2* with its bayonet. The army itself is a host, so its size factor is 4. However, when the army attacks a single person, only a handful of soldiers can attack together with bayonets. Their size factor is 1, so they cause *multiple-stabs-3*.

USING PLAYER MOVES AGAINST COLLECTIVES

When players use **Hit With All You've Got** against a collective and choose "Get them good or get more of them", the increased tier represents affecting more members of a collective; no further adjustment is needed.

When players use **Change the Game** and apply the effect improvement "Scale up the effect", treat the size factor of the collective as lower by one for each time that effect improvement is chosen. If they apply the *Dynamite!* Improvement "Large-scale effect", ignore the size factor altogether.

USING DANGERS

CREATING A DANGER ON THE FLY

You can create a Danger profile on the fly when you want to predefine how challenging an imminent threat will be for the crew. You can write down or make a mental note of quick and simple statements that outline the encounter:

- "This thug will go down when he takes *hurt-3*" (spectrum *hurt*:*3*)
- "If the dam hits tier 5, the City will be flooded" (countdown spectrum *collapse*:*5*)
- "I'm going to scare them by saying how the witch peers into their hearts" (soft move)
- "That Chimera is pretty mean, I guess it can do a *bite-4* or *slashed-4*" (hard move)
- "Vulcan is burning so whenever they hit him, they also get *burn-2*" (custom move)

INTRODUCING A DANGER

When a Danger enters a scene, narrate its appearance as you would for any character, location, or object.

Do not automatically share with the players the details of the Danger, such as its spectrums or Danger moves. First, consider which of the player characters is likely to have knowledge of this Danger, its nature, its abilities, and its resources. When a Danger's move is activated, either by you or because its condition was fulfilled, you must reveal this move to the group.

If the player characters wish to know more about a Danger, and given the right means, they can **Investigate** and spend Clues to ask questions about it. Provide details based on the outcome of the move and the players' questions, source, and method. As usual, you can choose to give a solid lead or a vague idea instead of exact specifications. For example, a lead character who is a gang member might know that a rival thug would take a tier-2 or tier-3 beating before he bails; a Rift of the Great Spirit might know that a Wendigo can drain the life out of its victims but perhaps not the extent to which the Rift of the Wendigo has perfected this ability.

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ADDING SPECTRUMS AND MOVES ON THE FLY

If the circumstances call for additional spectrums and moves for your Danger, simply add them on the fly.

Add a spectrum if the player characters are exploring a way to overcome the Danger that is not reflected in its listed spectrums. If this new way can somehow overcome the Danger, create a new spectrum by estimating what tier of status is required to defeat the Danger in this way and choose a maximum from 1 to 6.

> Det. Enkidu has had enough tousling with a troll under the highway bridge, so she's looking for another way to end the conflict. The troll has two spectrums listed, *turned-to-stone:5* and *outsmarted:1* but Det. Enkidu doesn't know about the first and she's too much of a brute to try the second. Instead, she tries the animal approach, turning their fight into a game and trying to *amuse-2* the troll. Enjoying this stroke of genius, Alice the MC agrees that the troll can eventually be persuaded to stand down this way and adds a new spectrum, *amused:4*.

Add a Danger move if you come up with an action that is appropriate for the Danger and is likely to be used by it regularly, but is not listed in its moves. If the action is unique to the situation, don't add a Danger move; simply make an MC move to reflect it, and narrate it as originating from the Danger. When you want to add a Danger move meant to be used regularly, choose whether it is a soft Danger move, a hard Danger move, or a custom move and select the appropriate effects and specifics.

> The troll later befriends Det. Enkidu and becomes an occasional ally. He often manages to entertain the hardy detective, who grows fond of him. The MC wants the troll to have an amusing and pacifying effect on Det. Enkidu. She creates two new Danger moves for the troll, in addition to his listed Danger moves:
>
> - a soft Danger move: "Start a fight for fun when it's least appropriate."
> - a hard Danger move: "Give Enkidu *amused-2* or remove 2 tiers from any moody or raging statuses Enkidu currently has."
>
> Since Enkidu often uses her rage to fuel her aggression and drive the investigation, Alice the MC thinks these moves could make things interesting.

EFFECTS OF STATUSES ON DANGERS

A Danger's statuses can be used in the game in several ways. They can:

- count against that Danger's spectrums to promote its defeat (as explained above);
- affect player moves against that Danger; and/or
- affect the Danger's own moves.

As the MC, you are advised to choose only the most appropriate of these options for each status taken by a Danger.

When necessary, you may apply more than one option. However, be mindful of how these options affect the challenge level of the game. For instance, if a Danger has taken a negative status, applying all of the above options to the same negative status could dramatically reduce the challenge level for the players, as a single status is promoting the Danger's defeat, improving the players' moves against it, and weakening its own moves against the players.

In addition to the above, off-spectrum statuses that are relevant to the Danger affect it like they do the player characters: tier-5 statuses incapacitate the Danger and prevent it from taking related actions while tier-6 statuses transform it permanently or destroy it. For example, a *blinded-5* Danger cannot take actions which require seeing, while a *blind-6* Danger could be permanently blind or make a fatal mistake due to her temporary blindness.

APPLYING A DANGER'S STATUS TO A PLAYER MOVE

When appropriate, a Danger's status can apply to player moves made against that Danger or to player moves that target that Danger. The Danger's status is then deemed to be helpful or detri-

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mental to the action the player character is taking. Note that the status only increases or reduces the Power of the action if it is the highest helpful status or the highest detrimental status among the statuses relevant for the action, as normal.

The Big Bad Wolf is hunting down Kitsune in the alleys of Chinatown and has given itself *sharpened-senses-3*. When Kitsune tries to **Sneak Around** to avoid the wolf, his Power is reduced by 3 since this status is detrimental to his action. (This assumes Kit has no other detrimental statuses of a higher tier.)

The super-criminal Margo Falls has fallen for Sullivan's charms, after he gave her the status *infatuated-2*. If Sullivan tries to **Convince** her to postpone her plans to rob the City Central Bank, his Power for this action is increased by 2 due to this helpful status (assuming he has no other helpful statuses of a higher tier).

Just like any player status, the Danger's status only applies to player actions which it directly enhances or impedes. This is given to the MC's interpretation; you are advised to use this guideline to adjust the challenge level of the game.

In a shadowy industrial loft, Margo Falls' team of professional mercenaries', a Danger with a spectrum of *overwhelmed:4*, is fighting Det. Enkidu, Goodfellow, and Sánchez, who are trying to reach Sullivan. Det. Enkidu charges at the mercs, **Hitting With All She's Got**, and manages to land a status of *pushed-back-1*, which counts towards their spectrum (three more tiers to go).

Since she did not choose to protect herself, the detective then makes a **Face Danger** move against heavy gunfire (*perforated-4*). The MC rules that being *pushed-back-1* doesn't reduce the effectivity of the mercenaries tactics, so Enkidu doesn't get to treat that status as a helpful status.

Later, Goodfellow tries to **Sneak Around** the mercs and secretly reach Sullivan in the back room. The MC rules *pushed-back-1* counts as a detrimental status for him because the mercenary team is now concentrated around the entrance to the back room.

APPLYING A DANGER'S STATUS TO ITS OWN DANGER MOVES

In some cases, the MC may rule that a particularly appropriate status detracts from a Danger's abilities or improves them.

When you make a Danger move, if a status detracts from that Danger's ability to perform the move, you can reduce the effect of the move by the tier of that status.

The MC rules that the mercenaries' *pushed-back-1* doesn't really hurt their firepower, and therefore they can still give a status of *perforated-4*. However, later in the game Goodfellow uses his illusions to create phantom visions of the crew members, imposing a temporary status of *can't-get-a-visual-2* on the mercs. The MC determines that this new status detracts from the mercenaries' ability to shoot. The next time the mercenaries fire their guns, their status of *perforated-4* will be reduced by 2 (the tier of *can't-get-a-visual-2* that Goodfellow imposed on them), so they will give *flesh-wound-2* instead.

On the other hand, when you make a Danger move and a status improves the Danger's ability to perform the move, you can increase the associated effect. Whatever the effect is, mark its numerical value on a tracking card (e.g., if the effect removes two tiers from a status, mark 2 on the card). Then stack the enhancing status with this effect, as if they were statuses on the same spectrum. This may result in the same tier or a greater tier. If the resulting tier is greater, use it as the new numerical value of the effect (e.g. if the final tier is 3, the effect can now remove three tiers from a status, instead of two).

Knowing the crew will show up to take Sullivan from her, Margo Falls equipped the mercenaries with rune-inscribed bullets that can penetrate both mundane and Mythos defenses, making them *dangerously-armed-4*. Placing their original *perforated-4* status on the card, the MC marks the number 4. Stacking it with *dangerously-armed-4* she gets a tier-5 status, which means the mercs now cause a tier-5 status, *shredded-5*.

The leader of the mercenary team also has an ability to remove two tiers of

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any negative tactical statuses from his team. He then gets a boost from Margo Falls herself in the form of a *mastermind-advice-3* status and the MC deems it helpful to his move. The MC marks the number 2 on the card (for his ability to remove two tiers) and stacks it with Margo's 3, resulting in 3. The commander can now remove three tiers of negative tactical statuses instead of just two.

RECOVERING FROM STATUSES

As long as a Danger remains in the story, it can recover from statuses in the same way a player character does, with any MC, Danger, or player moves which reduce or remove statuses and apply to the situation. Players can spend Juice to remove tiers from the Danger's statuses, if the method of the Juice is relevant. Finally, statuses expire for Dangers in the same way they expire for player characters: temporary statuses expire after a single hard Move to which they apply or when the circumstances dictate it; ongoing statuses expire when the circumstances dictate it; and permanent statuses do not expire.

DANGERS AND TAGS

Dangers have no power tags or weakness tags; effects that burn tags have no bearing on Danger moves. However, Danger moves can generate story tags, so effects that burn tags can remove story tags created by Danger moves. Story tags created by Dangers can impede moves players make against them. Finally, depending on circumstances, Danger moves may be affected by story tags in the same way they are affected by statuses; treat relevant story tags as tier-1 statuses. If multiple tags of similar nature are relevant, you can stack them as you would multiple tier-1 statuses on the same spectrum in order to increase the benefit they provide.

DANGERS THAT ARE NOT A THREAT

The purpose of Dangers is to present complications for the player characters: either as challenges to overcome, such as adversaries or dangerous situations, or as victims or targets deserving of assistance and protection. When the lead characters are witnessing an interaction between two characters, these NPCs do not use their Danger profiles and the rules to resolve the conflict; instead, simply narrate it in the way that most promotes the story. You can use the soft move **Complicate Things** to involve the lead characters in the interaction. If they don't step in, use **Hit Them After Fair Warning** to make a hard move such as **Make Something Horrible Happen** or **Deny Them Something They Want**. Use the rules only when the lead characters become involved. For example, if they try to assist one party by providing medical attention after the interaction, you can use the Dangers' profiles to determine how badly a Danger was injured and how challenging it would be for the lead characters to assist her.

Similarly, Danger moves are not meant to be used to assist the lead characters. However, Dangers profiles can serve as guidelines as to what the Danger is capable of. For example, if a Danger can remove statuses from her allies, it represents an ability she has in the story. If that Danger later teams up with the crew, decide how this ability may be applied to the lead characters. Then, use the information in the Danger's profile to determine if this has any effect on the rules, and if so, what it is. For example, you can decide that this character can remove statuses from the lead characters but only once per scene. This applies to a circumstantial use of the Danger's powers; if the players would like to use the character as a regular ally, they should obtain the appropriate themes and tags to represent her as such. Optionally, you could write a custom move to represent this ally's assistance.

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CREATING DANGERS

Creating a new Danger is as simple as naming its spectrums and MC moves. Creating custom-made Dangers for your cases is not only a lot of fun, it also helps you present a cohesive story that matches your series concept. Follow the steps below to create your own Dangers.

STEP 1: CONCEPT

Think about the character, location, force, or group that this Danger will represent.

? **FOR A CHARACTER: WHAT ARE THIS DANGER'S ABILITIES AND RESOURCES?**

? **FOR A RIFT: WHAT IS ITS MYTHOS? WHAT IS ITS LEVEL OF AWARENESS? WHAT MYTHOS POWERS DOES IT POSSESS?**

? **FOR A LOCATION: WHAT IS DANGEROUS ABOUT THIS PLACE?**

? **FOR ALL DANGERS: IN WHICH WAYS WILL THIS DANGER INTERACT WITH THE PLAYER CHARACTERS?**

Mack the MC is creating a few Dangers for his casino case, the suicide of Ashley Lind (see page 102). He starts with Carlton Cooper, the Royal Plaza Casino's Chief of Security and the Rift of the Dragon (Touched). Cooper is a highly-trained security officer and casino fraud countermeasures expert. As a Touched Rift, Cooper manifests mostly powers that allow him to watch the "hoard" he was entrusted with. Mack thinks that trying to manifest anything more flashy would severely strain the Chief of Security.

STEP 2: CHOOSE SPECTRUMS

Create the Danger's spectrums by considering these questions. You must create at least one spectrum.

? **HOW CAN THIS DANGER BE OVERCOME? WHAT STATUSES CAN BRING IT TO AN END?**

List one or more ways in which this Danger can be overcome or in which it can come to an end; these are the Danger's spectrums. For each spectrum, set a maximum between 1 and 6 which is the tier of relevant statuses required to max out this spectrum.

? **WHAT DANGEROUS TRANSFORMATION OR END IS THIS DANGER MOVING TOWARD?**

If relevant, list one or more countdown spectrums with a maximum between 1 and 6. When these spectrums max out, this Danger will transform into something else: a monster, an incendiary ball of fire, a City-wide disaster.

Mack the MC considers the ways in which Cooper can be overcome. Obviously, he can be hurt or killed, but as a skilled security officer with possibly dragon-like physiology, it won't be easy to do, so Mack gives Cooper a *hurt:5* spectrum.

Theoretically, Cooper can also be outsmarted or convinced to betray his employer; but since he is a shrewd man and a loyal employee, Mack doesn't think he should have these spectrums. He's not immune to either possibility, but they just don't represent likely ways to get rid of him.

However, since this is a crime drama, Mack thinks one of the ways to defeat Cooper is to *implicate:4* him in the death of Ashley Lind and put him behind bars. It won't be easy but if the crew can manage it, Cooper will be forced to skip town to avoid jail. He's loyal, not stupid.

STEP 3: CHOOSE SOFT DANGER MOVES

Create the Danger's soft moves by considering this question:

? **HOW CAN THIS DANGER MAKE LIFE HARDER FOR THE CREW, WITHOUT DRAMATIC CONSEQUENCES (YET)?**

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List a few short sentences describing actions typical to this danger that may pose a complication but have no direct influence on the rules (i.e. no game effects) and no dramatic results. Optionally, these actions could be precursors to a hard Danger move this Danger possesses. See examples for soft Danger moves under Danger Moves (page 123) and under Danger Profiles, starting on page 140.

Mack the MC lists the top actions Cooper can do to complicate things for the crew:

- Analyze the scene astutely, slowly piecing together the crew's next move
- Vanish into a service elevator or back corridor in the hotel or the casino
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they're on their way)
- When in trouble, stop everything and inhale deeply (preparing to blow fire)

STEP 4: CHOOSE HARD DANGER MOVES

Create the Danger's hard moves by considering these questions:

- **HOW CAN THIS DANGER INFLUENCE OR HURT OTHERS, IF THE CREW LETS IT?**
- **HOW CAN THIS DANGER HELP ITSELF OR ITS ALLIES, IF THE CREW LETS IT?**
- **HOW DOES THIS DANGER AFFECT THE SCENE OR THE STORY, IF THE CREW LETS IT?**

List a few short descriptions of actions the Danger can take and the consequences associated with each. For each action, choose an effect that reflects it: give a status, reduce or remove a status, burn a tag, or create a story tag. You may use a single effect or multiple effects for each action. See examples for hard Danger moves under Danger Moves (page 123) and under Danger Profiles, starting on page 140.

Mack the MC lists Cooper's hard moves:

- Hide, destroy, or tamper with evidence (*lack of evidence*)
- Keep the private security team efficient (*efficient-2*)
- Spot a greedy character and offer money (*greased-3*)
- Use martial arts to restrain or hurt someone (*restrained-3* or *painful-injury-3*)
- Breathe fire, exhausting himself (*burns-4*, giving himself *exhausted-2*)
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they arrive) (create a new Danger: Kenny Liu's Private Security, or increase its collective size if they're already here)

STEP 5: CHOOSE CUSTOM MOVES

Think about the Danger's custom moves by considering these questions:

- **WHAT CAN THIS DANGER DO THAT HAS NOT BEEN DESCRIBED BY ITS SOFT AND HARD MOVES?**
- **WHAT QUALITY DOES THIS DANGER POSSESS THAT HAS NOT BEEN DESCRIBED BY ITS SOFT AND HARD MOVES?**

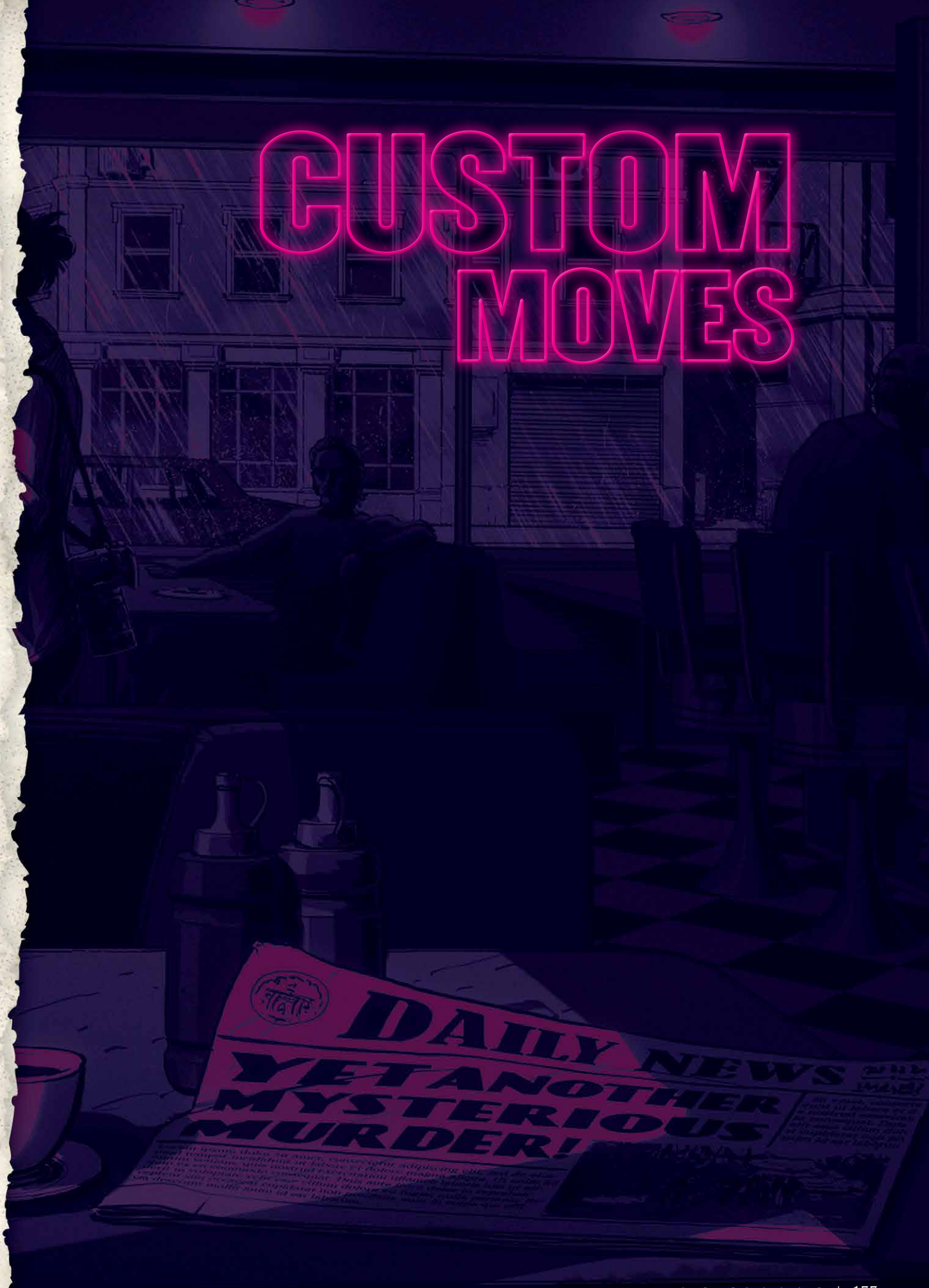
Phrase the custom move as a condition and an outcome. Read more about creating custom moves under Custom Moves, starting next page.

Mack the MC can think of a few abilities he still didn't cover: Cooper's supernatural alertness and his ability to know where anything stolen from the casino can be found. He creates the following custom moves:

Ultimate Predator: When Cooper enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.

Hoard Keeper: When you take something of value from the casino, Cooper knows where it is in town.

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Custom moves are rules that are tailored for a specific story element or circumstance. They allow you to introduce interesting situations and abilities in a way that has a direct impact on the rules, which in turn can make your game more engaging and fun.

Custom moves work in the same way as player moves do: they have a **condition**, which is triggered when a certain circumstance occurs in the story, and they have an **outcome**, which you apply when the move is triggered. However, unlike player moves, custom moves use conditions that can refer to anything, not just the players, e.g. "When Medusa enters the scene, ..." or "When you try to hit Proximo, ...".

Most custom moves are diceless, that is, they do not require the players to roll the dice.

TYPES OF CUSTOM MOVES

Custom moves can be used to describe any special condition in the story. The most common uses are:

- **Custom Danger move**, reflecting the nature, abilities, or resources of a Danger which allow it to impose special conditions on the game
- **Situational custom move**, reflecting the outcome of a specific circumstance in the game or the unique effects of a Relic, an Enclave, or anything that is the product of Mythos powers. See some examples of situational custom moves at the end of some of the Avatar Profiles (starting on page 174).
- **Improvement**, granting the character expanded use of the existing rules. The characters' theme improvements are essentially custom moves. You can expand the list by writing additional theme improvements or other improvements.

INTRODUCING A CUSTOM MOVE

As long as a custom move has not been triggered, you as the MC have the choice of whether to reveal it to the players in advance, reveal parts of it (such as the name only, or the condition only), or keep it from them entirely (only revealing it later for great dramatic effect).

The first time a custom move is triggered, you must reveal it to the players: either read it out loud to everyone in the table or pass around copies of the move written or printed on paper or cue cards. It becomes a part of the rules until it is no longer relevant or you choose to remove it.

WHEN SHOULD I USE CUSTOM MOVES?

Custom moves are an essential part of *City of Mist*: they enrich the game by adding more possibilities to the rules. However, since each custom move essentially redefines a small part of the rules, they can have a strong effect on your game, sometimes in unpredictable and undesirable ways. In addition, most aspects of the story are already covered by the game's moves and resources, so stacking additional rules might be redundant. For each custom move you create or include in your game, consider the following:

? **Are rules required to reflect this story element or situation, or is the story enough?**

? **For actions: Is there an existing player move or MC move that already covers this action?** Consider the Core Moves, Cinematic Moves, and Dramatic Moments Moves (especially **Stop. Holding. Back.**), as well as, soft and hard MC moves.

? **For abilities: Is there an existing game resource that can represent this ability?** Consider tags, statuses, Clues, Juice, Attention, Crack or Fade, Mysteries & Identities, etc.

Also note that there is no ability in the game that can remove or change moves so once you introduce a custom move into the game, the players cannot change the move, only cope with its outcome. You as the MC, however, can remove a custom move when it is no longer relevant. (The exception to the above are custom moves, which can affect other moves; however, creating rules that can break other rules may turn your game into a tedious exercise in legal wording).

If you can find an alternative within the existing rules of the game, use it; it will keep the game light and dynamic. Use a custom move only when it adds something new and interesting to the game.

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Because custom moves become visible to the players, be careful not to reveal any of the details of the case or series ahead of time in custom moves you create. Choose the wording of the move carefully.

CREATING A CUSTOM MOVE

Putting together a custom move is easy, but creating a good custom move is an art that touches on game design and requires you to think of the possible applications and implications of the move you are creating.

To create a move, think about what circumstance or ability you want to reflect in the move and choose the appropriate condition, roll (if any), and outcome(s). The condition should be specific; vague terms might cause the move to trigger inadvertently. A roll should be used only if you want variable outcomes that are dependent on some story or game element; remember you can also have variable outcomes by referring to a game element ("if *tick* is higher than 3, then… otherwise…") or by simply presenting a few choices. The outcome should give you a clear direction about what's happening next in the story, or a clear effect on some game elements, or both.

Then read the move again and consider what effect it would have on your game. You know your players better than anyone, so ask yourself, how will they be interacting with this move? Rephrase and rewrite as needed. Use the templates and examples given below as guidelines.

CONDITIONS

Whenever a custom move is triggered, regardless of the timing, the outcome is applied. Therefore, a condition can be used in different ways to trigger certain outcomes at points that are not covered by the existing rules, for example at the start of a scene or while a player has the spotlight.

Custom move conditions commonly start with the words "When", "Whenever", "Every time", "At" etc.

The following are common custom move conditions that are used in this chapter and that you can use in your own custom moves. Each type of condition opener is followed by a few examples of how you could use it:

- When you [as your character, do something in the story]
  - » When you take something of value from the casino, …
  - » When you aggravate the giant, …
  - » When you eat the magic mushroom, …
  - » When you get too far from the City, …
- When you [as a player, use the rules in a specific way]
  - » When you take a status, …
  - » When you gain Clues, …
  - » When you spend Juice, …
  - » When you burn another player's tag, …
- When [a Danger does something in the story or interacts with the rules]
  - » When the Golem of Prague enters the scene, …
  - » When Helix Labs puts a bounty on your head, …
  - » When your favorite waitress takes a status, …
  - » When the time bomb's *ticking:4* spectrum is maxed out, …
- When a situation transpires in the game
  - » When the cops arrive to arrest you, …
  - » When the mayor declares a state of emergency, …
  - » Every time the City Herald publishes a story about a cover-up, …
  - » When Níðhöggr the Serpent starts eating away at the roots of the world tree Yggdrasil, …
- At [a given point in the game]
  - » At the beginning of the session / scene / cutscene / downtime, …
  - » At the end of the session / scene / cutscene / downtime, …

ROLLS

Some custom moves may include a roll. When a custom move asks for a roll, only the players roll – never the MC. The players always roll two six-sided dice (2d6). Depending on the move's purpose, it can require the players to:

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- **roll+Power**, reflecting the player character's standard resources, like tags and statuses. Note that most player character actions that are based on roll+Power are already covered by the Core Moves.
- **roll+Mythos**, reflecting the player character's awareness and connection with her Mythos
- **roll+Logos**, reflecting the player character's grounding and attachment to the City
- **roll+[any other value]**, such as
  - » roll+[the number of heads the Hydra has left]
  - » roll+[the number of times you crossed paths with Eddie Dreamtime]
  - » roll+[the tier of the current *collapse* status this burning house has]
  - » To maintain an interesting range of results, the value added to the roll should be between +4 and -4.

When a custom move includes a roll, the move can specify different outcomes for a hit (any final score of 7 or more), a score of 7-9, a score of 10+, and even a score of 12+, if relevant. If the move does not explicitly specify an outcome for a miss (a final score of six or less), the outcome is a hard MC move. See the explanation on Outcome Categories, page 177 in the Player's Guide.

OUTCOMES

A custom move's outcome describes what happens when it is triggered. It can be described as events taking place in the story, as in this example:

```
Every time the City Herald publishes a
story about a cover-up, a reporter or
an editor is found dead the next morn-
ing.
```

It can be described in game terms:

```
When the Golem of Prague enters the
scene, give it hardened-skin-1.
```

Or it can be described with both:

```
Every time the City Herald publishes a
story about a cover-up, a reporter or
an editor is found dead the next morn-
ing. The killer or killers get ahead-
of-the-game-1.
```

CHALLENGE LEVEL AND CUSTOM MOVES

Custom moves can radically affect the challenge level of the game. When you introduce a new custom move into the game or write your own, consider its impact on the player characters and the story.

The effect a custom move has on the challenge level of the game depends on all of its components:

The condition determines how often and in what situations it will be triggered. You can control the challenge level of a custom move by increasing or decreasing the frequency in which it is triggered, for example from once a session to once a scene or vice versa.

The roll defines which factors affect the outcome. It also introduces an element of chance into the move. This often causes some player characters to be more or less affected or successful than other player characters.

The outcome(s) determines how impactful the move is when it triggers. To tweak the move, change the effects of its outcome; for example, reduce or increase the tier of the status it gives the players.

CUSTOM MOVES TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES

A few common types of *City of Mist* custom moves are given below. You can use the examples given here in your game or fill out the templates to create your own custom moves. Templates that have the potential to significantly increase the challenge level of your game are marked with one, two, or three ★ icons, ranging from mild to major impact respectively. Like any move, their impact also depends on their specific conditions and outcomes.

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ACTIVE SHIELD

An Active Shield move triggers when anyone or anything is trying to give a status to the Danger who has this move or influence it in other ways. This move activates after a player (or the MC) declares he wants to make a move or spend a resource to affect the Danger but before he actually makes the move or applies the rules to do so. Any effects applied by the Active Shield affect the move attempted by the player (or the MC) and may even nullify it (e.g., by giving an appropriate tier-5 status or by burning the tags used to make the offensive move).

★★ **Active Shield:** When you [description of attack], you first [outcome].

Popular: When you publicly shame Adam Drake, you first take *humiliated-3* as his fans boo you.

Defensive Shrouding: Once per scene, when you attack Gatekeeper Agents with Mythos powers, they manipulate the Mist to choke out your powers. The MC first burns two power tags related to your attack.

Boobytraps: Every time someone tries to enter your base uninvited, they take a status with tier=Power+2 once, unless they found a way to circumvent those security measures.

Brambles and Thorns: When you try to get into the castle of the Sleeping Beauty, you first take *entangled-3* or *nick-and-cuts-2*, MC's choice.

COUNTDOWN OUTCOME

A Countdown Outcome move is used to define what happens when a countdown spectrum is maxed out.

Countdown Outcome: When [Danger]'s [countdown spectrum] spectrum is maxed out, [outcome].

Lycanthropy: When a Bite Victim's *transformation:3* spectrum is maxed out, he or she transforms completely. Replace Bite Victim with the Danger: Hungry Werewolf.

KABOOM!: When the Time Bomb's *ticking:5* spectrum is maxed out, the bomb explodes. Everyone and everything within a one mile radius takes *disintegrated-6*.

Too late: When the Citywide Epidemic spectrum *spread:6* is maxed out, it is too late to stop the disease from spreading. The population of the City is decimated. Cut to a scene one month later and describe the devastating effect this had on the City.

STARTING STATUS OR TAG

A starting status custom move allows a Danger to start the scene with a status already in place, usually making things more difficult for the players. The Danger may not have to physically enter the scene to trigger this move; if the players are interacting with the Danger remotely this move may also apply.

★ **Starting status:** When [Danger] enters the scene, give it [status].

Made of Clay: When the Golem of Prague enters the scene, give it *hardened-skin-1*.

Ultimate Predator: When Cooper enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.

Celebrity Status: When Isabella walks into a public gathering, give her *admired-4*.

★★ **Starting status, renewable (hard):** When [Danger] enters the scene, give it [status]. If [Danger] loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.

Relentless investigator: When a nagging reporter enters the scene, give him *onto-you-1*. If the nagging reporter loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.

★★★ **Starting status, renewable (soft):** When [Danger] enters the scene, give it [status]. If [Danger] loses this status, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.

Force-field generator: When Helix Lab Elite Security enter the scene, give them *force-field-3*. If Helix Lab Elite Security loses this status, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.

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Similarly, Starting Tag allows a Danger to add a tag to the scene upon entering it. The tag is ongoing, unless otherwise stated.

★ **Starting tag:** When [Danger] enters the scene, add [tag] to the scene.

Three-Headed: When K9 enters the scene with his dogs, add *protective dog*, *mean dog*, and *watchful dog* to the scene.

Lens flare: When Apollo, the god of light, enters the scene, add *blinding flash* (temporary) to the scene.

★★ **Starting status, renewable (hard):** When [Danger] enters the scene, add [tag] to the scene. If this tag is removed, the MC can renew it as a hard move.

Smoke & Mirrors: When the Mononoke Ninjas enter the scene, add *smoke* to the scene. If this tag is removed, the MC can renew it as a hard move.

★★★ **Starting status, renewable (soft):** When [Danger] enters the scene, give it [status]. If this tag is removed, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.

Whirlwind God: When Ara Tiotio, the Polynesian tornado god, enters the scene, add *strong winds* to the scene. If this tag is removed, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.

STATUS FILTER

Status filters modify statuses that the Danger is receiving as they occur. They can be used to represent special defenses or resistance to harm or, conversely, susceptibilities or vulnerabilities.

★ **Status Filter (defense):** When [Danger] takes a [type of status], reduce the tier of the status by [a number of tiers].

Durable: When an Oni takes a physical harm status, reduce the tier of the status by 2.

Indomitable: When the Rift of Thor takes a mind-control status while raging, reduce the tier of the status by 3.

Massive: When the Kraken takes a status describing topical harm, reduce the tier of the status by 4. When the Kraken takes a status describing area harm, reduce the tier of the status by 3.

Status Filter (vulnerability): When [Danger] takes a [type of status], increase the tier of the status by [a number of tiers].

Dry Bones: When a Wight takes a fire-related status, increase the tier of the status by 2.

Structural Instability: When the Forgotten Subway Tunnel takes a status that moves its walls or supports, increase the tier of the status by 1.

STATUS PAYLOAD

A Status Payload is a custom move that is triggered when a player character or a Danger takes a specific status. This usually applies only if the status has any remaining tiers after the player character or Danger applied any relevant defenses (e.g., after the player character's **Face Danger** move).

★ **Status Payload:** When you take [type of status and source], [outcome].

Hollow point: When you take a gunshot status from gangsters using hollow point ammunition, take an additional tier-1 status with a similar tag.

Fishing for Information: When you take a *candid* status from an Aware Investigator, the MC can trade each of the tiers to have you truthfully answer a question, one-for-one. The investigator now knows your answers, whether or not your character actually said it.

Bow of Artemis: When you take a status from Natasha's arrows, you take an additional tier-3 status of the MC's choice representing the arrow she used, e.g., *poisoned-3*, *sick-3*, *unlucky-3*.

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DANGER DEFENSES

Using hard MC moves and custom moves, a Danger can erect four types of defenses.

The first option is the ability to give itself **a defensive status**. When appropriate, this defensive status can serve as a detrimental status for a player character's attack against this Danger, reducing its Power. However, since only the highest detrimental status applies to any roll, a defensive status is effective only insofar as the attacking player character does not have a higher detrimental status. A defensive status can be removed, in which case the MC must decide if it can be renewed and when (without a custom move, this requires a hard MC move).

The second option is the ability to create **a defensive story tag**. When appropriate, this defensive tag can reduce the Power of a player character's attack against this Danger. This works regardless of the player character's other tags and statuses. However, since the same story tag cannot be created twice, multiple story tags must describe different types of defenses which may not all be relevant to each specific attack (e.g., *armor*, *shield*, *visored helmet*). Using story tags can also make the conflict more descriptive. A defensive story tag can be removed, in which case the MC must decide if it can be renewed and when (without a custom move, this requires a hard MC move because the tag is significantly detrimental to the player characters).

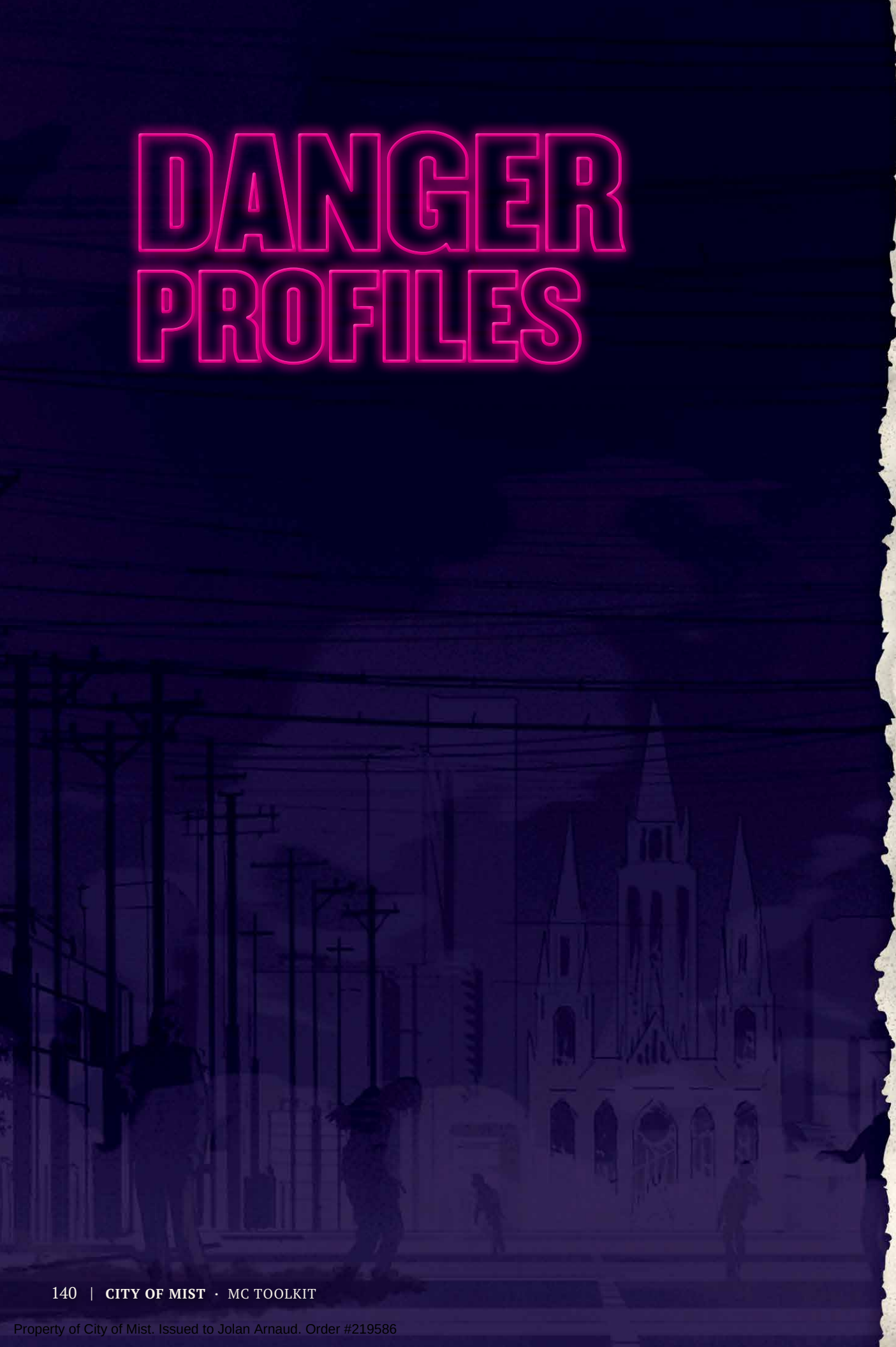
The above options not only reduce the tier of the status imposed by the attack but also reduce the chances the player will score well in his roll and increase the chances of a miss (which then triggers an additional hard MC move). They are suitable for Dangers with defenses that can be taken away and are hit-and-miss.

The third option is the ability to **reduce or remove statuses**. If this is applied as a hard Danger move, the Danger can only recover when a player character misses a move. However, if this is represented by a custom move with a **status filter**, then any relevant incoming status is affected. This is a more reliable type of defense, suitable for describing innate forms of protection, like size and durability. However, it does not affect the player characters' chances of succeeding or failing their actions.

The fourth option is to set up an **active shield**, which harms the player characters in some way whenever they attempt an attack. This defense can only be applied with a custom move and therefore cannot be prevented by the players. It also has the double effect of attacking the player characters whenever they attack, possibly imposing a status that will both promote their defeat and weaken their attacks. Hence, this defense is an exceptionally potent one and should be reserved for stronger Dangers.

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DANGER PROFILES



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This section of the book contains Danger profiles that you can use in your games, describing a variety of Dangers of all shapes and forms. It is divided into three sections:

- **Mundane Dangers** are ordinary individuals and threats that can be a part of any City. They can be used to describe Sleeper characters and threats of a mundane nature, or they can be combined with Mythos Power Sets to create Rifts on the fly.
- **Mythos Power Sets** are sets of Danger moves that represent special abilities granted by a specific type of Mythos. They can be added to a Mundane Danger to instantly create a unique Rift, such as a Witch Reporter or a Dog Catcher with a Hunter Mythos.
- **Rifts and Other Mythical Dangers** are complete Danger profiles of Rifts and other mythical beings (such as creatures created by Rifts) from the *City of Mist* setting.

DANGER RATING

Dangers profiles are given a Danger Rating to reflect their potential ability to challenge or harm the crew, normally ranging from zero (least dangerous) to five (most dangerous). The Danger Rating is marked next to each Danger's title with one ★ for each point of Danger Rating the Danger has.

Mythos Power Sets can increase the Danger Rating of a Mundane Danger. Each is marked by a + sign followed by the number of ★ equal to the point of Danger Rating this set adds to a Danger it is combined with. Combining a Mythos Power Set with a Mundane Danger may result in a Danger with a Danger Rating above five.

Remember that the challenge level of a Danger varies greatly based on how you as the MC use it, what optional rules you include in your game, and what your policies about tags and statuses are. You should therefore treat Danger Rating as a general estimate only.

COLLECTIVE PROFILES

Danger profiles describing a collective list the size factor of the collective and the Danger moves for a single member of the collective. As explained under Collectives (page 126), when multiple members make the same Danger move against the same target, you should increase the effects of the move accordingly.

MUNDANE DANGERS

CITY RESIDENTS

CITY OFFICIAL ★

A City Official can be anyone working at a formal position in the City: a courthouse clerk, a vehicle registration officer, a meter maid, etc. You can use the City Official as a non-violent barrier between the lead characters and something they want from the municipality. The City Official is usually a bureaucrat; she will sign papers, disclose information, or approve the crew's requests only when she is legally bound to do so. Adjust the City Official's spectrums according to how high-ranking, corruptible, or timid this individual is.

CORRUPT 3 / LEGALLY BIND 3 / SCARE 3

- Ask for more documents (*vexed-by-bureaucracy-2*)
- Call security or the police (create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards)
- Threaten to call security or the police if not left alone
- End the conversation abruptly

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CORPORATE LAWYER ★★★

This slimy corporate legal advisor is an expert at exploiting the City's legal system to benefit her employers. Enjoying a fat paycheck plus bonuses, money is not something that can sway this sleazeball. Moreover, if anyone so much as lays a finger on her or hers, they'll be in serious legal trouble – just give her a reason. You can also use this Danger profile to represent the City's District Attorney.

BRIBE – / DEFEAT IN COURT 5 / IMPLICATE 5 / THREATEN 4

- **Lawsuit:** When you give the Corporate Lawyer a status describing physical harm, restraint, or financial loss, you get a status describing legal implications of the same tier, such as *criminal-record-2* or *most-wanted-5*.
- **Objection!:** When Corporate Lawyer takes a legal or court status, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- **Relentless:** At the end of the scene, remove any statuses on the Corporate Lawyer's *threaten* spectrum.
- Use the court system against someone (*legal-trouble-3*) or sway the judge and/or jury against them in a trial (*guilty-3*)
- Send a P.I. to dig up some dirt on someone (create a new Danger: Detective)
- Bail her client out of trouble (remove up to two tiers of legal statuses)
- Threaten with legal action

HELPLESS CITY RESIDENT

Anyone in the City who cannot fend for themselves or does not pose a serious threat can be considered a Helpless City Resident. Such individuals often need the crew's protection and can be used to support the lead characters or their adversaries.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / SCARE 1

- Try to fight back (*ouch-1*)
- Call the police or scream for help

A Helpless City Resident can have one of the following moves, according to her background:

- **Spunky kid:** pick up a *stone* (temporary) or pull out a *sling*
- **Social worker:** help someone cope (remove one tier of a negative emotional status or give *calm-1*)
- **Doctor:** give medical assistance (remove one tier of a negative physical status)
- **Scientist:** offer someone their *scientific expertise*
- **Retired citizen:** give someone a *good advice* (temporary)
- **Stylist:** give someone a quick make-over (*fresh look*)
- **Bank manager:** give someone *the keys to the safe*
- **Dog catcher:** restrain someone or an animal with an animal control pole (*tangled-1*)
- **Waiter/waitress:** protect his/herself in *self-defense*
- **Rock band:** make this Danger a collective with a size factor of 1. They can also *excite-1* the audience (*inflame-2* as a band).

MOB ★★

This Danger represents an excited crowd of City residents: angry protesters, hysterical fans, a violent mob, etc.

QUELL 2

- **Collective:** This collective has many members and a size factor of 3.
- **(optional) Hard Core:** When *quell* is maxed out, create a new Danger: Mob, with a size factor smaller by one than that of the quelled mob. Give the new Mob a *violent-1* status.
- Root for their idol (give *confident-2*) or humiliate their idol's enemies (*humiliated-2*)
- Overrun a barricade, a police line, or a location (*overrun-1*)
- Many people shout and cheer, the mob is abuzz (give itself *inflamed-1*)
- A few people shout and cheer, the atmosphere is heating up

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MOVER & SHAKER ★★★★

This Danger represents one of the City's most powerful individuals, such as the mayor, a media magnate, or an industrial tycoon. With a battery of lawyers and the police on her payrolls (either legitimately or illegitimately), this person cannot be easily implicated in crimes unless the crew digs up some real dirt and manages to find a judge who will listen. Yeah, good luck with that.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / IMPLICATE – / THREATEN 5

- **Make Me an Offer I Can't Refuse:** When you refuse the offer of a Mover & Shaker, you are **Taking the Risk**.
- **Bodyguards:** When a Mover & Shaker takes a status her bodyguards can protect her from, the bodyguards take the status instead (use SWAT Team / Elite Security for the bodyguards).
- **Never Rest:** At the end of every downtime or as a hard move, the Mover & Shaker can give you *besmirched-reputation-3* or *wanted-3*, or create a new Danger to go after you (choose from City Official, Corporate Lawyer, Detective, SWAT Team / Elite Security, Hitman, etc.)
- **Relentless:** At the end of the scene, remove any statuses on the Mover & Shaker's *threaten* spectrum.
- Pull out a hidden weapon and attack (*well-placed-shot-4*)
- Subtly and chillingly threaten someone
- Be suspiciously nice to someone

PSYCHE WARD NURSE ★

If the lead characters talk too much about their experiences as Rifts, they may find themselves facing one or more of these trained psychiatric nurses. This nurse is used to hearing crazy people claim they are being wrongfully detained, so it will not be easy to impress her.

CONVINCE 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- **Hold Him Down!:** As a hard move, the Psyche Ward Nurse can change a target's status tag from *restrained* to *sedated*, keeping the same tier.
- Call the other nurses (this Danger becomes a **Collective** with a size factor of 1)
- Restrain manually or with a straight jacket (*restrained-3*)
- Ignore a patient's pleas (remove 2 tiers from any convincing statuses)
- Warn a patient not to disturb the order, or else

RADICAL ACTIVIST ★★

This individual is predominantly concerned with promoting her cause – whether it is a social, political, or environmental one – and may go to considerable lengths to do so.

CRIMINALIZE 3 / DELEGITIMIZE 4 / INFLAME 3 / RESTRAIN 2 / TALK SENSE 4

- Radical Action: When *inflame* is maxed out, Make Something Horrible Happen. The Radical Activist then dies, disappears, goes mad, goes to prison, etc.
- Wanted Fugitive: When *criminalize* is maxed out, the police attempt to arrest the Radical Activist. If appropriate, create a new Danger: Beat Cops.
- Vehemently fight for her rights (remove one tier from restricting statuses)
- Make you believe in her cause (*good-point-1*)
- Ostracize someone who does not adhere to her cause (*bad-rep-1*)
- Barricade herself and get herself into trouble (giving herself *barricaded-1* and *criminalized-1*)
- Cause a scene and get in trouble with the authorities

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REPORTER ★★

Television, radio, and newspaper reporters are always looking for the next scoop. You can often find them snooping around where unusual events take place, even if they are completely oblivious to the legendary happenings behind the scenes.

FOOL 3 / SCARE 4

- **Inquisitive:** As a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. The Reporter knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **On the Ball:** When the Reporter enters the scene, give her *alert-1*.
- Expose someone publically or give them a bad reputation (*exposed-2* or *infamous-2*) or threaten to do so unless...
- Use a *press pass*
- Show up at the worst time, snooping around
- Find an unlikely witness and start interviewing them
- Shove a microphone, camera, or notepad in someone's face and tell them they're live or that what they say will be on the morning newspaper

SOCIAL BUTTERFLY ★★

This person is flowing with charisma and good looks and can dominate any social gathering she attends. You can use this Danger to represent a celebrity, an old-money snob, a well-connected agent in the entertainment industry, etc.

BEFRIEND 5 / SHAME OR OVERSHADOW 4 / THREATEN 2

- **Words Can Never Hurt Me:** When Social Butterfly takes an unwanted social status, reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- Become the life of the party (give herself *center-of-attention-3*, temporary)
- Humiliate or shame someone (*shamed-3*), draw the attention away from someone (*ignored-3*), or give her support to someone (*popular-2*)
- Take over a casual conversation and impress the audience

TROUBLED INDIVIDUAL ★

This desperate individual is on a crash course. Haunted by her past and complicated emotions, she keeps making all the wrong decisions, often seeking the crew's help when it's too late. She can be a showgirl who fell in with the wrong people or a disturbed or suicidal teenager.

GET INTO TROUBLE 3 / HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- **Knack for Getting into Trouble:** At the end of every downtime, the Troubled Individual takes *trouble-1*.
- **Tragedy:** When *get in trouble* is maxed out, **Make Something Horrible Happen** to her.
- **Mysterious Past**: When you spend a Clue to ask a question about the Troubled Individual's past, the MC can choose to give answers that are fuzzy, incomplete, or part-true part-false (as in the 7-9 option of **Investigate**).
- Get someone to like her (*friendly-2*)
- Disappear at the least convenient time (hard move)
- Warn the crew that something bad is about to happen

VIOLENT DRUNK ★

This extremely intoxicated person has had too much to drink (or consumed too much drugs), to the point of becoming emotional and aggressive.

DETOX 4 / HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Drown the Pain:** When Violent Drunk enters the scene, give her *dulled-pain-1*.
- Punch someone (*bruise-2*)
- Blather unintelligibly about her past and make someone pity her (*pity-1*)
- Act up, pushing someone around

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CRIMINALS

CAT BURGLAR ★★

This expert burglar can tackle even the most advanced security systems to get to the precious items she seeks. A cat burglar could be working alone or with a team; for herself or for an employer. She could be after money, papers, jewelry, or even Relics.

CATCH 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- Stealthy: When the Cat Burglar enters the scene, if she's sneaking, give her *stealthy-2*. If the Cat Burglar loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- Fence: At the beginning of downtime, the Cat Burglar can use her criminal network to make one object she had in her possession disappear or reach someone else.
- Override, avoid, or escape security measures (remove up to two tiers of alertness statuses from others or restraining status from herself, or give *disabled-2*)
- Get away (Deny Them Something They Want)
- Easily slip through mundane security systems while the crew is left behind
- Flee, gaining distance

CRIME LORD ★★★★

The Crime Lord is the all-powerful ruler of an underworld empire. Often a dangerous and violent person, a crime lord is a formidable opponent both face-to-face and from afar.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN –

- **Make Me an Offer I Can't Refuse:** When you refuse the demands of the Crime Lord, you are **Taking the Risk**.
- **Bodyguards:** When the Crime Lord takes a status her bodyguards can protect her from, the bodyguards take the status instead (use Hired Thugs for the bodyguards).
- **Violent Tendencies:** When you attack or threaten the Crime Lord, you first take *threatened-3* or *injured-3*, MC's choice.
- **Never Rest:** At the end of every downtime or as a hard move, the Crime Lord can give you *threatened-3* or create a new Danger to go after you (choose from Corporate Lawyer or any criminal Danger).
- Brutally bludgeon, hack, or shoot someone (*horrible-injury-4*)
- Observe silently, mulling over her judgement

CON ARTIST ★★

A con artist is a master of deception: she can make you believe she is a simple saleswoman, swindle you out of your inheritance, or swipe an important keycard out of your pocket while you are having a conversation.

BUILD TRUST – / HURT 2 / THREATEN 3

- Fool someone (remove up to two tiers of alertness statuses from others or give *confused-2*)
- Steal something undetected (burn a tag that describes an item or **Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Pull out a hidden weapon and attack (*nasty-cut-2* or *flesh-wound-2*)
- Act friendly and build rapport with someone

Normally, a deception should be played out within the story and without using rules (because they reveal the existence of falsehood). Alternatively, you can use the con artist's moves to try to fool the players. The **Build Trust** move is deceptive: the con artist pretends to be suspicious and the players try to build trust with her. Then, at a critical moment, the con artist betrays the crew and flips the status to her favor, allowing her to escape with the money or shoot a crew member in the back. Note that unless she has the ability to resist Mythos powers, the con artist cannot flip *trust* statuses created by mythical means.

- **(optional) Build Trust:** When you do something that makes _____ trust you, she takes *trust-2*. When you try to **Convince** _____, you can choose to give her a *trust* status if she refuses you. If you use her *trust* against her, you lose her trust and remove this status. Once you build enough trust, she may open up to you.
- **(optional) Abuse Trust:** When _____ betrays you, the trust you thought you built with her becomes her advantage. The MC will change the tag *trust* into an appropriate positive status for her such as *underestimated* or *overlooked*. After she betrays you, remove the status.

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DELINQUENT TEENAGERS ★

Packs of unruly teenagers are often seen on the City streets, loitering, tagging, and disturbing the peace.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / THREATEN 1

- **Collective:** This collective has several members and a size factor of 2.
- Beat someone up (*bruise-1*) or spray them with pepper spray or paint spray (*blinded-1*)
- Fire each other up (*fired-up-0*, only relevant when size factor is applied)
- Loiter about, make noise, disturb the peace

GETAWAY VEHICLE ★★

A team of criminals usually has a vehicle nearby with a driver on standby to help them escape the crime scene as fast as possible. This Danger can also represent a drag race car.

CATCH OR OUTRUN 5 / DECOMMISSION 4

- **(optional) Vehicle:** Once per scene and depending on vehicle size, up to a handful of gunmen emerge from the vehicle windows and start shooting (use Hired Thugs). The gunmen automatically disembark when *decommission* is maxed out, but they take *hurt-1*.
- Slam into someone and try to force them off the road or turn sharply to shake someone off (*unsteady-2*)
- Get away (hard move)
- Accelerate and gain distance

HEIST TEAM ★★★+

Complex criminal operations require a team of professionals to carry out. This team includes different specialists who work together to pull off a heist, each contributing a different skill or know-how.

DISBAND X / HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / TURN 5

- **Team:** The Heist Team *disband* spectrum has a maximum equal to the number of team members minus one. Team members take statuses separately on the other spectrums. When a team member is overcome, turned, or captured, give the team a *disband* status with a tier greater by one than it has now. When a team member is retrieved, decrease the *disband* tier by one.
- **Gambit:** Once per scene, change one team member to another type.
- One team member gets away (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

Choose the members of the heist team (there may be more than one of each type):

- **Con Artist or Face:** fool someone (remove up to two tiers of alertness statuses from others or give *distracted-2*)
- **Demolitions Expert:** Once per scene, after you declare your move but before you roll the dice, the MC can have the Demolitions Expert set off a charge as an intrusion (*fatal-injury-5* or **Deny Them Something They Want**).
- **Ex-Military:** shoot (*gunshot-wound-3*) or physically subdue someone (*staggered-3*). When the Ex-Military takes a physical harm or subdue status, reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- **Master Thief:** steal something (burn a tag that describes an object or **Deny Them Something They Want**)
- **Operator / Mastermind:** give all team members *tactical-advantage-2* or remove up to two tiers of negative tactical statuses from all team members.

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HIRED THUGS ★★

These common crooks are hired to threaten snoopy reporters, beat up rebellious neighborhood residents, hit the opposition with a drive-by shooting, or guard their boss and her illegal operations. Some of them work for the highest bidder while others are loyal to whomever they serve, driven by fear or criminal affiliation.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN 4

- **Collective:** This collective has a handful of members and a size factor of 1.
- Bully (*threatened-2*), beat up (*broken-arm-3*), or shower with bullets (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- Eliminate a vulnerable target (*shot-in-the-gut-4*)

HITMAN ★★★

For as long as human society existed, assassins have been used to enact personal revenge or eliminate political rivals. This highly-trained individual is a professional killer and an expert of infiltration.

GET TO POSITION 3 / HURT OR SUBDUE 5

- **Take the Shot:** When *get-to-position* is maxed out, remove any statuses on this spectrum and the Hitman attacks her target (*fatal-wound-5* or *dead-6*).
- **Inscrutable:** To ask the MC a question about the Hitman, you must spend two Clues instead of one. At the MCs option, you may be able to combine Clues with another player.
- **(optional) Fateful Hour:** The Hitman can use "Move to position" (see below) as a soft move.
- Disable a threat with martial arts or expert gunslinging (*broken-4*)
- Move to position (*closing-on-target-1*)
- Flee the scene or swallow a cyanide pill (hard move)
- Betray her presence (but not her exact position) with a subtle clue, e.g., a reflection of her scope or a movement of her shadow

PETTY CROOK ★

The petty crook is a weasel, a lowlife, or a scumbag who is involved in criminal activity but is rarely taken seriously by anyone in the business. Sometimes a petty crook will be hired by a crime organization as a cheap laborer or to do a menial task. She often screws this job up, getting herself in bigger trouble. In the end, the petty crook doesn't want to hurt anyone, she just wants to get ahead in life.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / THREATEN OR SCARE 2

- **Bad Luck is Contagious:** Once per scene, when the Petty Crook is present, the MC can make a hard move as an intrusion.
- Hit with a knucklebuster, a crowbar, or a pistol (*hurt-1* or *damaged-1*)
- Offer something valuable to save her skin (*I'm-listening-2*)
- Beg for her life, sharing her life story

SMUGGLER ★★

Smugglers make their money running contraband or stolen goods through borders and law enforcement undetected. Unsavory and sly, they have an ever-growing repertoire of shell game tricks that ensure they are never caught or incriminated.

BRIBE 4 / HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / THREATEN 5

- **Sneaky Bastard:** When the Smuggler enters the scene, give her *sneaky-2*. If the Smuggler loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- **(optional) Fleet:** The Smuggler commands a smuggling vehicle (use Getaway Vehicle) and can call an additional vehicle as a hard move.
- Open a crate and pull out an over-the-top firearm, proceed to use it (*pumped-full-of-lead-4*)
- Use the environment to block and delay pursuers (*blocked-3* or *outrun-3*)
- Even if captured, make her contraband arrive at its destination nonetheless (**Deny them Something They Want**)
- Get away (**Deny them Something They Want**)

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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY

STREET GANG ★★

The rough parts of town are overrun by street gangs. More than just disturbers of the peace and not quite on par with organized crime, these gangs are nonetheless armed and dangerous, especially when an unwanted visitor wanders off into their turf or when they face a threat to their control over their turf.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / RALLY 3 / THREATEN 2

- **Collective:** This collective has several members and a size factor of 2.
- **Home Turf:** When the Street Gang enters the scene in its home turf or when it enters its home turf, give it *home-advantage-1*. If the Street Gang loses this status and are in their home turf, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.
- **Rally the Locals:** When the Street Gang is on its own turf and the *rally* spectrum is maxed out, increase its size factor by one (to a maximum of 3).
- When on their home turf, rally the local population to join them (*rally-2*)
- Threaten someone with violence (*threatened-2*) or make real on their threats (*broken-bones-3* or *gun-shot-wound-3*)
- Mob an intruder or victim

BEAT COPS / SECURITY GUARDS ★

This Danger represents a small standard unit within a larger law enforcement or private security force, often serving in the lowest ranks of the organization and performing routine tasks such as patrolling and tackling threats on the field.

CORRUPT 2 / HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / OVERRIDE AUTHORITY 1

- **Collective:** This collective has a handful of members and a size factor of 1.
- Physically subdue a target (*subdued-2*)
- Open fire using semi-automatic pistols or revolvers (*flesh-wound-2*)
- Call for backup (increase size factor by one)
- Close in on a target
- Order someone to leave the premises or "freeze!"

DETECTIVE / INVESTIGATOR ★★

The police detective or private investigator character is a staple of the noir genre. The detective may be working against the crew, helping the crew, or she may be a rival of the crew. Adjust the *corrupt* and *override-authority* spectrums of the detective according to how corruptible or how high-ranking this individual is, respectively.

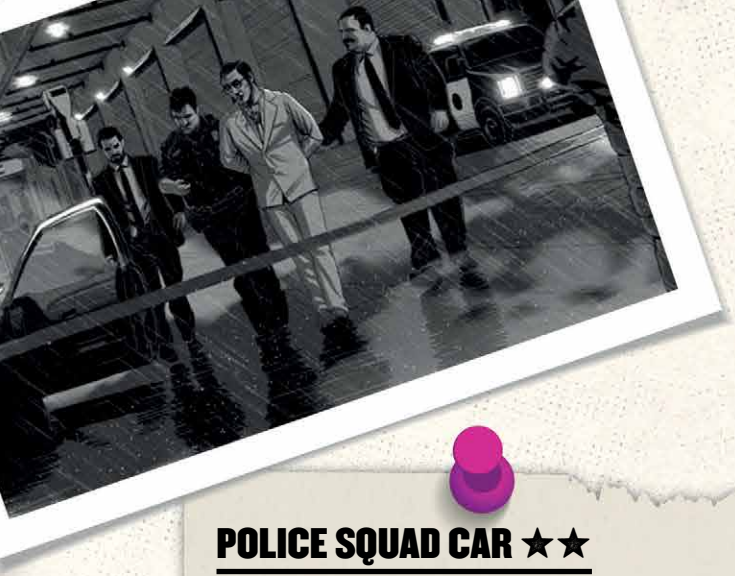
CORRUPT 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / OVERRIDE AUTHORITY 3

- **Powers of Deduction:** When the Detective surveys the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. The Detective knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **On the Ball:** When the Detective enters the scene, give her *alert-1*.
- Put someone on the spot (tell the truth or take *pressured-2*)
- Shoot a suspect or a threat with a firearm (*gun-shot-wound-3*)
- Cuff a suspect or tighten the handcuffs (*handcuffed-2*)
- Observe a scene quietly
- Find a piece of evidence
- When alone, call for backup

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POLICE SQUAD CAR ★★

Police squad cars patrol the streets of the City and chase down criminals on wheels.

DECOMMISSION 3 / OUTRUN 4

- **Vehicle:** When the police officers driving the Police Squad Car disembark, create a new Danger: Beat Cops. This happens automatically when *decommission* is maxed out, but Beat Cops take *hurt-1*.
- Block your escape (*blocked-3*)
- Fire while driving, using intermediate or deadly force (*bean-bag-bruise-2* or *pellet-wounds-3*)
- Ram with bullbar (*smashed-4*, but gives itself *damaged-1*)
- Catch up with a target in flight

SWAT TEAM / ELITE SECURITY ★★★

Law enforcement authorities and private security details keep units of highly-trained and well-equipped officers, capable of carrying out complex tactical operations such as assaulting fortified targets, extracting hostages or assets, securing control over a key position, or even assassinating a target.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Collective:** This collective has several members and a size factor of 2.
- **Body Armor:** When SWAT Team / Elite Security enter the scene, give them *armored-1*.
- **Stealthy:** When SWAT Team / Elite Security enters the scene, if it's sneaking, give it *stealthy-2*.
- Concentrate fire on a single target (*perforated-4*) or spread it across multiple targets (*flesh-wound-2*)
- Perform a tactical maneuver to gain the upper hand (give itself *tactical-advantage-2*, remove up to two tiers of positive tactical statuses from nearby targets, or burn up to two tags representing tactical advantages)
- Storm a location, preferably rappelling through a glass ceiling or throwing flash or smoke grenades (give everyone else a temporary *surprised-2*, *blinded-2*, or *dazzled-2*)
- Arrive by helicopter, ram down a barrier, or find another way in

SECURITY SYSTEM ★★

From a simple safe to the complex high tech system of a corporate facility, intrusion countermeasures are used to protect valuable possessions. This Danger profile represents a standard home or office security system or a common safe; you can adjust its challenge level by adjusting its *alarm* spectrum or by changing the repercussions of setting off the alarm. For example, you could add a sleeping gas trap or replace Beat Cops / Security Guards with SWAT Team / Elite Security, or even a legendary adversary.

Note that players do not know when the *alarm* spectrum would max out and when the alarm would go off; they see the statuses but they don't know the maximum. They can try to **Investigate** to estimate the internal threat level of the system if they have the skills or abilities needed to do so.

ALARM 3 / OVERRIDE 4

- **Red Alert:** When *alarm* is maxed out, create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards and give *locked-in/out-5* to unauthorized personnel in the perimeter.
- Increase its internal threat level (give itself *threat-1* on the *alarm* spectrum)
- Make anyone trying to override it *nervous-2* or give them *sweaty-hands-2*
- Present another security countermeasure that must be overcome, such as a magnetic lock, a keypad, a window alarm, a motion detector, an unexpected safe mechanism, etc.

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LOCATIONS & HAZARDS

DERELICT BUILDING ★

Abandoned derelict structures are a common sight in the City. Sometimes they are stripped bare of their contents; other times, they still contain the furniture they once did, but now it's dilapidated and rotting. Hobos, addicts, cultists, and other rejects love hanging out in these forsaken places, as do many Rifts who wish for a respite from the mainstream and the Mist.

Only physical statuses that affect a large area or that target a weak point in the Derelict Building count against its *collapse* spectrum. The MC can also rule that appropriate statuses given with **Hit With All You've Got** affect the building if the attacker does not choose to control the collateral damage or chooses to inflict collateral damage.

COLLAPSE 5

- **Collapse:** When the *collapse* spectrum is maxed out, the building collapses and everyone inside takes *buried-by-debris-5*.
- **Loose debris:** Whenever the Derelict Building takes a status on the *collapse* spectrum, debris falls from above (*bump-on-the-head-2* or *head-injury-3*) on everyone inside.
- Reveal a collapsed staircase, a hole in the middle of a second-floor room, an attic that can only be accessed by climbing a vine or a rickety drain, etc.



HOUSE FIRE ★★

Whether the result of an accident or of arson, a house fire can be devastating and is virtually unstoppable once it reaches a certain point.

Note that statuses on the *burning* spectrum can only be reduced by an effect that includes the entire house. Topical control of the fire has no effect on this Danger as a whole.

BURNING 6

- **On Fire:** When the House Fire enters the scene, give it *burning-2* on its *burning* spectrum. The House Fire can give itself *burning-1* as a soft move, unless its *burning* spectrum has no statuses on it, in which case it has been quenched.
- **Go Down in Flames:** When the *burning* spectrum is maxed out, the house collapses or explodes in a ball of fire. Everyone inside takes *burnt-alive-6*. Everyone in the immediate vicinity of the house takes *blast-4*.
- **(optional) Save Me!:** When house fire enters the scene, there are people trapped in the house (create a Danger: one or more Helpless City Resident).
- Burn the house or any one person in (give itself or someone else a *burning* status with a tier equal to the current tier on the *burning* spectrum)

TIME BOMB ★★★

This Danger describes a typical time-delayed explosive device. You can tweak this bomb by changing the tier of its *tick* status, changing the effect of the explosion, or making it easier or harder to defuse.

DEFUSE 5 / TICKING 4

- **KABOOM!:** When the Time Bomb's *ticking* spectrum is maxed out, the bomb explodes. Everyone and everything within a one mile radius takes *disintegrated-6*.
- Baffle anyone trying to defuse it with colorful wires (*wire-dilemma-2*)
- Display the time running out (*tick-1*)
- Stress out anyone standing near it (*nervous-2*)
- Tick away

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CITYWIDE EPIDEMIC ★★★

When a deadly virus breaks out of a top-secret government facility or arrives in the city in the blood of a "patient-zero", an outbreak is inevitable. This Danger represents an aggressive and highly contagious disease that could potentially spread to the entire City, killing millions.

Note that statuses on the *spread* spectrum can only be reduced by an effect that affects the entire City. Topical control of the disease has no effect on this Danger as a whole.

SPREAD 6

- **Spreading:** When the Citywide Epidemic enters the story, give it *spreading-2* on its *spread* spectrum. When its *spread* spectrum has no statuses on it, it has been quarantined.
- **Too late:** When the Citywide Epidemic spectrum *spread* is maxed out, it is too late to stop the disease from spreading. The population of the City is decimated. Cut to a scene one month later and describe the devastating effect this had on the City.
- **Around the Clock:** At the end of downtime, all infected people and anyone who isn't quarantined takes an *infected-1* status. The Citywide Epidemic increases the tier of the status on its *spread* spectrum by one.
- Worsen the condition of an infected person (*infected-3*)

JUNKYARD COMPACTOR ★★

This typical junkyard hydraulic compactor uses a conveyor belt and a heavy plate to flatten metallic debris – or your crewmates.

DECOMMISSION 4

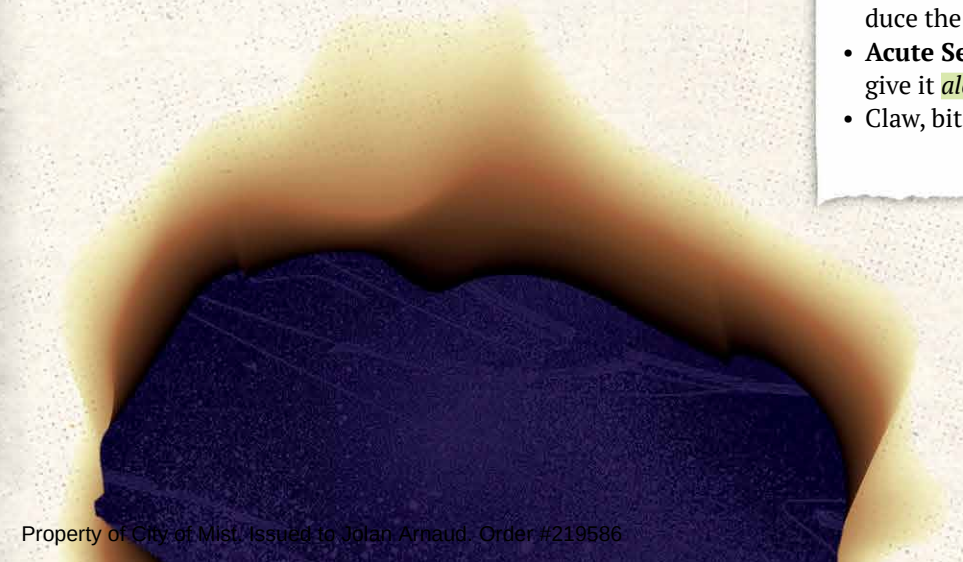
- **Sturdy:** When the Junkyard Compactor takes a status representing raw physical damage, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- **Conveyor Belt:** When you get on the conveyor belt, the MC will give you a status depending on your location (*far-1*, *midway-2*, or *close-3*). As a soft move, the Junkyard Compactor can increase the tier of that status by one. You cannot Face Danger against this increment. If you move along the belt, the MC will reduce or increase the tier accordingly. If you get off the belt, remove the status.
- **Pancake:** When you hit tier 5 on the conveyor belt status, you take *pancake-6* (you can Face Danger).

MYTHOS POWER SETS

BEAST +★

BIG BAD WOLF · MINOTAUR · SHAPESHIFTER

- **Thick Hide, Wild Nature:** When a Beast takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- **Acute Senses:** When a Beast enters the scene, give it *alert-2*.
- Claw, bite, or maul (*wounded-3*)



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CREATURE OF DARKNESS +★★

NAGA · VAMPIRE · WENDIGO

- **Drain Life:** As a hard move, the Creature of Darkness imposes *drained-3*. For every tier of *drained* the target takes after applying its defenses, the Creature of Darkness removes one tier from a harmful status it has or gives itself a positive status with one tier.
- **(optional +★) A Dire Enemy:** When you attack a Creature of Darkness, you first take *drained-3* (with effects as above).

DEMIGOD OR GIANT +★★

HERCULES · GILGAMESH · PAUL BUNYAN

- **Invincible:** When a Demigod takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce the tier of the status by 3.
- Punch with immense strength or hurl an object or weapon at someone (*broken-4*)

GHOST OR SPIRIT +★

ANCESTRAL SPIRITS · NYMPH · POLTERGEIST

- **Incorporeal:** A Ghost or Spirit cannot take physical harm or subdual statuses when it is incorporeal. Give its *hurt or subdue* spectrum a maximum of –. She cannot use any Danger moves that represent actions in the physical world (unless otherwise stated).
- **(optional) Materialize:** The Ghost or Spirit can become incorporeal or materialize as a hard move. When she becomes incorporeal, any statuses she had previously are kept and continue to affect her. When she materializes, she regains her original *hurt or subdue* maximum.
- **Imperceptible:** An incorporeal Ghost or Spirit can turn imperceptible or perceptible as a soft move. You cannot perceive the Ghost or Spirit with normal senses while she is imperceptible.

GOLEM OR ELEMENTAL +★

GOLEM OF PRAGUE · VOLCANO GOD · POSEIDON

- **Elemental Body:** When a Golem or Elemental takes a physical harm status, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- **Elemental Body, Part II:** When a Golem or Elemental takes a status from the element it is made of, the status becomes a positive status and does not add to its *hurt or subdue* spectrum.
- **(optional +★) Elemental Body, Part III:** When you attack a Golem or Elemental, you first take a tier-2 status related to the element it is made of.

HUNTER +★

ROBIN HOOD · ARTEMIS · WILLIAM TELL

- **Hunter Instincts:** When a Hunter enters the scene, give her *alert-3*.
- **Can't Escape:** When the hunter gives you a physical harm or subdual status, take an additional *crippled-2* or *trapped-2*.

MIND CONTROLLER +★

PERSON OF UNTOLD BEAUTY · PIED PIPER OF HAMLIN · POSSESSIVE SPIRIT

- **Impervious:** When a Mind Controller takes a status resembling her own form of mind control, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- Influence a person to do their bidding (*beguiled-3*, *hypnotized-3*, *possessed-3*, etc.)
- **(optional +★) Mind Reading:** As an MC intrusion, the MC can reduce the tier of the Mind Controller's influence status by one to have you truthfully answer a question. The Mind Controller now knows your answer.

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LEADER +★

ROYALTY · FABLED MILITARY LEADER · FOLK HERO

- **Trained combatant:** Increase the tier of the mundane physical harm or subdual statuses caused by the Leader's moves by one.
- Rally the troops (remove up to two tiers of negative tactical or morale statuses from herself and others)
- Command someone to do as she bids (*compelled-3*)

MESSENGER OF THE LIGHT +★

ANGEL OR SAINT · FAIRY GODMOTHER · A WHITE MAGICIAN

- **Protection from Evil:** When a Messenger of the Light takes a status from a source that is inherently evil or dark, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- Bless or enchant someone to protect them from evil (*protected-2*)
- Banish the forces of evil or darkness (*banish-3*)

NATURE SPIRIT OR GOD +★

DRYAD · GAYA · KAMI

- Use the weather, flora, or fauna to harm or restrict someone (*entangled-in-vines-3*, *blown-away-3*, *stuck-in-quicksand-3*, *viciously-bitten-3*)
- Alter the weather, creating a story tag such as *lashing rain*, *fog*, *sunshine*, etc.
- Heal living beings (remove up to one tier of physical harm statuses)

SORCERER OR WITCH +★

BALOR OF THE EVIL EYE · EVIL WITCH OF THE WEST · MORGANA

- **Sorcery**: Once per scene, a Sorcerer or Witch can create three story tags as an intrusion. In addition, as a hard move, a Sorcerer or Witch can create one story tag. The story tag can describe means of protection, environmental effects, conjured allies, or abilities and qualities the Sorcerer or Witch can give herself.
- Attack with sorcery (give an appropriate status with a tier equal to the number of story tags participating or enhancing the attack)
- **(optional +★) Dark Magick:** To burn a story tag created by the Sorcerer or Witch, you must spend two points of Juice instead of one.
- **(optional -★) Hedge Magick:** The story tags created by the Sorcerer or Witch are temporary.

NECROMANCER +★★

BARON SAMEDI · HADES · WITCH OF ENDOR

- **Bodyguards:** When the Necromancer takes a status her bodyguards can protect her from, the bodyguards take the status instead.
- **Speak to the Dead:** As a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. The Necromancer knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- Raise the dead (create a new Danger: Undead, with a *hurt:3* spectrum, a size factor of 1, and the ability to inflict *slashed-3*)

SWIFT-FOOTED +★

THE HARE (AND THE TORTOISE) · MERCURY · MONKEY KING

- **Runner:** The Swift-Footed has an *outrun:5* spectrum.
- Slam into someone at full speed (*mild-concussion-3*)
- Snatch something out of someone's hand or reach (burn a tag that describes an item or **Deny Them Something They Want**)

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THIEF +★

GOLDILOCKS · JACK AND THE BEANSTALK · PROMETHEUS

- **Stealthy:** When a Thief enters the scene, if she's sneaking, give her *stealthy-4*. If the Thief loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- Steal something undetected (burn a tag that describes an item or **Deny Them Something They Want**)

TRICKSTER +★

FAIRIES & GOBLINS · PUSS IN BOOTS · TRICKSTER GOD

- **Deceitful:** When you spend a Clue to ask a question about the Trickster, the MC can choose to give answers that are fuzzy, incomplete, or part-true part-false (as in the 7-9 option of **Investigate**).
- Convince someone to take a course of action (*convinced-3*)
- Take an illusory or false appearance (give itself a story tag)

WARRIOR +★

KNIGHT OF THE ROUND TABLE · DAVID & GOLIATH · HOU YI

- **Trained combatant:** Increase the tier of the mundane physical harm or subdual statuses caused by the Warrior's moves by one.
- **Unbeatable:** When a Warrior enters the scene, give her three defensive story tags such as *armor*, *shield*, *helmet*, *parry*, *dodge*, *block*, *slide*, *leap*, etc.
- **Legendary Swordsmanship:** When you attack a Warrior, you first take a tier-2 status related to her fighting skills. (**Trained Combatant** does not apply to this)

WEAPON BEARER (RELIC) +★★

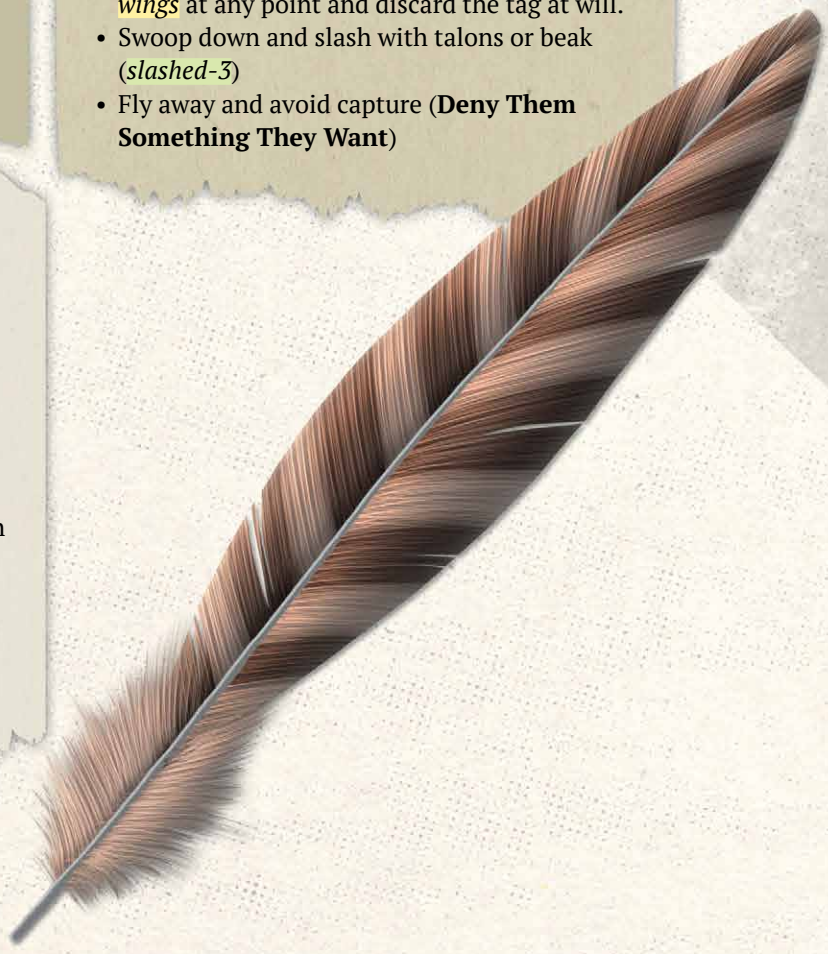
THUNDERBOLT OF ZEUS · THE FLAMING SWORD · SPEAR OF DESTINY

- **It Blocks By Itself:** When a Weapon Bearer enters the scene, give her *defensive-maneuvers-3*. It applies to any attack her Relic can block. If she loses this status, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.
- Smite someone with her weapon (an appropriate tier-4 status)
- Protect one more person or object with her weapon (*defensive-maneuvers-3*)

WINGED CREATURE +★

FLYING MONKEYS · PEGASUS · QUETZALCOATL

- **Take Flight:** A Winged Creature either has a permanent *wings* story tag or it can give itself *wings* at any point and discard the tag at will.
- Swoop down and slash with talons or beak (*slashed-3*)
- Fly away and avoid capture (**Deny Them Something They Want**)



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RIFTS & OTHER MYTHICAL DANGERS

DOWNTOWN

ALICE (ALICE IN WONDERLAND) ★★★★★

(Read the Mist-shrouded description of this character on page 24)

Alice is the strongest reality-bender in the City. Unfortunately for everyone else, she is also a total airhead and has absolutely no control over her powers – nor is she seeking to gain any. No one really knows what the hell is going on with this crazy drifter or where she came from, although some of the more knowledgeable beings in the City speculate that she emerged from the Wishing Well in a nearby village. It's unclear whether she is an Avatar, an extremely powerful Rift, or something else. Avatars steer well away from her, fearful of any strange and unexpected mystical consequences. Few know this, but even the Gatekeepers are freaked out by what she can do and her resistance to their methods.

ALTER – / HURT OR SUBDUE –

- **Pandemonium:** When Alice experiences an altered state of consciousness, everything in her line of sight takes *bedlam-5* ignoring **Face Danger** or other defenses. Logic, proportion, and the laws of physics evaporate. Things and people become totally different things and people. When Alice returns to a normal state of consciousness everything returns to normal. The *bedlam-5* status changes to *dormant-bedlam-5*. The pandemonium is triggered if anyone tries to attack or alter Alice in any way.
- **Subsequent Pandemonium:** When you hit tier 6 on a pandemonium status, pick one theme at random (roll a dice or draw one out without seeing the cards). You replace that theme. The tier-6 status changes to *dormant-bedlam-5*.
- **Utter State of Chaos:** When you **Stop. Holding. Back.** to fight Alice's powers, you must make a Significant sacrifice to stabilize a small area in the pandemonium, a No-Return sacrifice to remove the pandemonium status from someone, and the Ultimate sacrifice to end the pandemonium without anyone taking any statuses.
- **Redefined Essence:** When you use reality-bending to alter the pandemonium statuses, the status you are trying to remove also applies to your attempt.

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THE "REEDS" (NATURE BOY) ★★★

(Read the Mist-shrouded description of this location on page 22)

"The Reeds" is home to the wisest individual in the City, a nameless boy living in an Enclave that appears to be a riverbank. Wearing a pair of torn linen shorts, this boy basks in the sun, pretends to be fishing, and takes short swims now and then. Sometimes he goes out to tour the City but he always comes back to his Enclave.

The keeper of the gate to the Enclave is Zebedee Jackson, a blind sax player. He has been granted the wisdom to help others and if he can't, see whether they are worthy of the boy's advice.

HARM ZEBEDEE 1 / HARM THE BOY 1

- **Zebedee:** When Zebedee asks you a question, you must answer truthfully or take *afraid-to-know-5*. If you're afraid to know, Zebedee will not take you to the kid.
- **Just To Love:** When you take an action driven by malice or self-interest in "the Reeds", you hear an old jazz tune playing in your head. You must first **Face Danger** against *overwhelmed-by-emotion-5*.
- **The Greatest Thing You'll Ever Learn:** For every power tag you have that represents true love, Nature Boy will answer one question. You receive one Clue, but the MC must answer it with a straight answer. You cannot use the same tag with this move ever again. Unless you show true love, the boy can't answer your questions, even if you force him.

RACHEL DELANEY (RAPUNZEL) ★★

In a secure penthouse downtown, Rachel Delaney is being held against her will by a powerful individual. All her needs are catered for but she cannot leave. Her captors simply feel she is too valuable and they might be right. Rachel's hair is very special: it transports people magically from one place to another. Rachel, for her part, didn't ask for this. She tried to escape, but to no avail. She's escaped before but her captors found her and put her back where she is. With every passing day, she is growing more and more bitter.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- **Transported:** When you pull on a piece of one of Rachel's hairs, you are transported to where the rest of that hair is (whether it is attached to Rachel's head or not). The entire hair then crumbles to dust.
- Give someone one of her intact hairs (*Rachel's hair*, temporary)
- Beg or manipulate someone to help her escape (*pity-3*)
- Shoot someone with a concealed handgun (*shot-in-the-gut-4*)
- Call security (create a Danger: SWAT Team / Elite Security)

THE BLUE-COLLAR RESIDENTIAL

JACQUELINE BROWN (JACK AND THE BEANSTALK) ★★★

(Read a description of this character on page 30)

CATCH 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE 2

- **Stealthy:** When Jacqueline Brown enters the scene, if she's sneaking, give her *stealthy-2*. If she loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- **Green-thumbed:** As a soft move, Jacqueline Brown can grow a *giant beanstalk* from the earth where she stands or destroy one with a touch. Once per scene, she can do so as an MC intrusion. Anyone and anything supported by the beanstalk starts falling when she destroys it and must Take the Risk and/or Face Danger.
- **Giant Slayer:** Increase the tier of any physical harm statuses that Jacqueline Brown causes to oversized human-like creatures by one.
- Shoot someone with a pistol she's packing (*gunshot-wound-3*)

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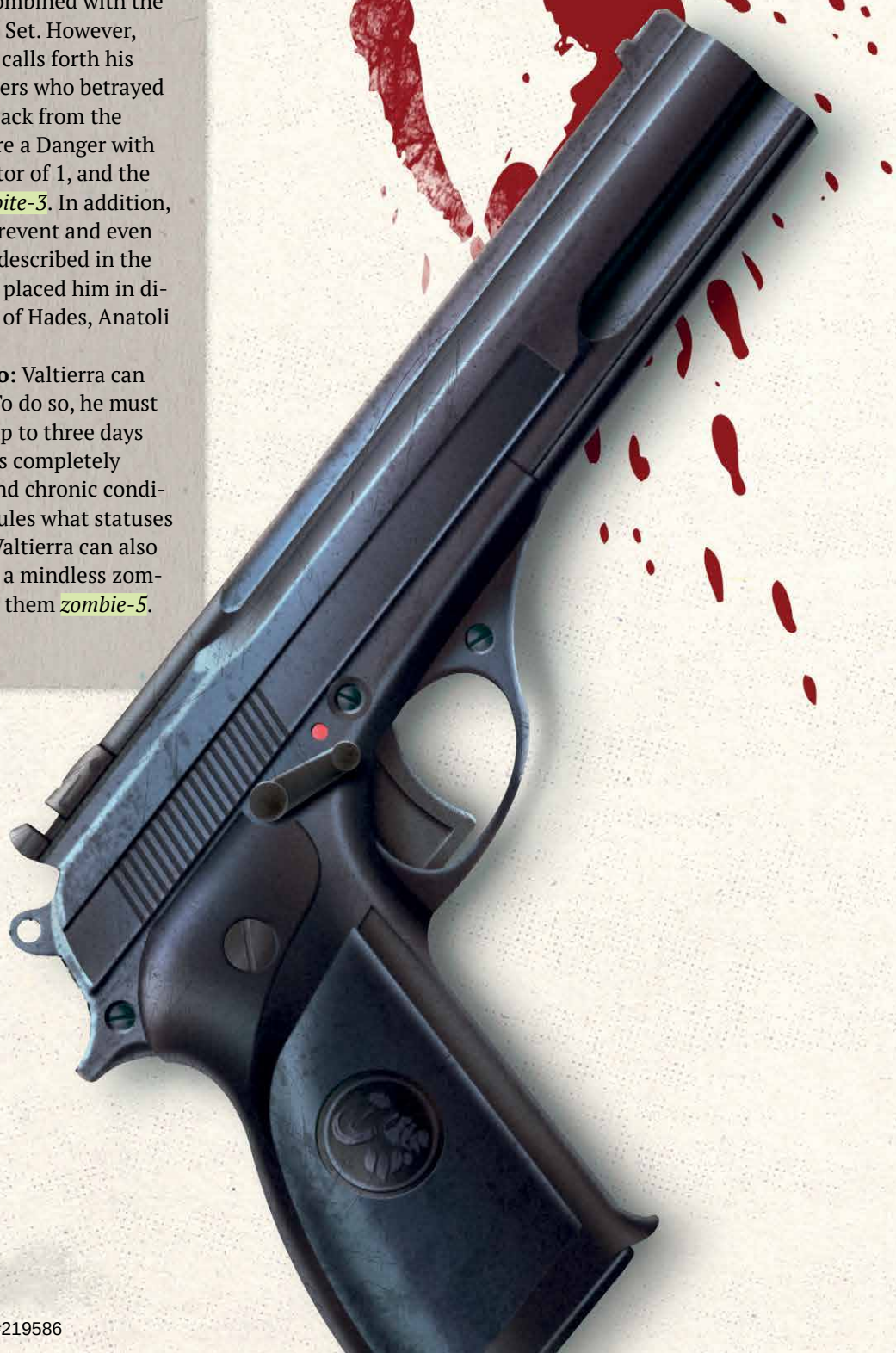


Property of City of M

SAMUEL VALTIERRA (BARON SAMEDI) ★★★★★

(Read a description of this character on page 30)

- Samuel Valtierra's abilities can be represented by the Crime Lord Danger combined with the Necromancer Mythos Power Set. However, instead of Undead, Valtierra calls forth his **Zombies**, living gang members who betrayed him and whom he brought back from the dead as his servants. They are a Danger with a *hurt:5* spectrum, a size factor of 1, and the ability to inflict a *ferocious-bite-3*. In addition, Valtierra has the ability to prevent and even reverse a person's death, as described in the move below; this ability has placed him in direct conflict with the Avatar of Hades, Anatoli Vidales (see page 174).
- **Nobody dies unless I say so:** Valtierra can bring a person back to life. To do so, he must touch a body that has died up to three days ago. The revived person rises completely healed, although illnesses and chronic conditions may remain. The MC rules what statuses the revived person retains. Valtierra can also choose to revive a person as a mindless zombie under his control, giving them *zombie-5*.



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MAGIC SWORD (FLAMING SWORD OF EDEN) ★★★★

This magical sword has been placed by the Museum Watch (the *ad hoc* group of vigilantes protecting the museum, mentioned on page 34) to protect the treasures in the museum from thieves, burglars, and raiders. While it cannot be destroyed, it can run out of magical energy if it exerts itself while fighting a powerful interloper. The sword is a guardian, not a killer; unless absolutely necessary, it will not use deadly force. Instead, it will try to render interlopers unconscious so the Museum Watch can drag them out.

EXHAUST 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE – / MYSTICALLY BIND 5

- **Resistant to Magic:** As long as the Flaming Sword is not completely exhausted, it cannot take any statuses on its *mystically-bind* spectrum.
- **Mystical Object:** When the *mystically-bind* spectrum is maxed out, the sword obeys the orders of whoever bound it.
- **Mystical Sense:** The sword can sense beings and mystical energies around it. When it enters the scene, give it *mystically-aware-4*. If it loses this status the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it, but the sword takes *exhausted-1*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- Strike with its flaming blade (*burning-injury-3*)
- Impale an interloper (*burning-sword-through-the-heart-6*, but the sword takes *exhausted-3*)
- Blast the area around it with mystical fire, damaging only its target(s) (*holy-burns-5*, but the sword takes *exhausted-2*)
- Magically alert the Museum Watch (create a Danger: Heist Team)
- Hover in the corridors of the museum, searching for interlopers
- Fly at maximum velocity at a target

PAUL DUMONT / "THE GARGOYLE" (QUASIMODO) ★★★

(Read the Mist-shrouded description of this character on page 37)

When Paul Dumont found the diary of the previous "cursed" Dumont family members, he realized what his forebears discovered before him: the "cursed" were created to fight corruption, especially that of the "blessed" family members. The curse had found a way of balancing itself out – and he was it. At nights, Paul prowls the rooftops as the famous vigilante "the Gargoyle", a name he inherited from the previous "cursed" members of his family.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Scandalous:** When the Gargoyle touches the ground on the street, a scandal immediately ensues: either someone sees him and a mob soon gathers around to capture him (create a Danger: Mob) or the MC can **Make Something Horrible Happen**.
- **Stoneskin:** When the Gargoyle takes a physical harm status, reduce the tier of the status by 3.
- **Gear:** When the Gargoyle enters the scene, give him a *hoodie*, a *grappling gun*, and a *glider*. If any of these tags is removed, the MC can renew one as a hard move if the Gargoyle can reasonably reclaim it.
- Climb up a building, take cover, and prepare to swoop (give himself *superior-position-3*)
- Slash with claws of stone (*gash-3*), overpower with martial arts (*staggered-3*), or throw a bola at someone (*entangled-3*)
- Creep in the shadows

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THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE

SPIDER (SPIDER GRANDMOTHER) ★★★

(Read the description of this character on page 43)

HURT OR SUBDUE 5

- **Spider Senses:** When Spider enters the scene, give him *alert-3*.
- **Tough Son of a Gun:** When Spider takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- **Dreamcatcher:** For every tier of *restrained* Spider gives a target, he can burn one of its Mythos power tags (for a PC) or reduce one of its legendary move effects by one (for a Danger).
- **Decommission:** As a soft move, Spider can give a *restrained-5* target an additional *no-Mythos-powers-5* status, against which the target cannot **Face Danger**.
- **Net Trap Landmine:** Once per scene, when you try to attack Spider, you first take a *restrained-5*.
- Restrain a target using a ziplock (*ziplock-2*) or a fire a net from his shotgun (*tied-up-4*)
- Step in silently, surveying the surroundings
- Warn someone to come quietly, or else

LILY CHOW (PRINCE OF IRON HANS) ★★★★

(Read the Mist-shrouded description of this character on page 42)

Lily Chow is able to summon (or conjure) one of the most powerful beings in the City to her aid – but she can't keep it up for long. Iron Hans is a green giant of pure magical energy, invulnerable for the most part and capable of virtually any magical feat. While he seems to be a powerful and wise individual, Iron Hans is entirely committed to Lily and her exploration of the City. If she asks him a question, he advises her, but mostly he just watches over her. If Lily evolves during the series, you can increase her spectrums or improve her martial arts move, or remove the *flicker* status from some of Hans' moves.

BANISH HANS 5 / HURT OR SUBDUE HANS – / HURT OR SUBDUE LILY 2

- **Cheeky Brat:** When Lily Chow enters the scene, give her *indignant-3*. If she loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- **Gutter Out:** When the *banish Hans* spectrum is maxed out, Iron Hans disappears. Lily Chow cannot summon him again this scene.
- **Energy Hulk**: Every time Iron Hans takes a physical harm status, he ignores it and Lily takes a *flicker-1* status on the *banish Hans* spectrum. As a soft move (or an MC intrusion if Lily is in danger), Iron Hans can move over and contain up to a handful of people inside him. Anyone inside Iron Hans cannot take any physical harm or subdual statuses.
- **Magician**: Once per scene, Iron Hans can create three story tags as an intrusion. As a hard move, he can create one story tag. After either action, Lily takes a *flicker-1* status on the *banish Hans* spectrum. The story tags can describe means of protection, environmental effects, conjured allies, or abilities and qualities Iron Hans can give himself or Lily.
- **Stop. Holding. Back:** Lily can have Hans grow to protect several people from one physical harm status (size factor 2) or concentrate all his energy on a fatal blow by burning two protective tags (or otherwise reducing a target's defenses by 2) and then imposing *cut-in-half-6*. Iron Hans vanishes and Lily Chow can't summon him again until the end of the next downtime.
- Command Iron Hans to attack, with one of the following: cleave with a magical energy axe (*gaping-gash-5*) or hit with a punch, a kick, or the butt of the axe handle (*barely-standing-4*). Lily takes a *flicker-1* status on the *banish Hans* spectrum.
- Use basic martial arts to protect herself (give herself *defensive-stance-1* and give someone *prone-2*, temporary, or *dizzy-2*)
- Threaten someone not to mess with her
- Behave like a brat and talk back indignantly

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ELSEWHERE

CHINTHE STATUES (CHINTHE) ★★★

(Read the Mist-shrouded description of this character on page 45)

The Chinthe statues are Relics that have been heirlooms of the Wong family for three generations. At any sign of an intruder or a threat to the Wongs' store, these statues come to life as guardian lions and either restrain or kill the intruder, as their master commands. Since the living Chinthe are creatures conjured from beyond the Mist, some sorcerers are able to revert them back to stone form using the right spells; however, as celestial guardians, these statues are immune to dark magic. This Danger profile represents a single statue.

DAMAGE 4 / REVERT 4

- **Guardian Lions:** When you **Investigate** or **Sneak Around** near the Chinthe, if you score 7-9, the MC can choose to awaken the Chinthe instead of choosing from the move list. When the Chinthe are awake, their master knows about it and can see and hear through their eyes and ears until they return to their statue state.
- **Celestial Beings:** When a Chinthe takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce the tier of the status by 2. When a Chinthe takes a dark magic status, ignore the status.
- Leap on a single target, holding it down (*held-down-3*)
- Bite or slash someone with their golden claws (*slash-3*)
- Banish otherworldly creatures and/or dispel dark magic (*banish-5* or burn five tags describing such creatures)
- Awaken at the first sign of an intruder

GATEKEEPER AGENTS ★★★

Out of the many different units at the disposal of the Gatekeepers, the ones most commonly seen in active duty are the field agents units. Besides their extensive mundane training, Gatekeeper agents are trained in the art of *shrouding*, the manipulation of the Mist.

Gatekeepers sometimes take a mundane guise created by the Mist. You should narrate this false identity as perfectly normal and unsuspicious characters. When you want to give the players a chance to expose the Gatekeepers, you can drop faint hints about the false identities. Use the **Creepy Feeling** move when the lead characters are already suspecting something and decide to **Investigate**; it reflects the difficulty of obtaining concrete information about the Gatekeepers' cover. When you reveal **Creepy Feeling** to the players, use the name of the Gatekeepers' false identities (instead of "Gatekeeper Agents") to avoid automatically exposing the Gatekeepers.

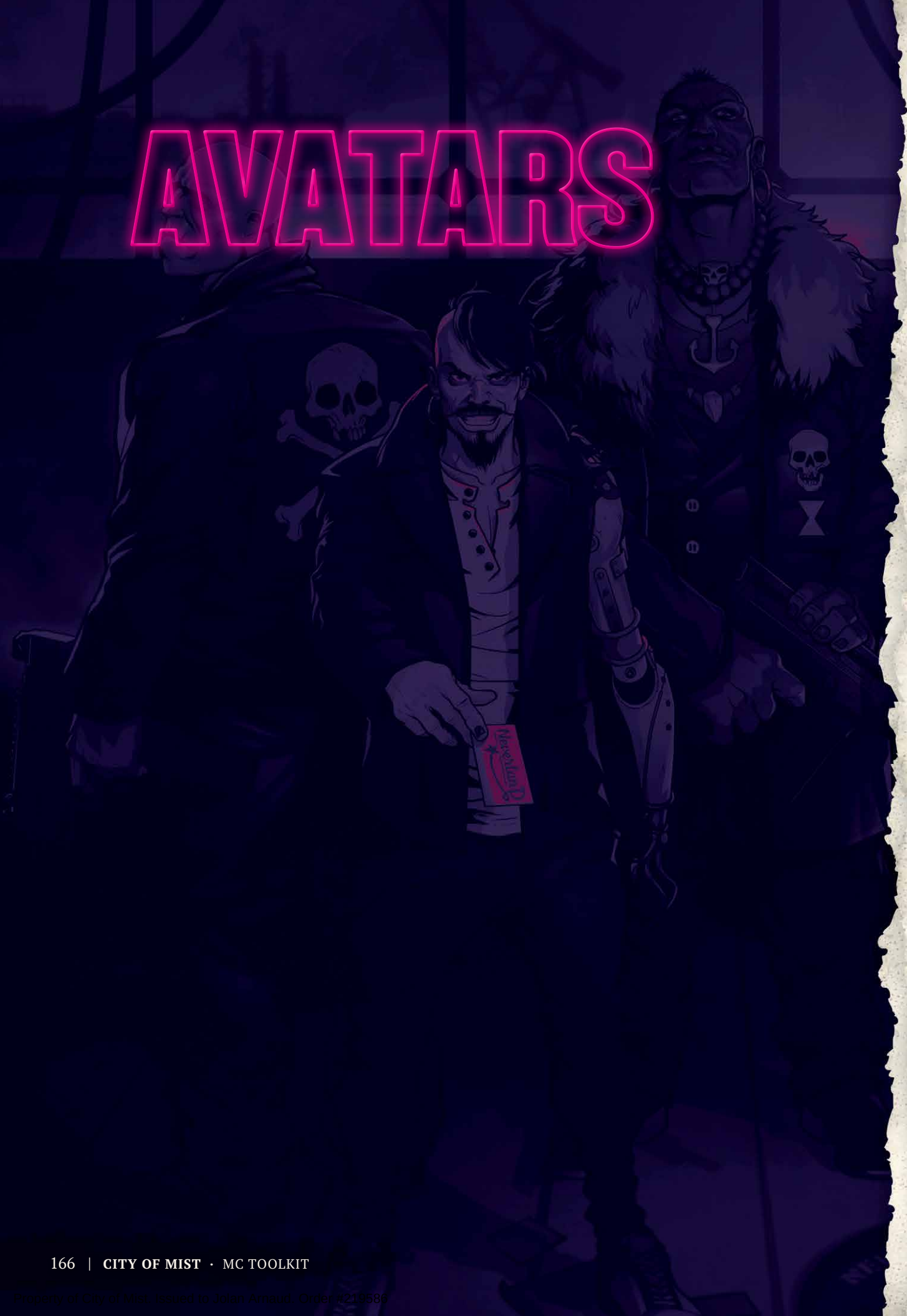
HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Collective:** This collective has a handful of members and a size factor of 1.
- **Creepy Feeling:** Whenever you try to **Investigate** to learn more about _____ , you get a strange feeling that he / she is impenetrable. _____ takes *mysterious-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Explosive Shrouding Ward:** Once per scene, as an intrusion, everyone around the Gatekeepers takes *oblivious-5*. At their option, the Gatekeepers may flee the scene.
- **Defensive Shrouding**: Once per scene, when you attack Gatekeeper Agents with Mythos powers, they manipulate the Mist to choke out your powers. The MC first burns two power tags related to your attack.
- Shroud someone so they can't remember (*vague-memories-3*)
- Shroud someone's Mythos, so they lose their powers (burn two Mythos power tags or reduce a Danger's move effect by two)
- Fire a standard-issue pistol (*gunshot-wound-3*) or use basic martial arts (*hold-down-2* or *bruise-2*)
- Show up out of nowhere
- Tell everyone how they soon won't remember all this

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As explained under The Mythoi, Their Avatars, And Their Operations (page 52), Avatars rule the City. From their ivory towers hidden deep in the Mist, each of them runs a many-branched operation centered on one purpose alone: to manifest the story of their Mythos on a Citywide scale. These operations branch out further and further until they affect many different individuals and groups, one of whom will come in contact with the lead characters. This sparks off the investigation which may end with the exposure of the Avatar's operation and an inevitable clash of mythical forces.

For the MC, an Avatar is the subject matter of a story arc, similar to a major villain in a TV series or comic book. Like any threat that is at the core of a story arc, an Avatar has **a large-scale agenda**, **a modus operandi**, **an endgame**, and **an operation** mapped on an Operation Iceberg (see Story Arcs, page 108).

You can use the details of an Avatar and her operation to add new burning questions, story elements, plot ideas, and style guides to your series, as explained under Series Resources (page 105). When writing the next case in the story arc and when improvising during a session, the Avatar's Operation Iceberg indicates what operational activities the crew may uncover and how they are connected.

A story arc surrounding the operation of an Avatar can be quite involved, encompassing the ups-and-downs of the crew's investigation and possible conflicts with the Avatar's minions. It could take quite a few sessions before the crew unravels the source of all the crimes, wrongdoings, and problems in this story arc: the Avatar herself. When your group finally comes face-to-face with the Avatar, the consequences can be devastating: to the crew, to the Avatar, and to the City.

THE ROLE OF AN AVATAR IN THE SERIES

The most obvious role an Avatar can play in a story arc is the role of an adversary, someone evil who is responsible for countless wrongs and must be stopped at any cost, or someone who directly opposes the crew's agenda. However, Avatars are never just overpowered challenges; they are a mirror of what could become of the lead characters if they allow themselves to be taken over by their Mythoi. While sometimes their actions can certainly be classified as evil, Avatars only ever act in the best interest of their Mythos, just as the lead characters often do. Most of the time, they act in the best interest of the City as they see it through the eyes of their Mythos. Therefore, like all others threats in *City of Mist*, an Avatar and those working in her operation should have identifiable motives that often put the lead characters in a dilemma, possibly triggering their Mysteries and Identities.

While some Avatars are more clearly wrongdoers or enemies (even if humanly so), other Avatars can play a more complicated role in the series. Avatars can use their operations to help the crew, becoming a hidden ally. This is especially true when the crew is digging into the operation of a rival Avatar. Someone in an Avatar's operation may reach out to the crew and hire them to do a job. An Avatar and her minions could try to manipulate the crew into doing something for them, and so on.

An Avatar's position towards the crew need not be fixed. Each branch of her operation could have a different approach to the crew: one branch may wish to exterminate the crew while another may wish to recruit the crew members to their ranks. As the investigation goes further into the Avatar's operation, the crew discovers new aspects of the operation that may change how they feel about working with that Avatar. The crew may even discover that their closest allies and their worst enemies are simply different aspects of the same Avatar.

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AGENDA AS THE STORY ARC OVERARCHING THEME

Just like player character Avatars, the MC's Avatars are driven to fulfill their Mythos' agenda on a larger-than-life scale, affecting the entire City. An Avatar may wish to teach everyone a lesson, help everyone fulfill a specific desire or a goal, or force everyone to experience a specific emotion. The lesson, desire, or emotion that lies at the heart of an Avatar gives the story arc its flavor and guides your cinematic considerations as the MC throughout the season.

The Avatar's agenda dictates the overarching theme of the story arc: the Avatar of the Fisher King dictates a story arc about pain and suffering, the Avatar of Hades dictates a story arc about debt, death, and the afterlife; the Avatar of Peter Pan dictates a story arc about eternal youth and freedom from care; and so on.

CONNECTING THE AVATAR TO THE CREW

When you decide to use a specific Avatar in a story arc, her Agenda should interact with the series concept. Ask yourself:

? HOW DOES THIS AVATAR TIE INTO THE SERIES CONCEPT AND CREW THEME(S)?

If your series is about a crew of vigilantes, then perhaps you should emphasize the criminal aspect of the Avatar's operation. If your series is about a group of insurance investigators, maybe the Avatar is the mysterious owner of their company or, conversely, an Avatar related to unpredictability and mayhem that is the potential source of the company's demise. If your series revolves around the personal drama within the crew, perhaps an Avatar who aspires to evoke powerful emotions is most fitting.

Furthermore, an Avatar should have some connection to each of the lead characters. Ask yourself:

? HOW DOES THIS AVATAR RELATE TO THE PLAYER CHARACTERS' THEME(S)?

The nature of an Avatar's relation to each player character could vary. One character may only be affected by one branch of the Avatar's operation, while another could be of personal interest to the Avatar. The lesson, desire, or emotion the Avatar symbolizes could play a role in one character's Mythos, while for another character it is her Logos themes that are more affected, for example, the object of her Defining Relationship may be caught in the clutches of the Avatar's operation, etc.

Do not try to plan in advance how the Avatar will interact with the crew and with each player character and what the final outcome will be. Instead, use the answers to the questions above to help you create additional story elements and plot ideas that will engage the players.

UNREACHABLE, UNFATHOMABLE, INDESTRUCTIBLE

Avatars are more than major threats in a story arc; they are the closest beings in *City of Mist* to the Mythoi themselves. There are a number of guidelines to consider when incorporating an Avatar into the series:

KEEP YOUR AVATAR A MYSTERY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE

Avatars are buried deep at the bottom of the Operation Iceberg. When an Avatar is revealed, all is revealed, so the uncovering of an Avatar should be a very slow process that builds up towards the end of the story arc. Try to avoid even mentioning the Avatar before the crew is at least half-way down the iceberg. Then gradually and sporadically drop thin hints and insinuations that there is a common thread behind all the cases the crew is solving and perhaps a single guiding hand. When the crew defeats someone in the Avatar's operation, let them wonder if that is the bottom of the iceberg; if they assume so, don't contradict them – let them be surprised later. Remember that an Avatar is hidden in the Mist. Operatives on the field most likely don't know or don't remember who they are really working for, least of all her real name. Everyone else has no idea the Avatar exists (barring the other Avatars, the Gatekeepers, and perhaps the strongest and most influential of Legendaries in the City).

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MAKE YOUR AVATAR WORTHY OF THE TITLE

Avatars are barely human anymore; they are their Mythos incarnate, virtually gods. In many ways, they are superior to all other Rifts in the City: they are more aware, wiser, and more influential and powerful. Assume that your Avatar is always ten steps ahead of the crew: if she has become aware of them, she already has several plans how to use them to further her agenda. If the crew ever becomes an actual nuisance or even a threat to an Avatar, give them a run for their money. The Avatar will make their life so miserable that they wished they never got involved or she will manipulate their lives so masterfully that they would not realize they are playing into her hands before it's too late.

If the crew ever comes face-to-face with an Avatar, they cannot walk away unscathed or unchanged. They have met with a force of nature and this force always wants something from them. They can resist, they can succumb, they can come to an agreement, but they cannot escape the consequences of meddling with such a godlike entity. Make sure that such an encounter is well-remembered: work out the details of what the Avatar will do to the lead characters in advance and create the required plot ideas, Dangers, custom moves, etc.

In Mack the MC's game, the crew was finally invited to meet the Avatar of Peter Pan face-to-face after they exposed his existence and influence over the City. They want to find a way to enter Neverland, where one of the crew's allies is being held against his will (or so they think). Mack the MC considers what might happen to anyone meeting such a mythical force in person. He wants to play it out as a battle of wills, with the Avatar trying to convince the crew members to abandon their obligations and come to Neverland with him. Mack the MC therefore gives Peter Pan a move that can cause *yearning-for-Neverland-4*; at tier 6, the affected character leaves for Neverland and triggers the following custom move:

When you go to Neverland, replace one of your Logos theme with a nascent Personality theme titled "Carefree". When you come back from Neverland, keep "Carefree" or replace it as you would a normal Logos theme.

Mack the MC plans to reveal the custom move as soon as the encounter begins, to represent the character's understanding that Peter Pan's intention is to coax them to abandon their responsibilities. Mack hopes this will make the crew's decision to go to Neverland more interesting, and at any rate, no one is likely to leave the encounter with the Avatar unchanged.

TREAT YOUR AVATAR AS A PLOT DEVICE, NOT A GAME CHALLENGE

Avatars are not ordinary game challenges – they are the soul of a story arc. An Avatar cannot be destroyed in battle without the special means mentioned below. First, Avatars are extremely powerful; their physical manifestations are the worst Dangers there are, capable of leveling entire City blocks and sustaining unimaginable amounts of damage or avoiding it all together. Second, while the physical manifestation of an Avatar may be represented as a Danger and can be defeated and destroyed, all well-founded Avatars have found one way or another to reform their physical manifestation, given time. If the crew thinks destroying the physical form of an Avatar is a solution to their problem, they will find it not only immensely difficult and costly but also quite futile.

To overcome an Avatar, the crew must do more than dish out tremendous amounts of punishment; they must understand the Avatar, her story, her origin, and then use this understanding to get what they want from her or orchestrate her demise. Such an understanding of the Avatar can involve an **origin investigation**, a series of cases that delve into the history of the Avatar and her motives. The crew may uncover the Avatar's **Secret Identity**, the last thing that she had to sacrifice to become an Avatar but which may still bear some importance to her and may cause her to forsake Avatarhood, if played right (see Becoming an Avatar, page 270 in the Player's Guide).

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Alternatively, the crew may find another Rift (perhaps even a Relic, a Familiar, or an Enclave) which is related to the Mythos of the Avatar and is the key to her undoing. All of the Avatar's secrets may be guarded by powerful beings: Rifts of part of her Mythos, the Avatar's strongest servants, or even other Avatars. The crew must answer many questions and sacrifice a great deal before they have a chance of influencing or threatening an Avatar.

CREATING AN AVATAR

To use an Avatar in a story arc, you need the Avatar's Operation Iceberg: a schematic of the Avatar's operation and the details of each of its components. The steps below explain this process.

Most threats in *City of Mist* tend to originate from an Avatar or at least are backed by one. However, you may wish to create an operation run by a threat that isn't an Avatar such as a less powerful Rift or even a Sleeper. The process given below can be applied to any such threat that runs an operation, no matter her personal level of awareness or the size of her operation.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH AGENDA AND ENDGAME

An Operation Iceberg is based on the Avatar's **agenda** and planned **endgame**. A non-player Avatar's agenda and endgame are established in the same way as for a player character Avatar. In brief, you refine the core lesson, emotion, or desire that lies at the heart of the Avatar's Mythos and then decide how the Avatar plans to realize this lesson, emotion, or desire in the City in the grandest way possible.

This is also a good time to establish the Avatar's history as well as her Secret Identity: the last speck of humanity remaining in her, which may be instrumental to her downfall. For the full explanation on how to create an Avatar concept, see Becoming an Avatar (page 270 in the Player's Guide).

Mack the MC is working on the Avatar of Peter Pan. He considers the Mythos of Peter Pan and decides that it is concerned with being an eternal child and freeing people from 'adult' obligations and commitments. The Avatar's endgame is to turn the City into one big Neverland, where no one is committed to anything and everyone is free to do as they please.

STEP 2: ESTABLISH MODUS OPERANDI

An Avatar's modus operandi (method or mode of operation) is the practical way in which she promotes her agenda and plans to achieve her endgame in the City. Ask yourself:

? WHAT ACTIONS DOES THE AVATAR'S OPERATION TAKE TO TURN HER AGENDA INTO REALITY?

An Avatar's modus operandi always requires tangible actions that often involve criminal or subversive activity or create problems for the residents of the City. An Avatar's operation may focus on a single main activity or spread across multiple different activities, which may be separate or intertwined.

Mack the MC considers how the Avatar of Peter Pan can realize his plans for the City. He decides that Peter Pan has a few Enclaves in town that serve as "Neverlands" and that Peter Pan is luring people into them, probably starting with children and irresponsible adults.

But Mack doesn't want it all to be about spiriting children away; he wants to add a real-world dimension to this Avatar's work. He decides that Peter Pan can't keep everyone in those Enclaves; instead, he uses "Neverlands" to train a guerilla army of Lost Boys that undermines the 'adult' way of life in the City by sabotaging institutions and infrastructure. Mack decides that the Avatar even has a division responsible for propaganda, calling people to let go of their inhibitions through popular chains of game stores, extreme sports clubs, etc.

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STEP 3: PLOT OUT THE OPERATION ICEBERG

First, consider the **branches** of the Avatar's operation based on her modus operandi. Some new Avatars or threats of a smaller scale have only one branch: they only have one way of promoting their agenda and they focus on it completely. Other Avatars lead many-pronged operations that promote their agenda on multiple fronts. Each such aspect of the operation is then a separate branch responsible for its own activity. Branches may intertwine: one division of the operation could be helping another by supplying it with a resource or protecting it. Branches may also have sub-branches, each responsible for a more specific activity that is a part of the greater branch's work.

> Mack the MC sees three branches for Peter Pan's operation: the "Neverlands" training Enclaves, the Lost Boys guerrilla army, and the recreational branch. He decides the recreational branch brings people to the "Neverlands", which in turn increase the ranks of the Lost Boys. Under the "Neverlands" branch, each separate facility is a sub-branch of its own, with its own leader, training methods, etc.

Next, populate each branch with **characters**, **groups**, and **locations**. A standard Avatar's operation has five Depths: Sleeper, Touched, Borderliner, Legendary, and Avatar. (You can create lighter operations that include fewer Depths, for shorter series, or experiment with complex conspiracies that have more than five Depths).

- Usually, a **character** or a **group** on the Operation Iceberg...
  - » is responsible for the part of the operation that is above it on the same branch;
  - » reports to the character or location that is directly below it on the same branch; and
  - » is known (at least in her function in the operation) only to those directly above her or anyone below her, on the same branch.
- Usually, a **location** on the Operation Iceberg is the place of a specific activity that is known (at least in its function in the operation) only to those directly above it or anyone below it, on the same branch.

Therefore:

- An **Avatar** knows all the details of her operation. She usually communicates only with those at the Legendary Depth.
- Those in the **Legendary Depth** are usually responsible for an entire branch of the operation. They answer to the Avatar alone and they are known only by the Avatar and by their subordinates in the Borderliner level. To facilitate better coordination, sometimes those in the Legendaries Depth know about each other and communicate with each other directly.
- Those in the **Borderliner Depth** are usually responsible for a sub-branch of the operation or carry out important tasks themselves. They answer to someone in the Legendary Depth and often do not know of the Avatar. Their subordinates are in the Touched Depth or Sleeper Depth.
- Those in the **Touched Depth** are often Mythos-powered pawns who know only a little more than Sleepers. They are lead or guided by someone on the Borderliner Depth and know nothing of what happens deeper than that.
- Those in the **Sleeper Depth** either work for the operation, victimized by it, or are involved without knowing it. They only know their contacts (or if they are targets, their attackers) from the Touched Depth.

As explained under Story Arcs (page 108), the various Depths of an operation represent how much a character of that Depth knows, not her level of awareness. Characters and locations commonly have the same level of awareness as the Depth they are in (Sleepers in the Sleeper Depth of an operation, Touched in the Touched Depth, and so on) but on occasions this rule is broken. Furthermore, as characters awaken or are overcome by the Mist, they may or may not change their location in the organization. For example, a Sleeper who was touched by an Avatar's influence could become Touched. Depending on the operation, this may allow her to learn more about what's going on (and move to the Touched Depth) or she could remain in the same position (only with newfound Mythos powers).

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Once you have all the branches plotted out as an Operation Iceberg, connect individuals on different branches to show what parts of the operation are connected.

> Mack the MC is building the "Neverlands" branch of the Peter Pan operation. He decides the Rift of Wendy is the one who manages the branch so he places her in the Legendary Depth. He then thinks of three locations for "Neverlands" and attaches a leading figure to each. These all exist in the Borderliner Depth of the operation, answering to the Rift of Wendy without knowing who they truly work for. Their subordinates are the Lost Boys trainers (Touched in the Touched Depth) and a host of pirates and pirate ships they use as mythical punching bags and obstacle courses (also Touched in the Touched Depth). Finally, in the Sleeper Depth, there are the children and footloose adults who are brought to these Enclave facilities as trainees. Mack also decides that the leaders of the "Neverlands" stand in direct contact with the leaders of the Lost Boys guerilla army and supply them with trained Lost Boys.

WHAT'S NEXT?

FLESHING OUT THE ICEBERG

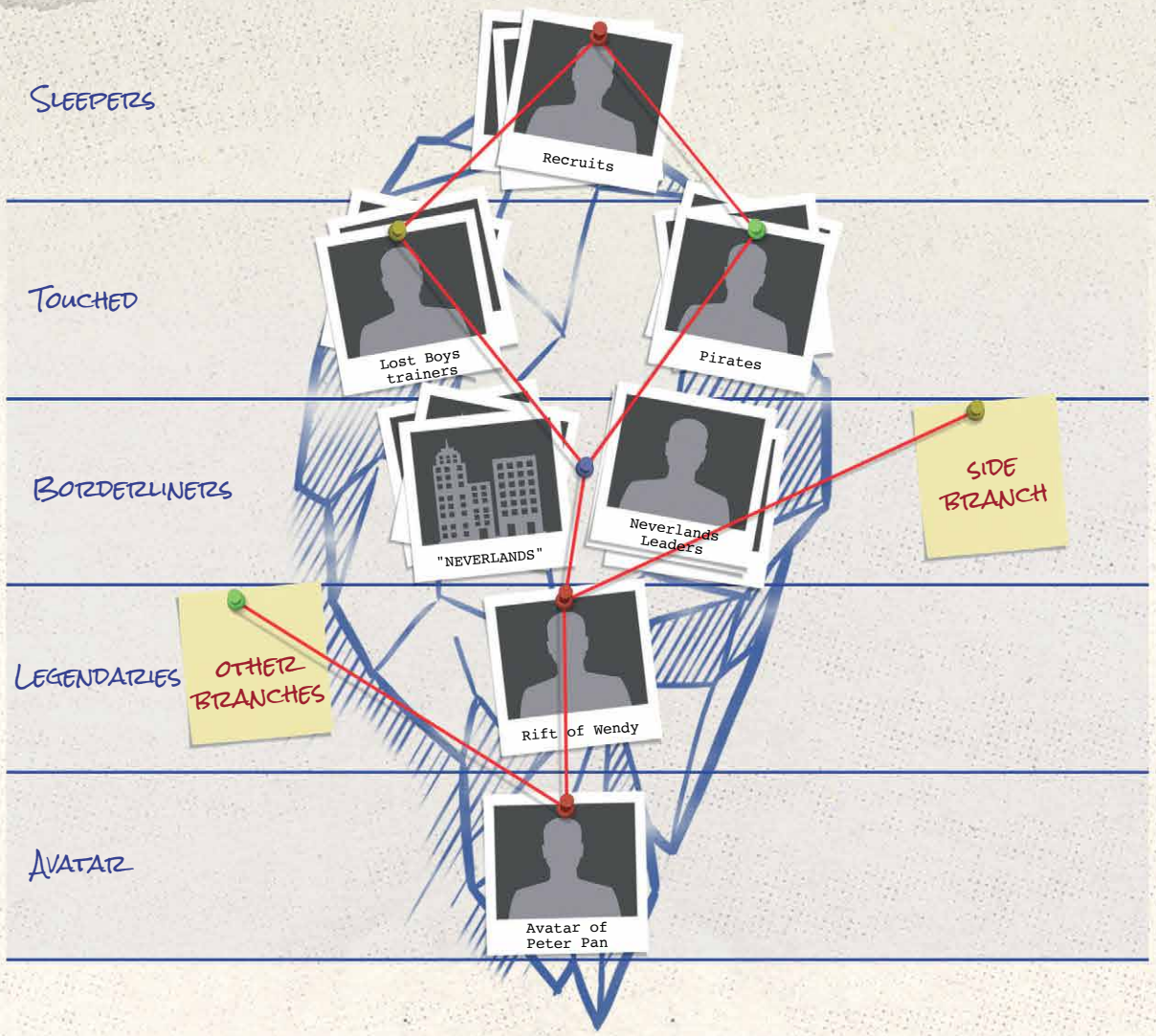
Each character, group, or location on your Iceberg needs a few more **details** to become a real part of the operation: a mundane name, a description or image, and the particularities of their part in the operation. In addition, some characters, groups, locations, or situations can be represented as Dangers or custom moves. You can complete the details of your Operation Iceberg at this point or wait until they are needed for a specific case. However, the more knowledge you have of the operation before you start writing the story arc, the more coherent and consistent your story arc will feel to the players.

USING THE OPERATION ICEBERG

Once you have the Operation Iceberg layout, you can use it to come up with **story seeds** for the first case that the crew will investigate in this story arc. The first case begins with some hooks that are related to the Sleeper Depth and may reveal something about the Touched Depth. Subsequent cases delve deeper and deeper into the operation or branch out horizontally to cover more aspects of the same operation. Read more under Story Arcs (page 108).

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ANATOLI VIDALES

Hades, Greek god of the underworld

"Man, I've boxed in dicey parts of town before, but this… it's not like any place I've ever been. There's a strange silence in the air. People get on with their daily business but you can tell they're just empty shells with no future. It looks like fear but it smells like death. You think I never took money to go down in a fight? I know what these mafia types are like, with their fancy suits and fedoras. I'm telling you – this is no ordinary mafia."
–Mitosis



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Anatoli Vidales, Avatar of Hades, is the head of the biggest criminal organization in the City. Often confused with the Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, or Albanian mafia, Mr. Vidales' organization in fact envelopes and employs many such smaller criminal operations. Needless to say, law enforcement authorities in the City have no idea about Anatoli's operation, least of all of the man who heads it.

Indeed, the true purpose of this enterprise is hidden even from most of its members. Being the lord of the underworld and the dead, Anatoli seeks to increase his power by increasing the ranks of his domain: transmigrating all souls into Hades. Since he cannot openly kill the masses (that would result in an all-out war with the Gatekeepers and the other Avatars; and worse, it would not be very conducive to the cause, as explained below), Anatoli's operation revolves around another means of making his victims a part of Hades: by making them indebted to him. His agents have mastered shrewd methods of getting individuals into debt and finally convincing them to give their life in return for (temporary) absolution. The victims of this operation do not pass to the afterlife; they continue to live in the City as living ghosts, but they remain forever under Anatoli's control. Anatoli has been diligently working to secure his grip on the City and has succeeded in transmigrating entire City blocks into Hades. His ultimate goal is to be able to transfer the entire City into Hades, using political corruption and extortion to somehow gain ownership of the City.

OVERVIEW OF ANATOLI VIDALES

Agenda: to turn all the City residents into residents of Hades

MO: pushing people into financial and spiritual debt

Emotion: hopelessness, dead-end

Motifs: symbols of death, life without prospects or meaning, mafia trappings

Frontliners: mundane mafia, consiglieri, enforcers, ferrymen, living dead

Stronghold: "Persephone", a Greek restaurant

ANATOLI'S MODUS OPERANDI

Contrary to common belief, Hades is not a place – it's a state of being. Victims of Anatoli's operation must die in order to move into Hades. However, at the discretion of Anatoli and his servants, people who are in Hades may continue their lives as normal residents of the City. When a deceased soul moves to Hades, it materializes from its resting place, leaving its body behind and assuming a form similar to the one it had in life. The person then returns to her everyday life.

Unfortunately for the residents of Hades, they only *appear* to be normal City residents. In actuality, people in the state of Hades are ghosts, living conglomerations of memories that keep going through the everyday routine they kept when they were alive. They behave just as they always did. They are tangible (although some have learned how to let go of their physical form temporarily) and mostly have no physical indication of being dead, except perhaps for a faint mark of how they died, such as a scar where they were shot. At least outwardly, they can continue their lives normally, if they can somehow mask the event of their death. If they cannot, they find a new life elsewhere in the City under a false name or in Anatoli's employment.

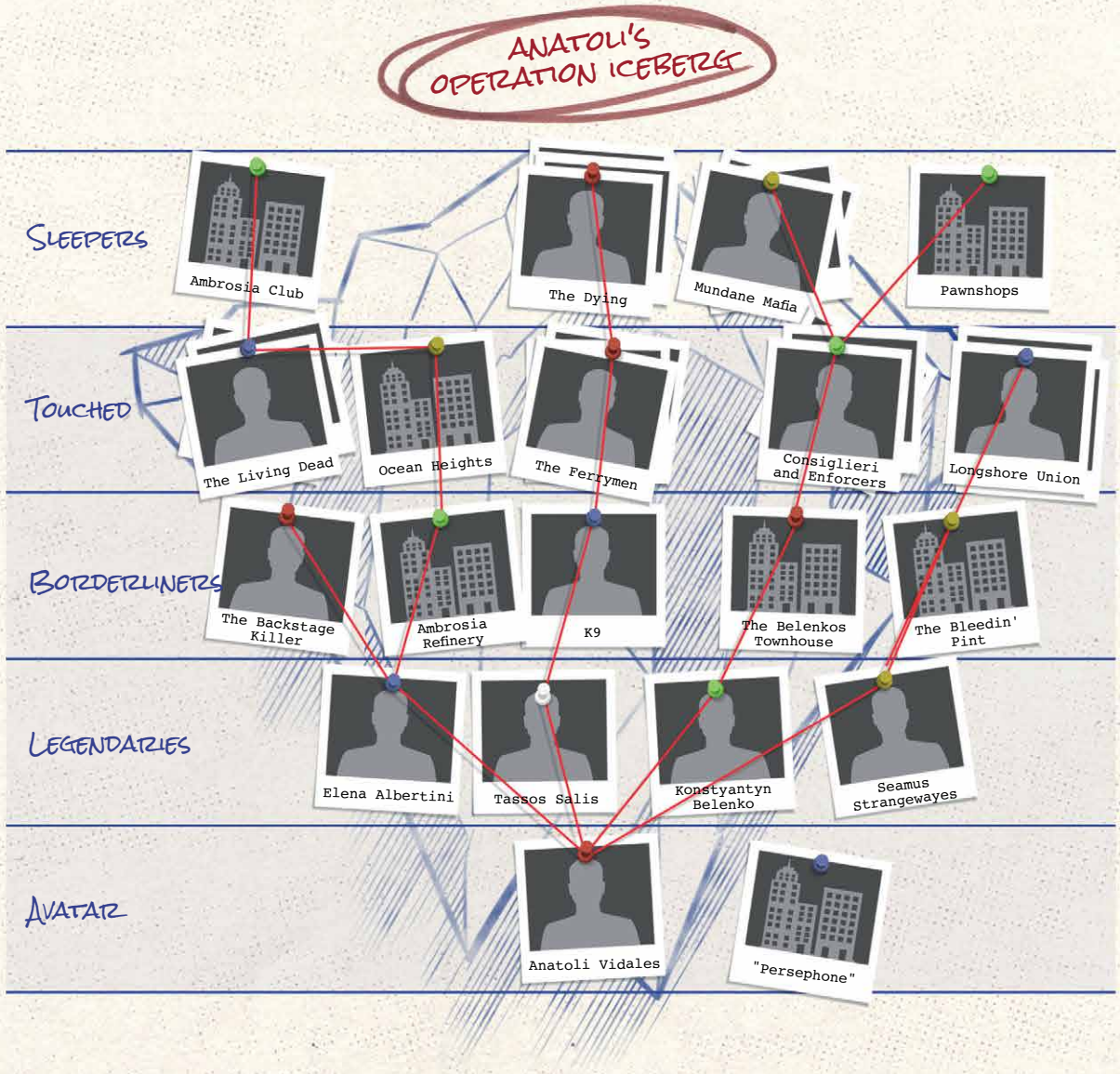
Existing in the City is a boon bestowed by Anatoli on his serfs and it could easily be taken away; if they ever cross him, he can send them to the eternal darkness of non-existence, or worse. There

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is a good number of prominent politicians and police captains that Anatoli has brought to Hades and who help him keep his operation under wraps. To their woe, people in Hades also discover that while they still have their old life, they cannot *feel* anything as vividly as they did when they were alive. To truly feel anything, they must consume a substance called *Ambrosia,* which Anatoli's men dispense and charge them handsomely for. The residents of Hades, therefore, are completely and permanently indebted to him.

Unfortunately for Anatoli, people who die in the City do not automatically go into Hades. Due to the limiting effect the Mist has on Mythoi, Hades exists only where the influence of his Avatar, Anatoli, is present. For a soul to transmigrate into Hades, its owner had to be in some way connected and influenced by Anatoli or his minions, most commonly an indebted victim of his racketeers, extortionists, loan sharks, etc. This is one reason why Anatoli refrains from directly attacking the population of the City: he doesn't dislike mindless killing, it just doesn't serve him.

Anatoli aspires to broaden his operations on all levels of society to increase the debt the City residents owe him, individually and as a community. If he could muster enough influence to gain control of the banks or credit card companies, he may be able to welcome swathes of new members and even entire districts to his Mythos' parallel state of existence.



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ANATOLI'S OPERATION

Anatoli's operation is divided into three main branches: the living, the dying, and the dead.

The living branch of Anatoli's operation is the largest of the three. It closely resembles a mundane criminal organization and, in fact, includes several recruited organized crime families who do the dirty work on the Sleeper level. Its primary purpose is to make as many people in the City indebted to Anatoli, by any means necessary.

The dying branch of Anatoli's operation is the smallest but most urgent of the three. It involves approaching people on their deathbed with a proposition to evade death and continue their life in the state of Hades. Of course, Anatoli's agents regularly neglect to mention that the dying individual would be eternally in the grasp of their master; then again, the dying individual often doesn't care about any caveats at that point.

The dead branch of Anatoli's operation is the most hidden of the three. It is concerned with managing and employing residents of Hades to fortify Anatoli's control of the City. The dead agents of Hades are everywhere in the City and their forced loyalty to Anatoli is absolute. Whenever one of the other branches gets into trouble, it's the dead branch that pulls them out. This branch also controls Ambrosia production and distribution, especially to the high-flying officials on Anatoli's "payroll".

KEY CHARACTERS

The living branch is further divided into sub-branches, each representing a crime organization that Anatoli's servants are in league with.

One such family are the **BELENKOS**, led by Konstyantyn Belenko. The Belenkos are one of Anatoli's most loyal and efficient "business partners" and manage a significant portion of the branch's street operations. Killed in an internal feud over

ANATOLI'S HISTORY

Almost a century ago, Anatoli Vidales was the eldest son of the nefarious Vidales crime family. Refraining from taking part in the family's illegal business, fun-loving Anatoli lived a life of debauchery and luxury, spending the family's fortune on cars, women, and trips around the world. Unfortunately for him, this all came to an abrupt end with a single gunshot.

Anatoli's youngest brother had shot their father, the head of the Vidales family, and disappeared, fleeing the City. This forced Anatoli to assume his father's position as the new leader of the Vidales underworld; otherwise, the resulting internal war would have not only ruined his father's life work but also ended with the deaths of Anatoli himself and his entire family. To stabilize the family, Anatoli had to step up, giving up his joyful life for the world of violence and hate that has always underlined, and indeed funded, his excessive lifestyle. Understanding that death is the source of all life has opened his eyes, and he became the Rift of Hades, taking his position as the City's new grim reaper and expanding his father's empire to an unprecedented scale.

In those days of his ascension to greatness, Anatoli fell in love with a young woman who passed by his window daily. Seeing her, even for only a brief moment at a time, breathed life into his dark existence; sometimes he would smile to himself even as he was wiping the blood of his enemies off his hands. Anatoli managed to use his influence and personal charm to lure this lady, Perry Kennedy, into his world and the two married. However, despite their great love, their life was fraught with tensions surrounding Anatoli's life as a crime lord. Eventually Kennedy left him (some say to the Rift of Orpheus); letting her go freely has broken Anatoli's last hope for a life of his own and he became the Avatar of Hades. To this day, Perry remains the only life Anatoli was ever loath to take. As far as he knows she has not died yet, at least not within the boundaries of the City.

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his relations with Anatoli's organization, Konstyantyn became a citizen of Hades and came back to haunt, torture, and finally eliminate his killers. He revealed his new presence only to his daughter, Ruslana, who is currently leading the organization under his guidance. Konstyantyn is not awakened; he is merely Touched by Anatoli's influence and was chosen for the role due to his immense influence. That makes him one of the very few Touched individuals in the City who intimately know an Avatar. He is completely committed to Anatoli's vision of Hades but has asked for one favor in return for his services: that Ruslana would be spared. For now, he has been given this grace.

Another criminal association that has been known to work with Anatoli are the Longshore Union hooligans (Red Caps, page 29), who answer to **SEAMUS STRANGEWAYES** (Oberon), the little-known king of many other Rifts of goblins and fairies. While not subordinate to Anatoli, Strangewayes's Mythos forces him to uphold the pact they made: if the hooligans ever kill someone indebted to them, their soul goes to Anatoli. In return, the dead branch keeps the police off the Longshore Union's back.

These and other mundane criminal organizations associated with Anatoli focus on generating debt on the street: racketeering, pushing drugs, loan sharking, etc. Their street-level teams are often divided into neighborhoods and headed by a local Touched **CONSIGLIERE**: a clever criminal promoted from the ranks and given the ability to sway people to sign their deals. Some Consiglieri also keep Touched **ENFORCERS** who can deal with any proud Rifts who might try to meddle in their business. Anatoli's Consiglieri and Enforcers are not residents of Hades; they are given their powers by consuming Ambrosia once a year at a special feast held by their bosses.

The dying branch is run by Anatoli's closest confidant, **TASSOS SALIS** (Charon), who among many other powers has the ability to sense anyone who is dying in the City. Tassos then dispatches his emissaries to offer the dying a second chance. If the dying person is a desirable high-profile asset, and especially if they are facing a slow and painful demise, Tassos sends one of his Borderliner messengers, like **K9** (Cerberus), to push his targets into debt and then persuade them to trade their lives for debt forgiveness. For more street-level or rapidly-dying targets, Tassos sends the **FERRYMEN**, a fleet of ambulance and taxi drivers and even false clergymen who reach the dying on the scene and try to convince them to sell their soul to Anatoli for a second chance.

Finally, the dead branch is governed by **ELENA ALBERTINI** (Cassandra), reputedly a witch and a fortune teller. Elena can actually see significant parts of the future but her Mythos does not allow her to tell anyone (no one believes her). She has managed to overcome this problem by simply keeping her prophetic knowledge to herself, using it to protect and promote her operation. Since she cannot share her insights, her subordinates must obediently follow her strange commands to the letter. This works well with the living dead, who serve her unequivocally, but even they sometimes slip and fail to execute Elena's masterful plans.

Elena's armies are the **LIVING DEAD**, hosts of City residents – some prominent, others anonymous – who have transmigrated to Hades and answer to her. Mostly serving as brute force, double agents, or spies, the residents of Hades are indifferent to pain and can move silently. If trained, they are able to become incorporeal and display other powers ascribed to dead spirits and ghosts. Some of the Living Dead even awaken and develop a connection with their own Mythos, usually a death-related tale. **THE BACKSTAGE KILLER** (*The Phantom of the Opera*, page 24) is one of them; he learned how to possess others and manipulate backstage equipment telekinetically. While for the most part he is concerned with his victims in the Theater District, the Backstage Killer is nevertheless a resident of Hades and will answer Elena's call when summoned.

KEY LOCATIONS

As the first line of debt generation and growth, Anatoli's operation includes a chain of **PAWNSHOPS**, convincing their clients to sell something they will later want back. When they fail to procure the needed sum to buy it back, the clients are referred to loan sharks, the next step in their gradual descent into Hades. While most pawnshops are mundane establishments, some contain Relics or are managed by

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Touched pawn brokers who can magically influence their clients to part with objects of sentimental value. One such place is "Second Chance Pawnbrokers" in the Blue-Collar Residential.

Every crime family working for Anatoli has several layers of **HEADQUARTERS**, one for each tier of the operation, from the street-level to the family mansion. The Belenkos branch, for example, is run by Ruslana from their fortified townhouse in an old City block they own on the edge of downtown. A warren of narrow corridors covered in Ukrainian iconography and memorabilia, this place is a deathtrap crawling with Mythos-powered Enforcers and counter-intrusion measures, some of them are Familiars and Relics gifted to Konstyantyn for the protection of his family homestead.

Since Hades' population is constantly growing, the dead branch needs a way to easily distribute Ambrosia to the living dead masses. The club bearing the seemingly not-so-secretive name **AMBROSIA** is the epicenter of the drug trafficking operation owned by Anatoli. However, most of the stuff sold as the club's signature drug is not the real deal but a variation on the City's current hottest narcotic or amphetamine, so there are dozens of different drugs that go by the same name (one of Elena's clever smoke-and-mirrors tactics). The Ambrosia club is just a place for the Living Dead to congregate and contact their dealers; the actual deals to traffic Ambrosia are carried out elsewhere.

OCEAN HEIGHTS is a small seaside housing estate on the beachfront which Anatoli has taken over completely. The developer of this project fell ill and had to sell his soul to Anatoli, whose Consiglieri and Enforcers quickly took over. The buildings now stand empty and dilapidated: the paint on the walls is flaking and most of the old-fashioned aquamarine decorative tiles are either chipped or missing, exposing a layer of cracked gray plaster. This ghost housing project is always gloomy and overshadowed, even on a clear day. Living Dead who have nowhere to go often end up here. The next stop for such lost souls are the Ambrosia refineries.

The real Ambrosia is produced in a series of secret **REFINERIES** around the City, some small makeshift labs, others huge facilities hidden away in the Industrial Zone. Ambrosia is actually manufactured in a painful process that robs Living Dead of their memories, further dehumanizing them (and occasionally turning them into soulless hungry ghosts who prey on others' memories). This is a form of payment that the more lowly residents of Hades are forced to make, either because they crossed Elena or Anatoli or simply because more Ambrosia is needed.

Anatoli himself likes to dine in a small Greek restaurant he bought and renamed **"PERSEPHONE"**. This restaurant appears in no phonebook, no restaurant guide, and no database. It is located on an undisclosed street in the heart of one of the neighborhoods that are completely under Anatoli's control, surrounded by entire City blocks filled with Living Dead (who would gladly give their undead life to protect Anatoli). No living soul has set foot in the place in decades. The Living Dead who live here behave normally as they pass by Anatoli dining outside of the restaurant. Some even smile at Anatoli and offer him fresh fish wrapped up in newspaper or a bouquet of flowers. He nods with a chilling, heartfelt smile. He is, after all, their humble ruler. He turns over to one of them dining next to him and says with a soft voice, "You should try the souvlaki. It's to die for."

ANATOLI'S STORY SEEDS

- Any Mythoi that feature death and the underworld may be tied to Anatoli's operation. For example, in the sample case Gambling With Death (page 224), which is based on *The Nightingale*, K9 appears briefly as Death's (Anatoli's) representative.
- A classic case for the crew to investigate is that of a pawnshop, such as "Second Chance Pawnbrokers" whose clients end up in debt and sometimes even dead. This could lead the crew down the living branch of Anatoli's iceberg.
- Alternatively, the crew could find themselves indebted to Anatoli if they fail to perform a service for an employer who is then revealed to be representing Anatoli. Transmigrating to Hades then becomes a viable alternative to dying – but at what cost?

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- The Ambrosia club and the drug trafficking activity surrounding it could be at the center of a case. However, Elena might fool the crew by allowing them to close a mundane trafficking operation in order to protect the real Ambrosia trafficking ring. If the crew is fooled, they will have to find out about the real Ambrosia from a different source.
- The investigation into the Backstage Killer could start as an independent case but end with a clue that leads deeper down the iceberg.

ANATOLI'S CUSTOM MOVES

Across the River Styx: When you die, if you owed a debt to Death's representatives or agreed to sell your soul in return for a second chance, you become a Living Dead. Remove the status that killed you. Take the permanent story tag *living dead* and the ongoing status *lost-soul-1*. At their option, servants of Death can incapacitate or kill you again, giving you a death-related tier-5 or tier-6 status of their choice.

(For the MC: Borderliner servants of Anatoli can do so as a hard MC move, Legendaries can do so as a soft MC move, and Anatoli can do so as an MC intrusion).

Ambrosia: When you consume Ambrosia, if you have the story tag *living dead* remove any *lost-soul* or *fading-identity* statuses you may have for the duration of the scene; restore them thereafter. If you don't have the *living dead* tag, choose one ongoing story tag to take: *increased stamina*, *uncanny strength*, *otherworldly beauty*, or *irresistible charisma*.

Ambrosia Refinery: If you have the story tag *living dead* and you are drained of your memories in an Ambrosia refinery, tell everyone what was the memory you lost. You take *fading-identity-2* and mark Crack on one of your Logos themes.

ANATOLI'S DANGERS

LIVING DEAD +★

To represent the Living Dead, combine a Mundane Danger (such as a Helpless City Resident) with this Mythos Power Set.

- **Living Dead:** When a Living Dead takes a mundane physical harm status, ignore it (she can still be physically subdued). If a Living Dead is destroyed using legendary means, she reforms around her resting place the next night, unless her return was somehow prevented.
- **(optional +★) Turn Incorporeal:** As a soft move, the Living Dead can turn incorporeal or materialize. When incorporeal, she ignores any mundane physical subdual or restraint statuses.

ENFORCERS ★★

Enforcers are based on the Hired Thugs Mundane Danger with the addition of the **Juiced Up** move, which represents their enhanced physical state thanks to their consumption of Ambrosia.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN 4

- **Collective:** This collective has a handful of members and a size factor of 1.
- **Juiced Up:** When Enforcers enter the scene, give them *juiced-up-1*. If they lose this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- Bully (*threatened-2*), beat up (*broken-arm-3*), or shower with bullets (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- Eliminate a vulnerable target (*shot-in-the-gut-4*)

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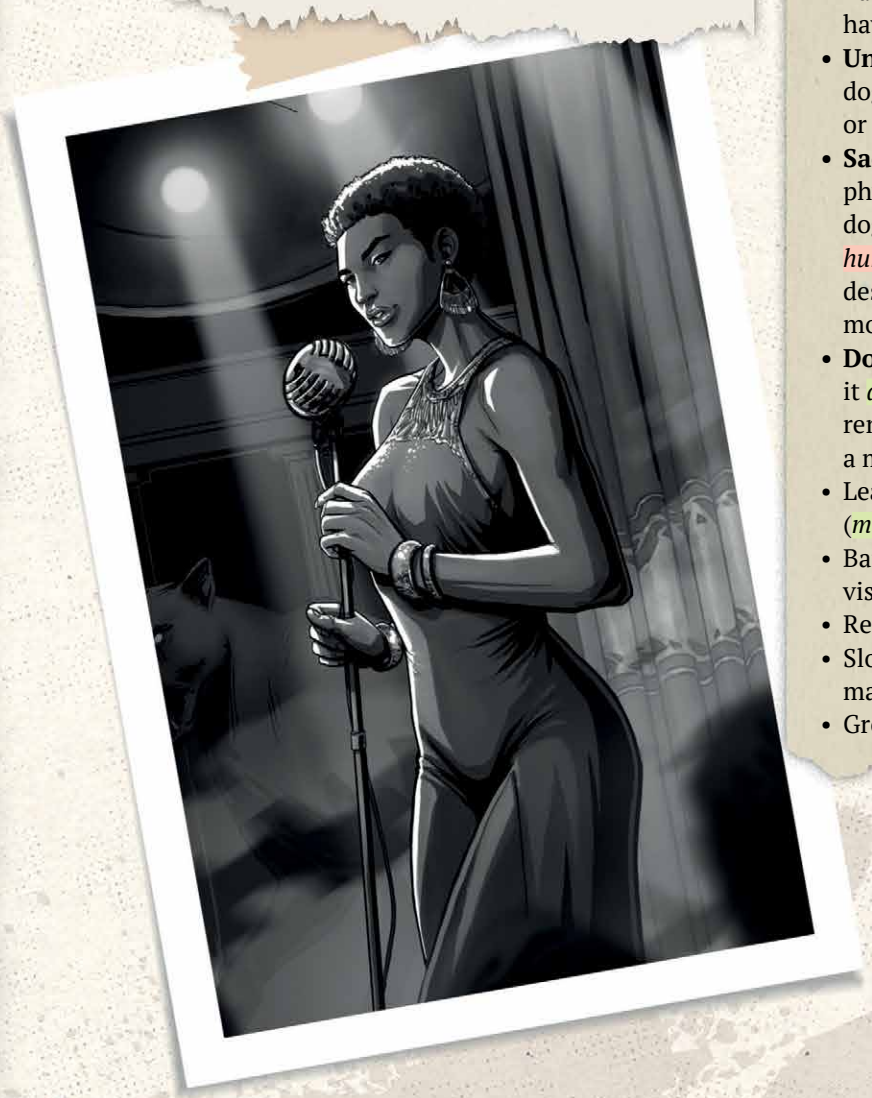


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CONSIGLIERE ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN 6

- **Bodyguards:** When a Consigliere takes a status that his bodyguards can protect him from, the bodyguards take the status instead (use Enforcers for the bodyguards).
- **Callous:** When a Consigliere takes a psychological status, reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- Sway someone to do as he says (*swayed-3*) or intimidate them (*threatened-3*)
- Shoot someone at point blank (*shot-in-the-gut-4*)
- Slowly remove his gloves and scarf, preparing to make a threat



K9 ★★★★

K9 appears as three large and violent dogs walked by an innocuous individual. The walker is a phantom, one of the Living Dead souls K9 devoured; K9 itself is actually the dogs (technically, a sentient collective of Familiars). It can speak and interact normally through its walker, although it is rather brusque and crass, displaying the mannerisms of a pack of feral dogs.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 HURT THE WALKER 4

- **Collective:** This collective has a handful of members and a size factor of 1.
- **Keeper of the Dead:** A Living Dead cannot turn incorporeal in the presence of K9, unless K9 allows it. K9 can impose an *incapacitated-5* or *devoured-6* status on a Living Dead as a hard move, ignoring any defenses they may have.
- **Unleashed:** When you attack K9, if one of the dogs can reach you, you first take *ghost-bite-3* or *crippling-bite-3*.
- **Sacrifice Walker:** When K9 takes a status of physical harm, if the walker can protect the dogs, she takes the status instead. When the *hurt the walker* is maxed out, the walker is destroyed. K9 can form a new walker as a hard move.
- **Dog Senses:** When K9 enters the scene, give it *alert-3*. If it loses this status, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.
- Leap at someone, clawing and biting (*mauled-4*)
- Bare its teeth at someone, showing them visions of death (*terrified-4*)
- Remind a Living Dead that it can destroy them
- Slowly form its new walker, fibers of ghost matter coalescing around it
- Growl at someone

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ELENA ALBERTINI ★★★★★

Elena's greatest power is her ability to foresee moments in the future and either use them to her favor or work around them to achieve what she wants. You can use Elena's **Architect of Fate** move to dramatically reveal the outcome of her plans while making a hard move. Note that Elena's planning is not limited to what happens in her vicinity; she can affect the whole City using her Living Dead servants. She could, for example:

Have someone assassinated just when a player spends a Clue to ask a critical question

When a lead character attacks Elena or someone she wants to protect, reveal that a minion preemptively slipped poison into the lead character's take-away meal (burn her tags and/or give her a status)

When the lead characters capture someone in Anatoli's organization, reveal that she preemptively replaced that person with a decoy or planted a bomb in that person's bag

When a lead character is about to take an action Elena wants to stop, reveal that the lead character's loved one is held at gunpoint in Elena's custody

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BOTCH 4

- **Architect of Fate:** Someone is orchestrating events in the City with an alarming precision. As an intrusion, the MC can make one or more hard moves to reflect the Architect's intervention. The Architect takes *impending-botch-1*.
- **Unreliable Servants:** When the *botch* spectrum is maxed out, one of the Architect's servants screws up. The players may choose to veto the **Architect of Fate** move once. Remove all statuses from the *botch* spectrum.
- **Undead Retinue:** When Elena enters the scene or as a hard move, she can summon the Living Dead to her service. Create any Mundane Danger with a Danger Rating of 3 or less and combine it with the Living Dead Mythos Power Set.
- **Bodyguards:** When Elena takes a status someone in her retinue can protect her from, that someone takes the status instead.

Keeper of the Dead: A Living Dead cannot turn incorporeal in the presence of Elena, unless Elena allows it. Elena can impose an *incapacitated-5* or *dissipated-6* status on a Living Dead as a soft move, ignoring any defenses they may have.

Ignored Prophecy: As a hard move, Elena warns you of a horrible future. You take *unbeliever-5*; you cannot take actions to avert this fate while you have this status. This status also applies to any attempt to remove it (because no one believes it should be removed).

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BARTON

The Spear, the collective symbol of all fabled military leaders

"Take a look at this picture. You see that guy? Over there, by the playground. No, not him, the one behind him, the ice-cream man. Yes. Look at his ankle. I bet that's a gun. Yes, I know he's wearing baggy pants, it only makes it more suspicious. I know a gun when I see one. Why would an ice-cream man carry a concealed weapon? Now look at this. Look harder. You see? That homeless woman has a rifle in her sack. The worst part is I looked them all up and there's nothing special about them. They're a bunch of ordinary people, just… organized."

– Post-Mortem

For every action, there is a reaction. For every trend, there are catalysts and inhibitors. In every situation, there are always at least two opposed forces. Conflict is the very essence of existence; at least according to Barton Canon, Avatar of the Spear.

Throughout history, great strategists and tacticians have led their armies to victory with cunning and ingenuity. These great minds are unified by the symbol of the Spear, which stood for martial superiority since time immemorial. Every one of those fabled military leaders – including Sun Tzu, Joan of Arc, Saladin, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, and many others – now lives inside the head of an unassuming superintendent of an anonymous apartment building in the blue-collar residential neighborhood: Barton. Barton is forever haunted by the voices of the Spear, who instruct him in the ways of war, chiming in and out of his mind in an incessant cacophony of strategic wisdom. Symbols more than personalities, the voices are not truly individuals but a collective made of pure military knowledge and the burning desire to emerge triumphant.

In order to win, one must first engage in battle. The Spear's endless hunger for victory goes hand in hand with an unremitting passion for conflict. As the Avatar of the Spear, Barton is entirely absorbed in the instigation of conflict and strife around the City, in which he takes part indirectly as the commander of his forces and, on occasion, personally. Barton's godlike strategic capacity could easily make him the ruling power in the City within a very short span of time. Luckily for the free residents of the City, the existence of one supreme power eliminates any possibility of conflict. Paradoxically, in order to constantly experience his own martial superiority, Barton must always be on the losing side and lead it to victory.

OVERVIEW OF BARTON

Agenda: to drive the City into a constant state of conflict

MO: instigating conflict on all levels of society

Drive: desire for victory, violence

Motifs: past military leaders, weapons, veterans, PTSD, and hallucinations

Frontliners: mundane veterans, Spearheads

Stronghold: the building at 35 Cedar st.

BARTON'S MODUS OPERANDI

Barton is constantly on the hunt for a more difficult challenge. Employing a network of innocuous yet highly-trained and motivated operatives, Barton watches every conflict in the City. While the myriad voices in his head are constantly pushing him to intervene in the confrontations he sees, he is usually strong enough to keep the voices at bay until a truly worthy challenge presents itself. The Spear isn't picky about who is involved in the conflict or how Barton intervenes; it just wants Barton to use his exceptional combat senses to their utmost potential. When Barton finds a conflict that could possibly pose an interesting challenge, usually a completely lost cause, the game begins: like a calculated chess player, he deploys his operatives and agents to sway the battle in favor of whoever is losing (only because it's more of a challenge). Once the former losers overpower their superior adversaries, Barton loses interest, at least until the new winners become powerful enough to serve as his new adversaries.

The Spear's plans, however, are not limited to challenging Barton alone – it wants everyone to engage in conflict, constantly. Its voices instruct Barton to use his keen analytical abilities to survey the political and social landscape of the City. When he identifies the factions vying for power (legitimate and illegitimate), he subtly intervenes to keep a relative balance of power. The Spear wants no faction or personality to gain exclusive sway over

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the City, so it uses Barton to weaken the strong. It once ordered Barton to strike an ascendant street gang; the gang leaders then found one of their members mysteriously beaten and bloody in a dark alley and jumped to the conclusion that a rival gang is responsible. The ensuing flash-fire war weakened both sides and the hostilities continued for months. Another time, the target was a thriving corporation about to acquire a block of prime downtown real estate that would secure its control over its industry. Barton's team sabotaged the sewer pipes on one of the properties, flooding the area and scuttling the sale.

Barton knows that when the forces at play in the City are at a relatively equal power level, conflict ensues. He eventually plans to turn the City into the battleground of one grand, never-ending, multi-faceted conflict: a war which could never be won by anyone, not even him. That is one strategic challenge Barton has not solved as of yet; it gives the Spear much gratification and keeps Barton's hands and mind full.

BARTON'S OPERATION

Barton's network of operatives, on which he relies heavily, is composed exclusively of war veterans. These men and women first join his network when they begin suffering from moments of clouded vision and hallucinations. People around them tend to ascribe it to shell shock, PTSD, depression, or tremors, but Barton's agents describe it as being overwhelmed by a sense of purpose. They hear the words of Barton guiding them to what they must do.

The veterans working for Barton are regular joes and janes, often the unassuming and silent types. They work as cops, dock workers, hot dog vendors, and other blue-collar jobs; some of them live on the street, in a hovel, or in a dirty van, detached from mainstream society. They are all accomplished soldiers of past wars, but other than that nothing seems to connect them.

In a sense, Barton's operation is much less complex and layered than those of other Avatars. Through the Spear's hallucinations, he summons his veteran operatives to various public locations where they meet each other, talk about their visions and combat experience, and share information from their part of the City offhandedly, sometimes without consciously knowing that they are a part of a large-scale operation. Then, they go on their way and may never see each other again. Many times the veteran they meet with is Barton himself but, due to the increased effect of the Mist on Avatars, they never know who he really is and forget about him soon thereafter.

In another sense, Barton's operation is impossibly complicated: it's constantly growing, shedding, and regrowing branches for each one of its objectives. Whenever there is a job to be done, carefully selected veterans seem to come out of the woodwork, contacted by the Spear's network of visions and flashes. They join up to form cells and carry out the task at hand, only to dissipate again into the population when the job is done.

The moment an objective is achieved, Barton's veterans look like a disparate group of people driven by temporary insanity to take random actions that sadly result in misfortunate consequences for a seemingly unrelated party. None of them has a motive to do what they did and they will never betray their comrades or divulge anything about the visions. Even if they did, they know nothing of value: information is shared on a need-to-know basis so every operative is only savvy to their share of the plan (sometimes that's very little; an operative could even be a pawn to be sacrificed).

Barton masterfully makes use of his veterans and then discards them to avoid being discovered. The Spear would accept no less. A veteran that was a member of one strike team might never be involved again in any of Barton's operations, so it's virtually impossible to map out the internal connections. Unless someone really digs into the operatives' background and uncovers the veteran connection, it would be a bit of a head-scratcher to make out what connects the network. This keeps Barton's operation under the radar and makes it very costly to track down. In a way, Barton wishes someone worthy would try to expose his operation or infiltrate it; if they somehow manage it, they might prove to be an actual threat; that would be a refreshing change.

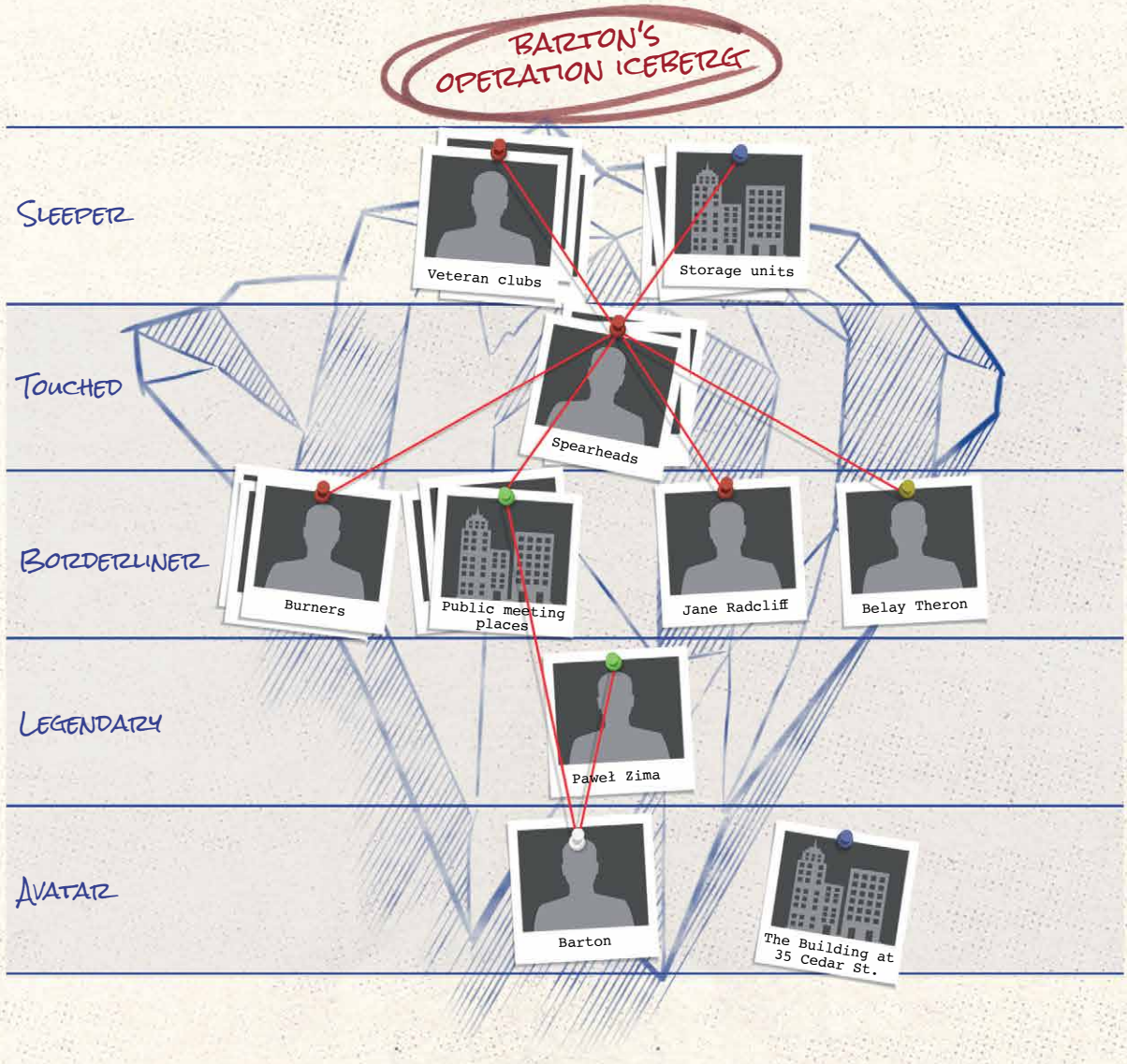
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KEY CHARACTERS

Barton's operation relies first and foremost on his armies of Touched veterans, the **SPEARHEADS**. These seemingly harmless men and women were trained as weapons of war long before Barton got to them; with the guidance of the Spear, they are truly remarkable combatants, infiltrators, and saboteurs. While proficient with many weapons, each Spearhead usually becomes attached to their weapon of choice, which he or she controls with legendary proficiency. Sometimes when Spearheads experience an extraordinary connection with the Spear, the ghost of the past warrior or tactician guiding their hand may become visible for a moment.

Once they get the go signal, Spearheads form cells, recruiting Sleeper veterans they know or manage to locate. Other times, Barton brings a few Spearheads together. These teams are temporary; once the job is done, they might never see each other again. If they bump into one another on the street, not a word will be said, only a brief exchange of knowing looks.

Being merely Touched by the Spear, Spearheads lack the high-level understanding of the battlefield and the strategic capacity that Barton needs to play out his ingenious attacks on centers of power in the City. They are best at leading small teams of up to six operatives and they can do a good job with up to twenty; anything more than that and Spearheads start dropping the ball (unless they were previously high-ranking military



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officers, who are not easy to come by). From what Barton gathered so far, their command abilities max out at about fifty men.

Barton can't lead all of his men alone; the Spear's network of hallucinations is too fuzzy and sketchy to provide reliable communications and even an elite military force needs a leader on the ground. **BURNERS** have much more of the Spear inside them: they are the ultimate combatants, far superior to most Rifts in the City, and they understand Barton's plans intuitively. When Barton is running a coordinated Citywide strike on a major target (or targets), he uses groups of Spearheads led by Burners or, for more challenging targets, teams of Burners.

However, there's a catch. As 'upgraded' Spearheads, Burners aren't ready for the influx of information and aggression that the Spear assails them with; The Spear is a violent Mythos, after all, and it pushes them to do its will. Barton survives as an Avatar because he rolls with the voices of the Spear, but Burners' psyches usually hold up for a single operation before they start to flame out in random acts of violence. That kindly meter maid that inexplicably died in a bloody alley fight? The gang leader that throws it all away in a suicide-by-cop? The businessman who gets into a nasty bar brawl that escalated too quickly? All of them were Burners for whom the siren song for hyper-violence proved too strong.

The positive side-effect of Burners is that they often take the blame for their actions, citing not temporary but permanent insanity. They also save Barton the temptation of using them again in another operation, keeping the organization dynamic and untraceable. Barton isn't fazed by the sacrifice these soldiers make; anything is justified for victory.

On a rare occasion, a Burner may manage to weather the psychic maelstrom of voices and single out one great warrior or military leader to follow. This Burner then awakens with the Mythos of that warrior or leader. So far there were only two such cases out of thousands of Burners Barton made: **JANE RADCLIFF** (Queen Boudica), an aggressive knife-fighter from the Industrial Zone and **BELAY THERON** (Shaka Zulu), a South African mercenary. Being Borderliners, Barton knows Radcliff and Theron have some chance of remembering his face if they ever saw him, so he only communicates with them through visions or through his network of Spearheads.

Barton has yet to have trusted anyone with a permanent position in his operation. It's simply not the way the organization works. Sometimes, however, he might personally contact someone outside of the Spear's network for a specific job. This would usually be a heavy-hitter that can understand the bigger picture and do on their own a job suited for a small army of Spearheads. **PAWEŁ ZIMA** (The White Rose of Wrocław), for example, is a religious monk and an unmatched assassin who targets only those whose time has come (how he decides that remains a mystery). Whenever Barton needs someone taken out, he simply leaves a folder with enough information on the altar of the church where Paweł prays every day at noon. Then he watches the target; if they find a white rose on their seat in the next few days, they are as good as dead. Barton has not yet cracked Zima's motives and so far he has avoided giving him falsified information, even though Zima's skills could have come in handy in a number of cases. Barton knows Zima is a worthy opponent and that Zima has been keeping tabs on him. If Zima finds out Barton deceived him and tries to attack the Avatar, the fight could be devastating. As tempting as the challenge may be, it would be a great loss to Barton's greater plan to have to kill his most valued assassin.

KEY LOCATIONS

Barton's Spearheads keep a chain of **STORAGE UNITS** across the City packed to the brim with weapons, ammunition, and supplies. Most of these are locked with keypads or combination locks; the code, unit number, and address appear in the minds of the Spearheads as a hallucination when it's time for a visit. Every now and then, a random Spearhead would walk up to a unit and add a piece of equipment or a firearm they obtained to the immaculately organized collection. When it's time for a hit, other Spearheads show up at these hidden armories and gear up for the operation, completely depleting the unit of its contents (Barton knows in advance which veteran unit to send to which storage unit and what they will find there). The same unit is never used twice.

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Out of the hundreds of public meeting locations Barton employs for the Spearhead meetings, his favorite meeting place is at the **PARK CHESS TABLES**. These concrete slab tables and seats are used for a variety of games and sometimes also for gambling. The place is frequented by all ages but typically by middle-aged men. There is an air of tension and urgency; some games are quiet and intense while others are loud and aggressive. Every so often, a veteran finds his way to the park, compelled by the Spear's hallucinations. There they shake hands with another veteran (who may be Barton himself) and play a game or two while chatting about what goes down in the City. Another favorite location of Barton's are the **MOVIE THEATERS** downtown.

Most days, Barton lives in the sleepy **BUILDING AT 35 CEDAR ST.**, where he works as a superintendent. The building is completely ordinary although, by Barton's design or the Mist's, not a single war veteran lives there or visits there. Barton doesn't need any fancy fortifications or boobytraps. He eagerly awaits the day someone with the intention and the ability to fight him will find him here. He knows this building intimately and he is fascinated to discover how a conflict may unfold here. In fact, he chose the building at 35 Cedar St. exactly because it would make such a fine battleground.

THE BURNER EXPERIMENT

For the large-scale, multi-pronged coordinated attacks that Barton dreams up on a regular basis, he needs better commanders. To acquire such leaders, Barton tried to do what only a few Avatars ever did: push Sleepers to awaken. Normally, Sleepers touched by the powers of an Avatar can reach the level of awareness of a Touched individual. Unlike people Touched by their own Mythos, those Touched by an Avatar return to their Sleeper life once the Avatar's influence is out of the picture. Barton needed more, so he pushed a few poor veterans over the edge. In most cases, the result was unstable to say the least, but Barton soon found that disposable Borderliners can be just as useful to his operations as stable ones.



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BARTON'S HISTORY

At the age of 40, Barton is a relatively new Avatar. Not so long ago, he served as a black ops officer in some of the army's most secretive operations. His awakening to the Mythos of the Spear was a long and tortuous process that began when he came back from war, suffering from a wide spectrum of post-traumatic conditions as well as an unbearable burden of grief, anger, and guilt. His continued suffering eventually culminated in a planned suicide that he never went through with; when he finally held his old military-issued gun to his head, he had an epiphany. He wanted to overcome and outsmart his depression, just like any other opponent he met on the battlefield, and this decision opened him up to the Spear.

Over the next few years Barton pulled himself out of the rut he was in. He started training again and challenged himself to accomplish impossible goals. He aspired to become a superior strategist and fighter, even better than he was before, and now he had the advice of the greatest masters of war constantly echoing in his head. He fought in the pits of the Industrial Zone, where he lost many times but won even more. After two years, he became the second person to ever overcome Eddie Dreamtime, the champion and owner of the Bowl club (after first losing to him four times the year before). He was ready to move on.

Drunk on power and superiority, Barton started his habit of siding with the underdog in search of greater challenges. He was personally involved in countless conflicts in the City: gang wars in the slums, hostile takeovers in the stock exchange, defamation campaigns in the media. The Spear drove him to pitch himself against the top professionals of the City and to become better and smarter and stronger. But he soon learned war must take its toll; innocent people were killed in a hostage situation he orchestrated, and worse, he knew it would happen because it was a part of the plan. As he stood over the body of one of those poor souls, Barton realized that while the Spear was freeing him from his weakness, it was condemning him to a restless life of remorse. It was a critical moment; Barton had to choose between victory and peace.

Deep down Barton is weak. As the Avatar of the Spear, he is a badass in any fight. He holds an immense and ever-expanding knowledge base of the City's power players, thanks to his vast network of informants. He is the leader of an army of hard-edged veterans willing to die for him in a heartbeat. But when it comes to confronting the Spear, Barton is beaten down. The voices in his head always win and he always does their bidding. Somewhere deep inside him, there is still a fleck of humanity that doesn't want to be an instrument of war and still craves peace. But Barton has made his choice; in order to always be victorious he had to lose to the Spear.

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BARTON'S STORY SEEDS

- A violent conflict between street gangs, the police, criminal organizations, and/or local vigilantes could draw the attention of the crew. If they investigate or even try to mediate, they may discover that a third party has been instigating the conflict, leading them to a cell of Barton's Spearheads.
- An underdog sports team miraculously makes its way to the top of the league throughout the season. Accusations of illegal use of stimulants lead to reports of tensions in the locker room. If the crew does not intervene, there will be blood.
- An explosion in a maximum-security Helix Labs facility is being hushed. If the crew is able to penetrate the now-even-more-fortified lab, they may discover that high-tech weapons were stolen by a team of Burners.
- One of Barton's Spearheads could hire the crew to do a job for him. When the crew completes the job, they discover they have been used as an instrument to instigate a much bigger war.
- Barton could take personal interest in the crew, especially in lead characters that show martial prowess or strategic genius. He will then repeatedly try to take the crew out or to cultivate inner conflict in order to expose the truly superior warrior among them.

BARTON'S CUSTOM MOVES

War-Torn City: At the beginning of every session, the crew rolls+[tier of the City's *war-torn* status]. On 7-9, the MC chooses two. On 10+, the MC chooses three:

- A major player or organization in the City is hit by an unknown party, becomes weakened, and then falls prey to its natural opposition. The City takes *war-torn-1*.
- Rival organizations or gangs escalate to open war on the streets and innocent bystanders get caught up in the fight. The City takes *war-torn-1*.
- The police or military use unchecked force in order to restore the order, to no avail. The City takes *war-torn-1*.
- A financial giant suffers a great misfortune and collapses, bringing down the economy. People turn to looting and mugging to find food. The City takes *war-torn-1*.
- A downtrodden population successfully sues the City for compensation. Other under-privileged communities protest and all sides riot and clash on the streets. The City takes *war-torn-1*.

This status can only be reduced by appropriate actions that affect the entire city. At tier-5, the City is effectively in a state of inner war and is shut down. At tier-6 the City is irrevocably transformed or destroyed, MC's choice.

On a miss, your crew gains one Clue regarding the true instigators of these clashes.

BARTON'S DANGERS

SPEARHEADS ★★★

To represent a team of Spearheads use the SWAT Team / Elite Security Danger profile. Increase their tactical advantage move to *tactical-advantage-3* or removing three tiers of tactical statuses. In addition, Spearheads have the following moves:

Disappear Into the Population: As a hard move, the Spearheads can disappear from the scene. Whenever someone is looking for them, add *lack of evidence* and *lost in the masses* to the scene.

Single Combat: When a single Spearhead is fighting alone in close quarters, as a hard move, add a tag for her favored weapon such as *axe*, *club*, *combat knife*, *katana*, *nunchaku*, *sai*, etc. While the Spearhead has the tag, she can impose *horrible-wound-4* or *about-to-pass-out-4*.

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BURNERS ★★★★

To represent a team of Burners use the SWAT Team / Elite Security Danger profile, reduce its size factor to 1, increase all its move effects by one, and give it both of the Spearheads' moves. In addition, Burners have the following moves:

REGULAR BURNERS

LOSE IT 3

Violent Outburst: When the *lose-it* spectrum is maxed out, the Burner goes permanently berserk and attacks whatever aggravates her most.

Indomitable: When a berserk Burner takes a psychological or subdual status, reduce the tier of that status by 2.

Collect herself and try to power through (remove 1 tier from the *lose-it* spectrum)

JANE RADCLIFF

Improvised Weapon: As an MC intrusion and assuming she's unarmed, Jane can pick up an object in the environment and get a tag to use with **Single Combat**.

Knife Fighter Queen: If Jane has a tag describing a knife, increase the tier of statuses given with **Single Combat** to 5.

Rebellious: When Jane takes a psychological or subdual status, reduce the tier of that status by 1.

Disarm an opponent (burn one tag describing a weapon)

BELAY THERON

Ancestral Nguni Shield: When Belay enters the scene, give him *spirit shield* (in addition to his status from **Body Armor**). If this tag is removed, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it.

Ancestral Iklwa Spear: As a soft move, Belay can create or recreate the tag *spirit Iklwa spear*, which he can use with **Single Combat**.

Bullhorn Formation: Once per session, Belay can summon the spirits of Zulu warriors and become a collective with a size factor of 1 for the duration of the scene.

PAWEŁ ZIMA ★★★★★

The legend of the White Rose of Wrocław tells of a priest who fell in love with a beautiful woman and, after her misfortunate death, planted a bush of white roses upon her grave. The priest himself died when he spent a night in a room where a bouquet of the white roses from the bush was left for him. Since then, anyone who found a white rose on his seat in the cathedral would die in the next three days.

When Paweł Zima places a rose on someone's seat, they die like in the legend. But what drives him to choose one target over the other? Is he an avenger, protecting helpless victims? Is he a religious fanatic, targeting the unrighteous? Is he a representative of Fate?

HURT OR SUBDUE 5

- **Curse of the White Rose:** When Paweł Zima has marked a target, the target will die in the next three days in an accident, due to an unforeseen medical condition, or in the hands of someone else. The MC can **Make Something Horrible Happen** as an intrusion, once, to reflect that.
- **Killer Scent:** As a soft move, Paweł Zima can transform into a colorless cloud of rose odor that is otherwise undetectable and enter any space that isn't airtight. The maximum of his *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum becomes –. He can reassume his physical form as a soft move.
- **Inscrutable:** To ask the MC a question about Paweł Zima, you must spend three Clues instead of one. At the MCs option, you may be able to combine Clues with another player.
- **Deadly Adversary:** When you attack Paweł Zima, he appears next to you from the shadows, if he so wishes. You first take *disabled-5* or *stabbed-through-the-heart-6*, MC's choice.
- **Benediction:** When Paweł Zima takes a status from a source that is inherently evil or dark, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- **Poisoned Daggers:** Once per session, Paweł Zima may use poison on his daggers. Anyone who takes a status from the daggers also takes *poisoned-3*. As a hard move, the MC can increase the tier of a *poisoned* status by one.
- Tackle a threat with martial arts and his daggers (*disabled-5* or *stabbed-through-the-heart-6*)
- Mark someone by placing a white rose on their seat or somewhere else where they will find it
- Vanish in the shadows and leave the scene (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

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ISABELLA AGUILAR

Xochiquetzal, Lady of Feathers and Flowers, Aztec goddess of beauty

"The gig was in full momentum when I got there. Through the smoke in the club I could hear the fangirls screaming and the band was killing it. Things have been, like, different for me since I had that vision, so I was out of sync with the scene. I asked a guy about the band; he looked at me with disdain and said it was Adam Drake's band, and that they've been all the rage this week. Frankly, I thought Drake's music was pretty mediocre, but everyone else seemed hypnotized. Well, it turns out they were."

–Flicker

Everybody knows Isabella Aguilar – she's the City's foremost superstar. Her visage hangs from every building downtown on giant billboards and her music is played on all mainstream radio stations. Fans adore the earth she walks on, TV shows and gossip columnists cover her every move (and outfit), and hipsters love to hate her. Little do they know that the diva Isabella is a real, flesh-and-blood goddess.

Isabella wants the world to be beautiful, for everyone. She envisions a world where mankind lives in harmony with nature, where flowers flourish and bloom everywhere, and beautiful birds with bright and colorful plumages soar through the multi-hued sunrise sky. If she had her way, she would replace all the concrete and metal structures in the City with a lush jungle where people could live happily and all their needs would be catered for. Isabella wants to rebuild paradise, and she has secretly named her vision after the mythical home of her Mythos: Tamoanchan.

No one could deny that Isabella is using her celebrity status to support a good cause. On every public performance she makes, Isabella calls her fans and indeed the whole world to return to a state of love and harmony, to support the preservation of the planet's ecological beauty, and to protect endangered species (of birds, especially). She uses her influence to promote "green" politicians and initiatives and to pressure the government into action where the wheels of bureaucracy move too slowly, but always with unmatched kindness and grace. Among the mainstream population of the City, she is an absolute consensus; even the few who do not like her music value her contribution to building a better world.

But the Lady of Feather and Flowers, when angered, can be unforgiving. Isabella is hiding a big secret under her beautiful plumage and behind her perfect smile: she has been angry with mankind for a long time over their mindless destruction of natural beauty. For over two decades she has been leading an eco-terrorist organization that has viciously struck the City's infrastructure time after time and brought it down to its knees. No one knows that this compassionate promoter of love and world peace is also a terrorist and, on occasion, a ruthless killer. Isabella plans to keep it this way, at least until the time is ripe to take over the City and shape it into the paradise she envisions.

OVERVIEW OF ISABELLA

Agenda: to turn the City into a verdant paradise

MO: celebrity philanthropy by day, eco-terrorism by night

Lesson: to embrace nature's beauty

Motifs: flowers, birds and feathers, butterflies, celebrity persona, double-standard compassion

Frontliners: mundane eco-terrorists (Tamoanchan operatives), Swan Maidens, Trendsetters

Stronghold: the Arboretum

ISABELLA'S MODUS OPERANDI

Isabella realizes that the change she wishes to effect is monumental. Enamored as they are with her, the City residents are loathe to part with their hyper-processed foods and manufactured urban comforts. Since she never took a liking to direct conflict and has no intentions of terrorizing mankind into submission (much), Isabella focuses on securing a deep-rooted sway over public opinion.

Isabella spends every possible moment making public appearances, not only because she is vain but also because it's a major part of her scheme. Her voice, in particular her singing voice, has an enchanting effect on anyone who hears it. As if hearing an irresistible subliminal message, people start adopting Isabella's views and opinions, change their preferences to match hers and little by little alter their lifestyle to align with what she preaches. Because of the Mist, this alarming magical effect is stronger when people are close to her and can hear her voice directly, but Isabella is powerful enough to

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reach out to people over the radio or even through her recorded albums – it simply takes longer and requires repeated exposure to her content. She therefore ceaselessly runs concerts, does benefits, and meets with policy makers and trendsetters. Anything to get her voice out there.

The more cultural exposure Isabella gets, the more the citizens of the City become fond of all things natural, to the point of becoming more protective of plants and animal life than they are of human life or needs. Even the coldest exterminator, after listening to her songs, could have a strange daydream where he runs in green lush fields with birds, rabbits, deer, rats, and cockroaches. Isabella knows this, but she also knows she can't reach everyone with one medium alone. Therefore, she has worked hard to broaden her cultural foothold by erecting a commercial empire around her self-named brand: she sells clothing, perfume, cosmetics, and even garden furniture; she has her own record label; she runs a chain of health spas and healthy eateries, etc. – all in order to reach more people. She also uses her fortune to buy property and increase the size of parks and gardens in the City. Most residents love this initiative but this encroachment on the City's residential space is affecting the real-estate market, making housing less affordable.

Sadly, however, municipal regulations and public opinion do little to prevent greedy corporations from polluting the natural environment of the City. This aspect of humanity's disrespect to beauty is handled by Isabella's eco-terrorist cell, named Tamoanchan after her vision. Publically, she is outspoken about Tamoanchan needing to come clean and choose the path of compassion. Behind the scenes, she imparts mythical powers on the members of this organization, provides them with ample funding, and equips them with Relics. Tamoanchan are Isabella's dark and vindictive side: they bomb corporate headquarters and assassinate executives responsible for the destruction of nature; they release algae into the water system, clogging it and sending the public rushing to natural water sources, causing panic and disruption; they have shut down the power to the City a number of times, making outrageous demands. They will stop at nothing to achieve Isabella's goal. In fact, they are working on a biological agent that can rapidly digest cement, a substance that will play a key role in Isabella's plan to transform the City into a lush green paradise.

ISABELLA'S OPERATION

Isabella's operation has two branches: the public branch and the eco-terrorist branch.

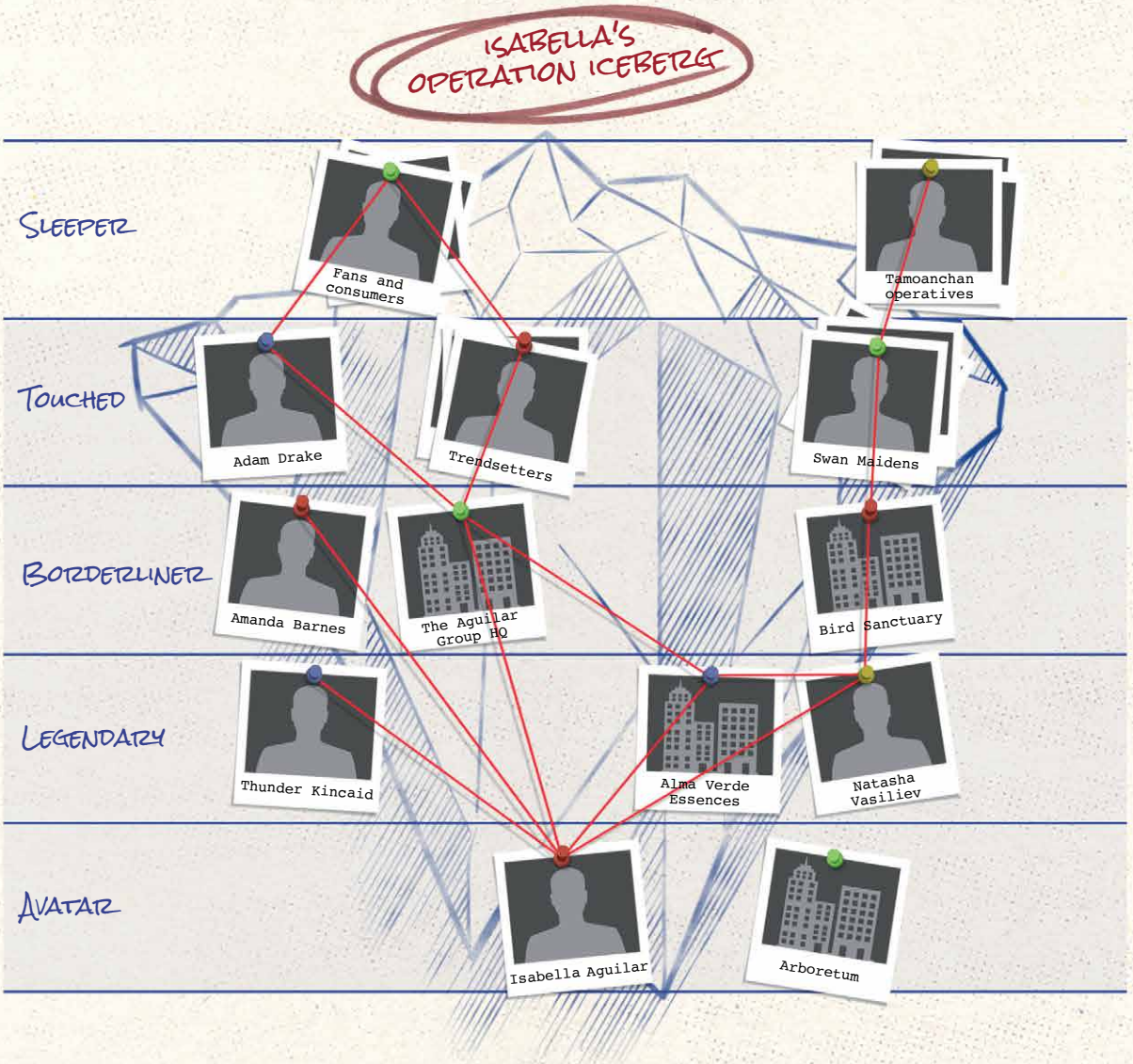
KEY CHARACTERS

The public branch is effectively managed by Isabella's personal assistant, **AMANDA BARNES** (Benzaiten, Japanese goddess of everything that flows: water, time, words, and music). Amanda fully subscribes to Isabella's views on ecological issues and is probably her number one fan. She is also one of Isabella's major assets, masterfully managing her tight schedule (a little time-bending goes a long way) and navigating the delicacies of running a successful company. Keeping an air of professionalism has been more and more difficult for Amanda, who has been developing feelings towards her boss. She knows Isabella is more than she lets on and she is aware of her boss's powers but her Borderliner sensibilities tell her exploring any further would tip the balance too much in favor of her Mythos, so she leaves things as they are.

The other person permanently present at Isabella's side is her bodyguard, a former professional wrestler called **THUNDER KINCAID** (Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent). As the mythological son of Xochiquetzal and a feathered creature, Kincaid is highly susceptible to Isabella's powers of persuasion and obeys her every command, even though he is not necessarily a proponent of her agenda. As fast as a hurricane and as powerful as the sun, Kincaid is a mighty Rift in and of himself and provides all the protection Isabella needs, even from dangerous Rifts (although the media sometimes questions his ability to protect her, due to his lack of suitable training). For now, Isabella has full control over him, but the destiny of Quetzalcoatl may prove to be beyond her manipulations.

Isabella often selects prominent individuals from her fan base or society at large to serve as her ambassadors by promoting her products and expanding her presence in the City's cultural life. These **TRENDSETTERS** are often gifted with Isabella's

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limited-edition garments or cosmetic products that give them a fraction of her powers of enchantment and allure, propelling their popularity and helping them spread the word while making them die-hard fans of Isabella and her agenda. One of these Trendsetters is the folky singer-songwriter and hipster heartthrob **ADAM DRAKE** who is signed to Isabella's label, which also provided the rustic acoustic guitar that helps him conquer audiences Isabella finds hard to reach. Adam exemplifies how Isabella's operation, disguised as The Aguilar Group, uses the mundane entertainment, cosmetics, and recreation industries to manage the Trendsetters without ever getting Isabella herself involved.

Isabella's terrorist branch is run by **NATASHA VASILIEV** (Artemis), a highly-trained eco-terrorist with a rich criminal record. Natasha's Mythos' motives and agenda align almost perfectly with those of Isabella, with the main difference being that Natasha is not much of a talker. She is more concerned with how to stop humanity's senseless abuse of nature and she is willing to go to great lengths to achieve her goals. On the field, nothing evades Vasiliev or her composite bow. She can strike nature's enemies with arrows that make them not only bleed, but also contract disease, suffer from misfortune, or lose their loved ones. Besides continuing her campaign of terror against

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the City's polluters and their supporters, her most urgent responsibility is to back the development of a mythical substance that could turn the City into a lush forest once again. This includes the procurement of two things that currently belong to Helix Labs: the product of a project dubbed DRYAD – and the project's chief scientist.

Natasha works with different Rifts and Sleeper operatives to accomplish the Tamoanchan objectives. These remote assets, whether an individual or a cell of operatives, are often contacted and managed by handlers called the **SWAN MAIDENS**. Swan Maidens are given feathered garments that allow them to fly as well as to disguise themselves, which makes them quite hard to intercept. Each Swan Maiden undergoes meticulous vetting before joining Tamoanchan and rigorous training thereafter. Once they wear their feathered garments and take flight for the first time, they invariably become staunch believers in Tamoanchan's cause thanks to Isabella's powers.

Under the guidance of the Swan Maiden's, **TAMOANCHAN OPERATIVES** target the enemies of nature in the City, leaving mayhem and destruction in their wake. They are not beyond abducting and threatening family members of decision makers or spraying a City park packed with people with animal blood to get their point across. Most of them don't take pleasure in hurting others but will do what is necessary to protect nature's children from what they perceive as the most unnatural beast of them all: mankind.

KEY LOCATIONS

The public branch of Isabella's operation is centered around **THE AGUILAR GROUP HQ**, a beautiful skyscraper built entirely of durable yet biodegradable materials developed by the Group's own labs and brandishing an ingenious architectural design that combines natural elements and modern amenities. Isabella is still unimpressed by this urban monstrosity, but she acknowledges the role it must play as her legitimate front. Most of the Aguilar Group's activities are managed from here, including a record label, a clothing line, a line of cosmetic products, a brand of musical instruments, a magazine, a chain of spas, resorts, and eateries, etc.

The real "science" takes place at **ALMA VERDE ESSENCES**, an independent cosmetics company that is nevertheless controlled by Isabella and her charms. This is where Isabella's enchanted products are manufactured by herbalists and botanists endowed with her arcane knowledge of the magical properties of flowers. In another facility, Alma Verde Essences also create all the biological agents used by Tamoanchan and they are working to crack the formula for Isabella's endgame substance.

An obscure **BIRD SANCTUARY** somewhere at the edge of the park is used to raise all manners of legendary birds and butterflies. These creatures, who hatch from eggs and cocoons stolen by Tamoanchan, willingly stay in this place and serve Isabella. Currently, it holds a roc, two griffins, five cockatrices, and even a phoenix. Their feathers are sewn into hagoromos, the Swan Maiden's garments, to give them different powers. The Swan Maidens will protect this place at the cost of their own lives – or the lives of others.

With her busy public life, Isabella doesn't have much time for herself. She keeps a few apartments and houses (mostly downtown or in one of the gated communities), but when she needs a respite from the intensity of her operation she goes to the old **ARBORETUM**, an overgrown public garden in the Old Quarter that was abandoned years ago. The place serves as a crossing point to an Enclave of the fabled Tamoanchan (the mythical place, not the terrorist organization named after it). Oddly enough, visitors hold differing opinions on this place. Natasha dislikes it; situated way up in the clouds with winds that cut like razors, it's too windy and wild for her taste and not at all serene, a rather mad version of paradise with a tree that bleeds human blood in its center (Aztec, after all). Thunder Kincaid, on the other hand, finds it refreshing; it's the only place in the City he can let himself go and fully transform into the enormous feathered serpent that he is. Isabella ignores both of them. Still caught in the trappings of a mortal life, they do not understand what true beauty is, judging it only by what is pleasant or unpleasant to them. Isabella is no longer limited to this form of thinking; she intends to show the world the meaning of awe-inspiring magnificence.

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ISABELLA'S HISTORY

In spite of what her youthful look might suggest, Isabella has been in the Avatar game for a few good decades. Xochiquetzal awakened within her when she was a teenager, singing along to the latest hits in the blue-collar residential neighborhood while people stopped to listen below her window. She knew then that she wanted to bring beauty and love to the world, to everyone. A record label picked her up soon thereafter and she became a hit overnight.

Despite her secret life as a Rift, Isabella married several times and had a child, Paloma, whom she loved more than anything. As the years went by, Paloma grew up and became more and more beautiful. Xochiquetzal, in the meantime, wanted Isabella to fight for a paradise on Earth. Isabella started speaking her opinions more publicly, protesting in rallies, burning tires on the streets. She was arrested, released, and had to fight for custody of her daughter with her ex-husband, who thought she was unfit to be a parent. Her success and money made all these problems go away but they didn't satisfy Xochiquetzal.

She was protesting against the bulldozing of a park in the Old Quarter with Paloma at her side when the real-estate developers decided they had enough and sent the bulldozers to scare the protesters away. Isabella would not budge, holding her daughter behind her. Nobody really knows what happened that moment, perhaps not even Isabella. The bulldozer hit the child, mortally wounding her. Was it an accident? Was someone else involved? Or did Isabella sacrifice her sweetest bird to save the park? She knew she could not save her, not as a mortal, so she allowed Xochiquetzal in and, using her powers, transformed Paloma into a tree. That tree then became the center of the Enclave of Tamoanchan. The park to be demolished was the Arboretum.

Even as she was overcome with grief, Isabella was overwhelmed by the beauty of Tamoanchan. She could not escape the realization that true beauty requires the greatest sacrifice, a lesson she swore to impart to the inhabitants of the City.

ISABELLA'S STORY SEEDS

- An up-and-coming rock band's gigs repeatedly erupt into violent riots, attracting the crew's attention. The crew investigates backstage and discovers the band's manager is a Trendsetter and that he has tampered with the sound system to include the music of a mythical musical instrument.
- The crew could be recruited by a Swan Maiden to attack and shut down a factory in the Industrial Zone that is illegally polluting the City's drinking water. They may or may not discover that while they were keeping the factory's security team occupied, the Swan Maiden stole an experimental serum from a safe in the factory lab.
- In a charity gala funded by the Aguilar Group and attended by crew members, a few of the guests take everyone present hostage until the City municipality answers their unrealistic demands. The crew must resolve the situation and find out if this is a spontaneous uprising (work of the Trendsetters and Isabella's products) or an organized infiltration and attack by members of Tamoanchan.
- A body shows up in the crew's turf covered with fungus-like green blotches. If the crew investigates it would lead them to a testing ground for an unstable version of the DRYAD biological

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agent: an abandoned high-rise project on the outskirts of the City, where entire buildings collapse and turn into bioactive dirt that aggressively sprouts plant life.

- Natasha Vasiliev herself tasks the crew with a mission to find a one-of-a-kind legendary flower, vital to the completion of her DRYAD project. In return she promises them fortune, fame, or a potion that one of them needs desperately. The flower is virtually impossible to find or to retrieve. It may be hidden in the castle of another Avatar, deep within a dangerous Enclave, in the hands of the Gatekeepers, or even outside of the City.

ISABELLA'S CUSTOM MOVES

A New Trend: Every time you have downtime and choose to give attention to a Logos theme, someone related to that theme starts talking about the ecological state of affairs in the City, what more can be done for animals and wildlife, or a new public figure that is calling to regulate pollution and construction. They take *following-2*.

ISABELLA'S DANGERS

For Tamoanchan operatives, use Hired Thugs or a Heist Team.

TRENDSETTERS ★★

To represent a Trendsetter use the Social Butterfly Danger profile. In addition, a Trendsetter has the following moves:

Popular: When you publicly shame or threaten a Trendsetter, you first take *humiliated-3* as her fans boo you.

Influence an audience and turn them into her followers (*following-2*) or beguile an individual with her charms (*charmed-2*)

ALMA VERDE HERBALIST ★★

Alma Verde's herbalists are usually confined to their labs. They depend on security or Tamoanchan operatives to get them out of trouble but when the going gets rough they can also use their strange pseudo-science to their advantage.

CONCOCT 3 / HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Regenerative Serum:** As a soft move, if the herbalist is not dead and can ingest her regenerative serum, remove any physical harm statuses the Herbalist has.
- **It's Ready!:** When the *concoct* spectrum is maxed out, the herbalist can use one concoction from the list below. Remove any statuses on this spectrum.
- Gather *ingredients*
- Work on a concoction (*I'm-working-on-it!-1*,or *almost-there-2* if she has the *ingredients*)
- Try to escape or call for help

Concoctions:

- **Sleep Gas:** Everyone around except the Herbalist takes *knocked-out-5*.
- **Feathery Escape:** The Herbalist transforms into a human-bird hybrid and escapes.
- **Aphrodisiac:** Everyone around except the Herbalist takes *romantic-5*.
- **Fungus Monsters:** Create a new Danger with a *hurt-or-subdue:4* spectrum, a handful of members (size factor of 1), and the ability to creep over and consume targets (*biodegraded-flesh-3*). Thanks to pheromones the herbalist applied, these monsters avoid her.
- **DRYAD Prototype:** One target takes *fatally-biodegraded-5*.



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SWAN MAIDENS ★★★

CATCH 4 / HURT OR SUBDUE 3

- **Evasive Maneuvers:** When a Swan Maiden enters the scene, give her *evasive-3*. If she loses this status, the MC can renew it as a hard move.
- Put a spell on someone (*beguiled-3*)
- Shoot someone with a submachine gun (*gunshot-wound-3*) or hit them hard (*bruise-2*)
- Take flight and disappear (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

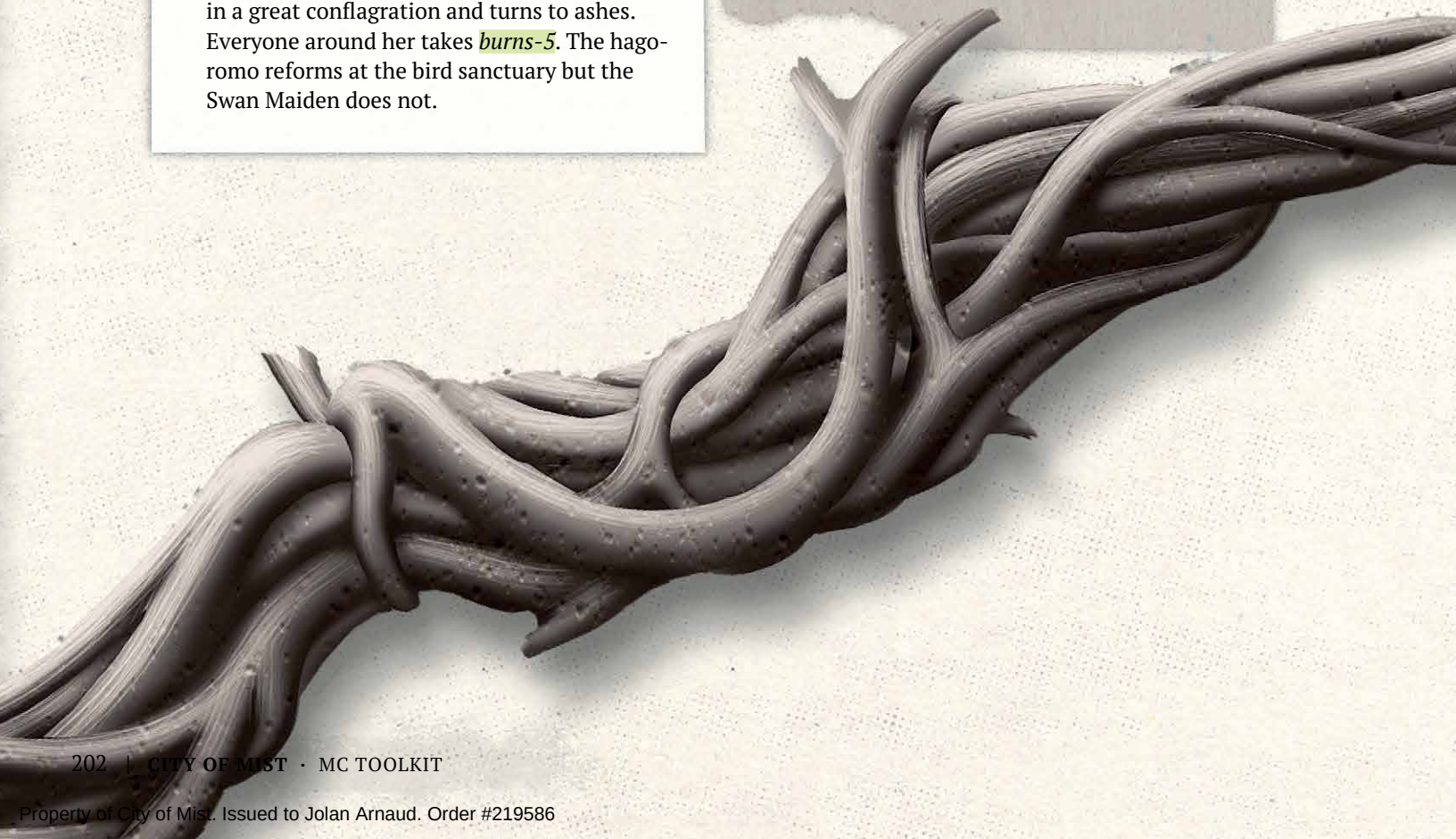
In addition, each Swan Maiden's hagoromo has one special power, depending on the creature whose feathers it is made of:

- **Griffon:** The Swan Maiden can grow ironlike talons (*mauled-4*)
- **Cockatrice:** The Swam Maiden's touch turns people to stone (*petrified-3*).
- **Roc:** The Swan Maiden grows larger and gains supernatural strength. Give her a size factor of 1 (treat her as a collective).
- **Nightingale:** The Swan Maiden's song can heal wounds and ward off death (remove up to 2 tiers from physical harm statuses)
- **Phoenix:** When the Swan Maiden's *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum is maxed out, she goes out in a great conflagration and turns to ashes. Everyone around her takes *burns-5*. The hagoromo reforms at the bird sanctuary but the Swan Maiden does not.

AMANDA BARNES ★★★

BRIBE OR THREATEN – / LEGALLY BIND 4 / PARADOX 4

- **Divert the Flow of Time:** As an MC intrusion, Amanda can escape any move made by someone who is not a time bender. She takes *paradox-1*.
- **Make the Impossible Happen:** Amanda takes *paradox-1* whenever she strains to accommodate Isabella Aguilar's busy schedule.
- **Space-Time Paradox:** When the *paradox* spectrum is maxed out, Amanda passes out or becomes involved in a time-bending accident. Remove any statuses on this spectrum.
- **Corporate Wording:** When you spend a Clue to ask a question with Amanda as your source, the MC can choose to give answers that are fuzzy, incomplete, or part-true part-false (as in the 7-9 option of **Investigate**).
- Amanda can control the flow of water, creating *undercurrents*. She can have someone *sucked-into-a-whirlpool-4* if they are in a body of water that is deep enough.
- Call security or the police (create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards)



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NATASHA VASILIEV ★★★★

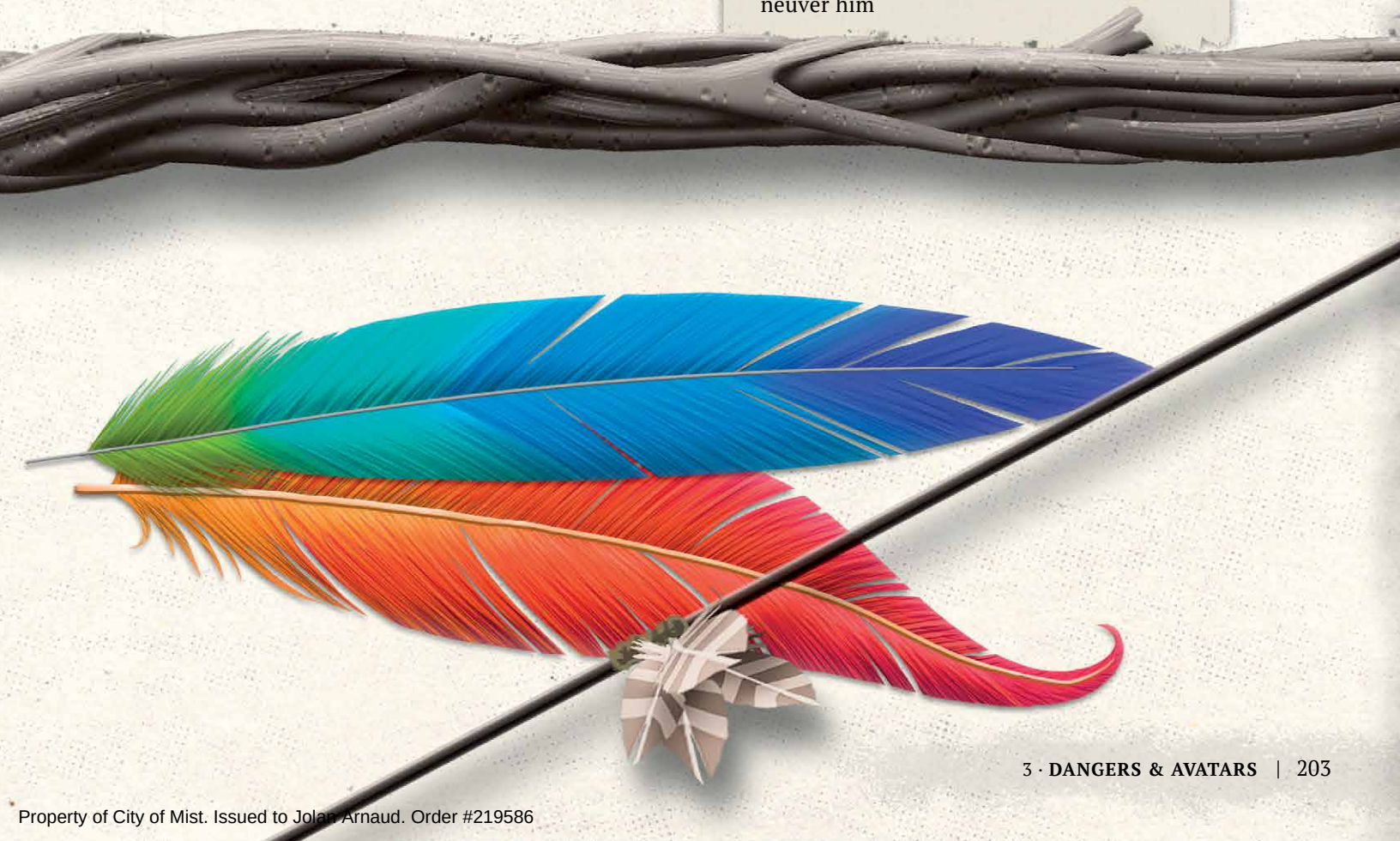
CATCH OR OUTRUN 5 / HARM OR SUBDUE 4

- **Hunter Goddess:** When Natasha enters the scene, give her *alert-4*, *stealthy-4* , *evasive-4*. If she loses any of these statuses, the MC can renew some or all of them as a hard move. These statuses cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Bow of Artemis:** When you take a status from Natasha's arrows, you take an additional tier-3 status of the MC's choice representing the arrow she used, e.g., *poisoned-3*, *sick-3*, *unlucky-3*.
- **Alma Verde Pouch Kit:** Once per scene, Natasha can use one of the Alma Verde Herbalist concoctions as a hard move.
- **Vanish:** Once per session, Natasha can escape the crew as a soft move.
- Fire a volley of arrows, hitting any number of targets (*arrow-wounds-3*) or one lethal arrow (*mortal-wound-5* or, once per scene, *arrow-through-the-heart-6*)

THUNDER KINCAID ★★★★★

CATCH OR OUTRUN 6 / HARM OR SUBDUE 6

- **Invincible:** When Thunder Kincaid takes a physical harm status, reduce the tier of the status by 5. When Thunder Kincaid takes a physical subdual status, reduce the tier of the status by 3.
- **Unwavering Destiny:** Thunder Kincaid is unaffected by any moves that tamper with his destiny or predetermine it, including moves that disturb the flow of time or foresee his actions.
- **Feathered Serpent:** As a soft move, Thunder Kincaid can transform into a giant feathered serpent or reassume his human form. Thunder Kincaid can fly in both forms.
- **Faster Than the Wind:** Once per scene, as an MC intrusion, Thunder Kincaid can interrupt one move and make a hard move.
- Claw, bite, buffet with tail, smite with a thunder punch, burn with a lightning strike, or frighten someone to death by revealing his true face (*dying-5* or *all-but-destroyed-5* and burn one defensive tag)
- Be amused at attempts to harm or outmaneuver him



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KWAKU

Anansi the Spider, spirit of all stories

"The spider… *thing*… was hunched in the shadows of the upper corner of my bedroom, with its long legs stretched across the walls. When it spoke, it hissed with many voices speaking different words in weird languages, but I understood. I told him what he asked for was too dangerous. He said that my parents were hiding something from me, something that belonged to me, my destiny. He told me to go to the home office and he showed me how to override the security system and open the safe. Then it left, but everything had already changed forever."

–Lily Chow

Everyone loves a good story, but none more than Kwaku Noble, Avatar of Anansi the Spider. He sits at the center of his web, spinning tales and listening to the stories coming back to him as tremors on the gossamer threads. Kwaku is pleased when a story he made is told over and over again. He ponders how to make his stories better and then weaves them into the fate of the City.

Some people are entertained by comedy while others enjoy a tragedy; some want action while others want drama or horror. Kwaku knows this better than anyone. Anansi doesn't mind what a story is about, only that it is entertaining and compelling enough to be told again and again. He is looking for that one special story, a tale of epic proportions that will be told throughout eternity and he chose Kwaku to dream up this story for him. Kwaku's mission is to engineer entertaining stories all throughout the City, cultivate them, and spin them, until one of them emerges as the legend he was looking for.

Kwaku knows that only truly mythical events could provide the basis for a legend such as the one he seeks. In his visions, Anansi has told him that he should deceive and capture three animals: a vain python, a gullible leopard, and a self-serving nest of hornets. Kwaku wants to unravel the true identity of these proverbial beasts in the City. Knowing his Mythos, he suspects at least one of them is an Avatar; if that's true, luring them into his web may very well be the epic tale he was looking for, with him in its center. However, Kwaku knows Anansi better than anyone; he knows the old spider doesn't like to stay in one place or support the same protagonist for long. Kwaku wonders if his own Mythos is deceiving him, making a story out of him. The more he considers it, the more he is sure of it; but since they are now one, he too is curious to see how his own story will unfold.

OVERVIEW OF KWAKU

Agenda: to use the City to tell entertaining and compelling stories
MO: a private media network that not only covers stories but also engineers them
Desire: to be entertained
Motifs: spiders, media, technology, trickery
Frontliners: mundane informers, mundane heist teams, Webflo reporters, Tar Babies, Nightcrawlers
Stronghold: None

KWAKU'S MODUS OPERANDI

To find the most compelling stories in the City, Kwaku, who is a master of technology, constructed a web like no other, a web of words and images: a media network dubbed "Webflo". This news outlet, focusing mostly on celebrity news and gossip, has grown to be one of the City's most resourceful investigative agencies, digging up the most well-hidden scoops and then going public with them. Webflo has exposed hundreds of scandalous scoops so far and they are not slowing down. There isn't a politician, a businessperson, or a celebrity who isn't looking over her shoulder when she does something morally wrong or socially reprimandable to see if a Webflo reporter is snapping her picture.

Webflo's network is an elaborate one. Informants in every stratum of society listen in on local word of mouth and report back. Rumors from barber shops, nail salons, bookstores, and bars are Kwaku's bread-and-butter, providing him with an intimate knowledge of the City's going-ons. No secret is safe from him. The phones in the agency's call center are constantly ringing off the hook with exciting news or hot leads. Many informants are regulars and are practically a part of the Webflo team but many others are spontaneous callers who just saw something weird and felt the urge to tell Kwaku. If a happening was witnessed by more than one person, it is very likely to find its way to a report on Kwaku's web. He particularly likes the strange stories, the ones he knows are about Rifts (even if the informant is a total Sleeper). These have the most potential of exploding into something big.

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Depending on your series concept and the era in which you are playing, Webflo may be using different technologies to disseminate information. However, it should always be using the most advanced technology available.

If you're playing in the roaring 30s, Webflo is a radio broadcasting agency and its reporters take notes in a notepad. If you're playing in the 80s, Webflo is a popular TV channel with camera crews driving vans with satellite dishes all over the City. In modern times, Webflo is an internet company whose vloggers capture news with their mobile phones.

As reports from his network stream into Kwaku's center of command, he sifts through them to find which of them could evolve into a story worth telling. Webflo reporters don't just look for finished stories, they also look for potential stories. When Kwaku's people see potential in an emerging situation in the City, their master's storyteller aspect kicks in. Kwaku uses his operation to actively intervene in a story to make it better. From his experience, adding a chaotic and unexpected twist to a story makes it surprising and exhilarating for the audience. Kwaku loves throwing a wrench into a developing story and watch how it turns into something completely different. If a successful power couple is rapidly ascending the City's social ladder, he might run an embarrassing story about one of them to see how they hold up or nudge their child into going on a dangerous adventure. If somewhere in the blue-collar residential neighborhood kids are being bullied by a teenage Rift, Kwaku is not beyond orchestrating the awakening of one girl who will stand up to the bully.

Kwaku has a natural affinity for underdogs and underserved populations; that "rising from the gutter" spin may be trite but everybody loves a tearjerker. He doesn't envy the heroes he makes; people tend to get lazy when the work is being done for them and the more they rely on Kwaku's help, the greater his temptation is to leave them hanging and see how they fare (that "hero loses her powers" spin is another favorite of his). Kwaku rarely hurts his protagonists directly, but he certainly makes sure their lives are interesting, sometimes more interesting than they would like them to be.

An admirer of technology, Kwaku likes to gift his proteges with Relics. Relics can be given and they can be taken away, which makes things more interesting. Kwaku's people are always on the hunt for new Relics to add to his collection. When the time comes, Kwaku picks out the most suitable inanimate Rift he possesses and drops it unexpectedly into the hands of a Sleeper in need and *voila!* A new legend is born.

KWAKU'S OPERATION

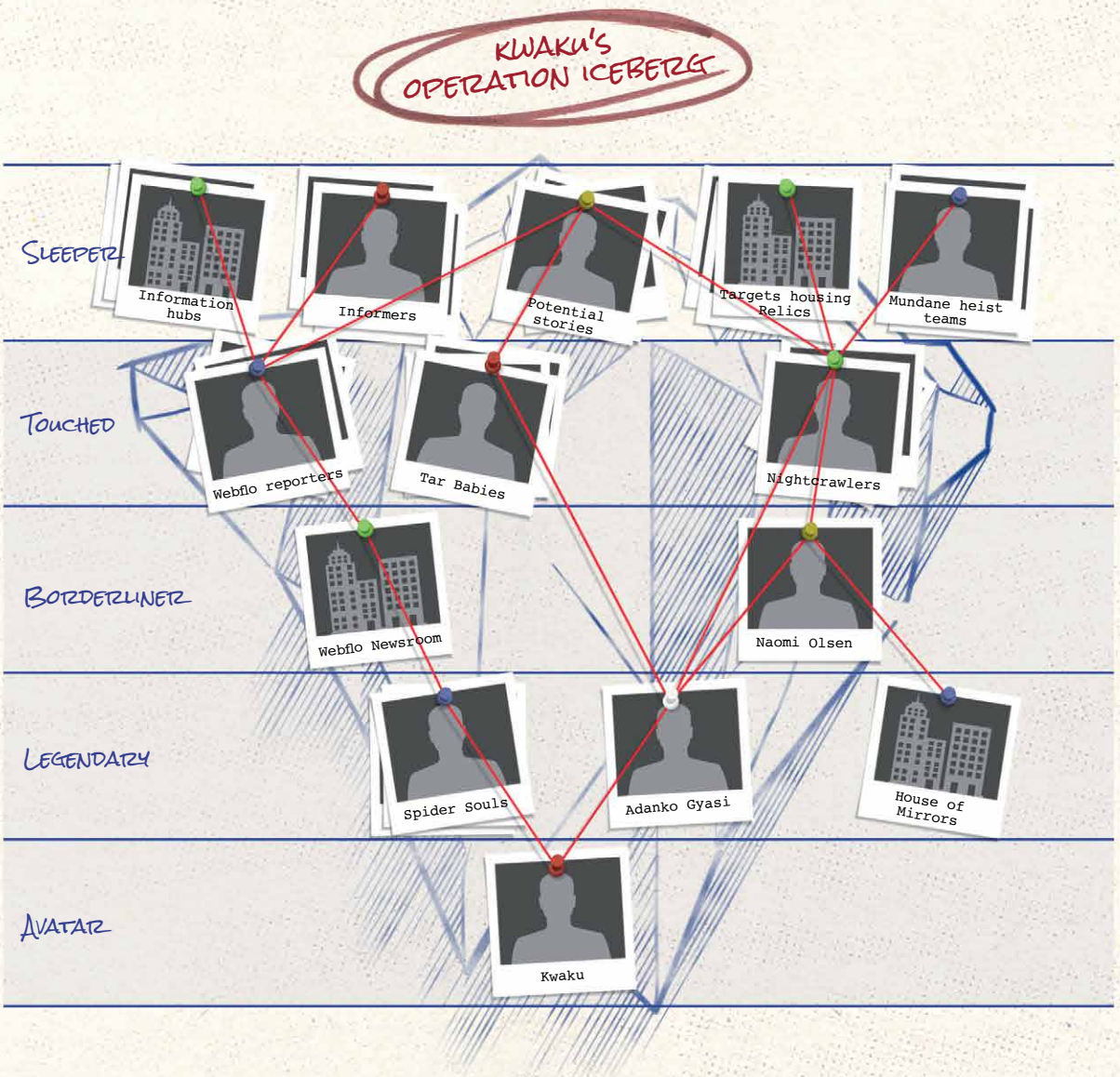
Hiding behind the Webflo front, Kwaku's operation uses the same main branch both to collect information and to engineer stories, with different side branches of the operation responsible for specific activities. In the spirit of its creator, Anansi, the operation is extremely fluid and adaptive: in one case, the same reporter can investigate a story, then intervene in it, and then cover the consequences, whereas in another case ten different operatives of Kwaku's could be involved in different roles, all depending on the circumstances.

KEY CHARACTERS

Kwaku's stories start with a lead from an **INFORMER** on the field. Informers are most often Sleepers but they can be anyone in Kwaku's operation who runs into an incident worth reporting. The story is then picked up by a **WEBFLO REPORTER**, who usually lets the newsroom know they are working on something. Webflo Reporters are crafty and manipulative and can make themselves appear innocuous or forgettable (raising suspicions among other Avatars that Kwaku is cooperating with the Gatekeepers). The reporter investigates the case and profiles the story, assessing its potential entertainment value for Kwaku.

Once the potential of a story is established, the reporter may decide to intervene herself or, if it seems the story is out of her league, pass it back to the newsroom. When the stakes are exceptionally high, **ADANKO GYASI** (Brer Rabbit) takes over from the newsroom and ensures that the story will turn into a delightful mess. Often in a smart-casual linen suit and a straw boater hat, Gyasi is a smooth operator and a master of deceit, almost as cunning as

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Kwaku himself. He gets very creative when choosing predicaments for the protagonists in his stories and can orchestrate complex operations to make them happen. He is also quite the escape artist and has emerged unharmed out of several extremely sticky encounters with other Avatars' heavy-hitters.

Adanko uses his very own invention, the **TAR BABIES** (Tar Baby), when it's time to implicate a protagonist in some trouble. These sticky creatures are best described as animated webs of accident dressed in an innocent human form; once a passerby greets them, they will follow this person everywhere and get them into any sort of trouble and mishap possible. It takes a Tar Baby no more than a few hours to tarnish the name of a respectable member of society and up to a week to implicate a more shrewd individual. The target must never suspect that the Tar Baby is working for someone else; when cut, Tar Babies bleed out the pitch black viscous substance they're made of. Their other downside is that they are costly to make; Adanko hasn't been able to conjure one up without Kwaku's help, at least so far.

The side-branch of Relic acquisition is run by **NAOMI OLSEN** (Loki), a fence and a master thief from the Old Quarter. Olsen has been collecting Relics since before Kwaku recruited her. Back then, she funded her hobby by selling other valuable

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artifacts she acquired in similarly illegal ways. She uses Webflo's resources and her own research to find out where Relics are being held in the City. Once she marks a target, Olsen will send her own **NIGHTCRAWLERS** to retrieve it. These stealthy criminals wield some of Kwaku's abilities such as clinging to walls and producing small amounts of sticky filaments, just enough to pull an artifact into their hands. Olsen also hires mundane heist teams made of con artists, security system experts, masterminds, etc. If the job is harder to pull off, she recruits suitable Rifts or does the job herself. Once a Relic is obtained, it is usually put to good use by Adanko Gyasi, who uses the Nightcrawlers (or, if necessary, a Spider Soul, see below) as a delivery service to get the Relic over to the right candidate and alter the course of their fate.

Since Kwaku remains forever in the shadows and since most of his operation is built out of self-serving two-timers, he needs reliable messengers to communicate with Webflo and make sure his interests are protected. For this, he created the **SPIDER SOULS**. Like the Tar Babies, Spider Souls are not Rifts, nor are they human beings; they are conglomerations of gossamer and shadows that Kwaku conjures from the snuffed souls of those who try to trick him and are tricked in return, to their doom. Able to materialize or turn incorporeal at will, Spider Souls are made of smoky shadows that are impossible to capture or track. They can assume any form, but when stripped of their illusory appearances they appear as tall spindly humanoids with jet black skin, eight long limbs, and a face covered in glassy green orbs that serve as their eyes. No one knows how many of them exist or even if they are multiple individuals; perhaps they are all a single conjuration that can appear in multiple locations in the City at the same time.

KEY LOCATIONS

Webflo's informers and reporters often operate in local **INFORMATION HUBS,** from trendy bars downtown to tenement stoops in the slums. Any rumor that crosses lips in these monitored locations will make its way to Webflo.

The **WEBFLO NEWSROOM** is situated in the 53rd story of a prominent downtown skyscraper connected to a few other skyscrapers with sky bridges. Most people working here are Sleepers, who do a good job pushing the information along and managing the reporters on the ground. There is also a production team and a studio that is used by different members in the organization to broadcast important stories. Kwaku and Adanko Gyasi track the work remotely and chime in when they spot a story with enough potential. At least one of the employees here is a Spider Soul, keeping an eye out – or eight – for Kwaku.

The process of matching a Relic to one of Kwaku's downtrodden potentials is a tricky one. Kwaku must find a candidate that the Relic would accept as its bearer and the Relic must be useful in pushing the candidate towards the story development Kwaku is planning. When the acquisition branch gets a hold of a Relic for which Kwaku doesn't have an immediate fitting candidate, it is sent to the **HOUSE OF MIRRORS**. This is an actual house of mirrors which appears periodically in different parts of town: sometimes in a fair in the Old Quarter, other times on the boardwalks or as part of a circus that sets up in an empty lot in the Industrial Zone. The visible part is used normally by Sleepers, but when Adanko Gyasi or a Spider Soul enter they can step through some of the mirrors into a phantom plane. Following a secret pattern along the mirror maze, they can eventually emerge in a secure room, guarded by a host of Spider Souls. In its center stands a barrel-sized emptied out calabash (a dried squash-like fruit used as a receptacle). Kwaku's servants can reach into it and store or take out a Relic; to do so, one must be able to trick the calabash into giving away its contents.

Kwaku himself has no permanent home; he is a wanderer and a storyteller, and so he loves nothing more than to walk the streets of the City and mix with the heroes of his stories. One day he is a rich man dining in a fancy restaurant with a homeless person he picked up on the street. The next day he could be that homeless person strumming on the guilty conscience of a privileged college girl. Even Kwaku doesn't know where he will be tomorrow and he doesn't want to know. Where's the fun in that?

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KWAKU'S STORY SEEDS

The crew or one of the crew members can become investigative reporters working for Webflo, either as freelancers or as Webflo's employees. As they investigate their assignments they could uncover Webflo's own involvement in the stories it brings to light.

A safe in the vault of the City Central Bank may be marked as a target by the Nightcrawlers, who think there is a valuable Relic inside. If the hit was successful, the crew must investigate the crime, find the elusive Nightcrawler et al, and retrieve the artifact. If it was not successful, the crew has a chance to lure some spiders into their trap.

A helpless individual who is at the center of a Webflo story (possibly a Tar Baby victim) could ask the crew for help in getting out of the mess he or she got into. When the crew gets in the way of the story, Kwaku and his agents find a way to spin it in their favor.

Kwaku or Adanko Gyasi could single out one of the lead characters as the up-and-coming star of one of their stories, showering him or her with Relics, Tar Babies, and complications to bring about the most spectacular circumstances possible – at the lead character's expense.

KWAKU'S HISTORY

Several decades ago, Kwaku Noble was a brilliant and mischievous kid growing up in a poor neighborhood. As an illegal immigrant to the City, he had to take care of himself and his twin sisters by making money under the table. He began to use his talent for mechanics to soup up unusual cars for drag races, gaining a reputation in the racer circles as the go-to guy for that something extra.

Not long thereafter, one of Kwaku's sisters fell ill. While his other sister tended to her, it fell to Kwaku to get her medicine, but that required a lot more money than he had. Out of options, Kwaku decided to enter one of the biggest drag races himself. As he pulled up in his car, Kwaku looked into the car on the left and saw a bald man with a skull painted on his face grinning back at him with coal-black eyes. The flags dropped down and the cars took off. Skullhead in the lead, Kwaku took off a split second later when suddenly something strange happened. The faint intuition that had always guided his mechanical manipulations, electronic modifications, and practical pranks suddenly amplified into a thundering voice, a voice that spoke to him.

The voice told Kwaku that the man in the car is Death who has come personally to take his sister. If he, Anansi, were allowed to live through Kwaku, all will be well. Kwaku knew he had already consented. As if in a dream, he recalled tampering with the Skullhead's engine before the race.

Gas started to leak out of the Skullhead's smoking car and it slowed down. Kwaku Anansi crossed the finish line. As Skullhead and his gang rushed up to Kwaku, they were tripped by invisible hands. Kwaku escaped with the money and bought the medicine for his sister.

Skullhead, as it turned out, was the young Anatoli Vidales. In the following years, as both men grew strong and powerful, Mr. Vidales continued to hunt for the sister he felt was his while Kwaku repeatedly fooled him. But the stronger Death became, the harder it was to evade him and the greater the sacrifices Kwaku had to make to succeed. Finally, Kwaku devised the ultimate act of trickery, one which would forever ensure the safety of his family: he would hide his sisters even from himself so that they could get on with their lives and no one would ever bother them again.

As he bid his sisters farewell for the last time, Kwaku's responsibilities and bonds evaporated. He was now a footloose trickster, ready to roam the City, trick whoever comes in his path and tell stories, tell countless stories. Kwaku was all but gone; Anansi was reborn. But sometimes he still wonders if he could outsmart his old self and find his hidden sisters again. So far, he hasn't tried once.

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KWAKU'S CUSTOM MOVES

The Lying Calabash: Whenever you wish to take something out of the calabash or put something inside it, you must first **Sneak Around** and fool it. With every attempt the calabash adds to itself a permanent story tag that works against you (*prank*, *trick*, *ruse*, *stunt*, etc.). On a hit, you can choose one item to leave in the calabash or take one item out of it. If you take an item out, the MC will give you an appropriate permanent story tag, if relevant.

The Lying Calabash, Part II: The first time you take something out of the Lying Calabash, it's a decoy that will only work once. When you first use the item, it works to some extent but then crumbles to dust. If you received a tag for this item, the tag expires after one invocation.

The Lying Calabash, Part III: The second time you take something out of the Lying Calabash, it's the real deal, but it has a charm that will make it disappear and go back into the calabash after a short while. If you received a tag for this item, the tag expires when the scene ends.

The Lying Calabash, Part IV: The third time you take something out of the Lying Calabash, you really got it.

KWAKU'S DANGERS

WEBFLO REPORTER ★

To represent a Webflo Reporter, use the Reporter Danger profile. In addition, a Webflo Reporter has the following moves:

Sketchy at Best: When you spend a Clue to ask a question about the reporter, the MC can choose to give answers that are fuzzy, incomplete, or part-true part-false (as in the 7-9 option of **Investigate**).

NIGHTCRAWLERS ★★

To represent a Nightcrawler, use the Cat Burglar Danger profile, but note that a Nightcrawler's mystical nature allows it to override mystical as well as mundane security measures. In addition, a Nightcrawler has the following moves:

- Climb a wall to evade pursuers (giving herself *out-of-reach-2*)
- Shoot a web at someone (*sticky-2*) or to snatch an item from a distance (as long as it's not firmly fixed in place; this can be used to **Deny Them Something They Want**)

TAR BABY ★★

A Tar Baby always looks and behaves like a real person. It has a false name, a backstory, and sometimes even the trappings of a life: an apartment, a car, a bank account, etc. When you present the Tar Baby's moves to the players, don't expose its nature; instead, use its false name. If the players overcome the Tar Baby but still think she is human, the surprise will await for later.

A Tar Baby can be overcome by physically bursting it open, by using sorcery to dissipate or banish it back to whence it came, or by exposing it as a threat, in which case its victim might be wise enough to avoid it completely (leading Kwaku's people to recall it).

BANISH 2 / BURST 3 / EXPOSE 4

- **Sticky Situation:** When you first greet _____ , she sees you as her soulmate, her best buddy, her savior, or her golden opportunity and wants to follow you wherever you go. You take *bad-luck-2*.
- **Sticky Situation, Part II:** At the end of every scene, downtime, or cutscene _____ spends time with her object of admiration, they take *bad-luck-2*.
- **Sticky Situation, Part III**: When _____'s object of admiration reaches *bad-luck-5*, _____ involves them in a disaster or a tragedy. The MC makes the move **Make Something Horrible Happen**. _____ is never seen again.
- **Sketchy at Best:** When you spend a Clue to ask a question about _____, the MC can choose to give answers that are fuzzy, incomplete, or part-true part-false (as in the 7-9 option of **Investigate**).
- Beg the object of her admiration not to leave her
- Show up again after someone got rid of her

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NAOMI OLSEN ★★★

To represent Naomi Olsen, use the Smuggler Danger profile. In addition, Naomi Olsen has the following moves:

- **Decoy:** When you catch Naomi Olsen without first verifying it is her, you have one of her decoys instead; it dissipates when you catch it.
- **Hard to Tell:** When you try to **Investigate** to verify whether Naomi Olsen is real or a decoy, calculate your Power but postpone the roll. If you or your crewmates catch her, roll the dice. If you score 12+, you can trade your Clues to make it the real Naomi Olsen.
- Conjure lifelike illusions to confuse her pursuers or enemies (*can't-tell-what's-real-3*)

ADANKO GYASI ★★★★

Adanko Gyasi should be used as a colorful presenter for Kwaku's agenda. He is not an aggressor; if someone attempts to initiate a conflict with him, he will just finish what he has to say and disappear or mysteriously swap places with a Spider Soul in his form, leaving the Spider Soul to handle the fight. He is more interested in instigating a good story, so when he comes in contact with the lead characters, he will likely have several plans underway that will force them to undertake an impossible task, confront a powerful adversary, or **Make a Hard Choice**. If appropriate, use the move **Ruinous Turn of Events** to reflect Gyasi's ability to engineer "interesting" life situations for his targets.

BAD LUCK – / HURT OR SUBDUE 5 / RESTRAIN –

- **The Shell Game:** As an MC intrusion, Adanko is revealed to be a Spider Soul in disguise.
- **Uncatchable:** As an MC Intrusion, Adanko leaves the scene.
- **Lucky Bastard:** When you try to affect Adanko with a negative effect (except for one causing forgetfulness), you first take *bad-luck-4*.
- **Ruinous Turn of Events:** Three times per scene in which Adanko is present, the MC can make a hard move as a soft move.
- Reveal to a lead character how he has made her life more interesting

SPIDER SOULS ★★★★★

Spider Souls sometimes take a mundane guise created by their illusory powers (similarly to the Gatekeepers using the Mist). You should narrate this false identity as a perfectly normal and unsuspicious character. When you want to give the players a chance to expose the Spider Soul, you can drop faint hints about the false identity character. Use the move **Creepy Feeling** when the lead characters are already suspecting something and decide to **Investigate**; it reflects the difficulty of obtaining concrete information about the Spider Soul. When you reveal **Creepy Feeling** to the players, use the name of the Spider Soul's false identity (instead of "Spider Souls") to avoid automatically exposing the Spider Souls.

BANISH 6 / CONVINCE OR TURN – / HURT OR SUBDUE –

- **Creepy Feeling:** Whenever you try to **Investigate** to learn more about _____ you get a strange feeling that he / she is impenetrable. _____ takes *unknowable-4*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Shadow Being:** When a Spider Soul reveals itself as one, give it *hidden-4*. If it loses this status, the MC can renew it as a soft move after one player makes a move without it. It can also impart this status to one more object or person it is holding. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- Mysteriously push people into action with its strange presence (*compelled-4*)
- Impale up to six targets with its spidery limbs (burn one defensive tag and then give *impaled-4*) or impale one victim with multiple limbs (burn two defensive tags and then give *pin-cushion-5*)
- Spray sticky web (*restrained-4*) or acidic venom (*poisonous-burns-3*) on an area
- Disappear into the shadows, possibly taking something or someone with it (**Deny Something They Want**)
- Creep along the walls silently like a fluid shadow

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APPENDICES



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DANGERS BY DANGER RATING

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Leader +★	154
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Mind Controller +★	153
Nature Spirit or God +★	154
Nurse, Psyche Ward ★	143
Petty Crook ★	147
Sorcerer or Witch +★	154
Swift-footed +★	154
Thief +★	156
Trickster +★	156
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Junkyard Compactor ★★	152
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DANGERS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Adanko Gyasi (Brer Rabbit) ★★★★	211
Alice (Alice In Wonderland) ★★★★★	157
Alma Verde Herbalist ★★	200
Amanda Barnes (Benzaiten) ★★★	202
Beast +★	152
Beat Cops / Security Guards ★	148
Belay Theron (Shaka Zulu) ★★★★	192
Burners ★★★★	192
Cat Burglar ★★	145
Chinthe Statues (Chinthe) ★★★	164
City Official ★	141
City Resident, Helpless	142
Con Artist ★★	145
Consigliere ★★	182
Creature of Darkness +★★	153
Crime Lord ★★★★	145
Delinquent Teenagers ★	146
Demigod or Giant +★★	153
Derelict Building ★	151
Detective / Investigator ★★	148
Elena Albertini (Cassandra) ★★★★★	183
Enforcers ★★	180
Epidemic, Citywide ★★★	152
Gatekeeper Agents ★★★	164
Getaway Vehicle ★★	146
Ghost or Spirit +★	153
Golem or Elemental +★	153
Heist Team ★★★+	146
Hired Thugs ★★	147
Hitman ★★★	147
House Fire ★★	151
Hunter +★	153
Jacqueline Brown ★★★ (Jack And The Beanstalk)	158
Jane Radcliff (Boudica) ★★★★	192
Junkyard Compactor ★★	152
K9 (Cerberus) ★★★★	182
Lawyer, Corporate ★★★	142
Leader +★	154
Lily Chow (Prince Of Iron Hans) ★★★★	163
Living Dead +★	180
Magic Sword ★★★★ (Flaming Sword Of Eden)	161
Messenger of the Light +★	154
Mind Controller +★	153
Mob ★★	142
Mover & Shaker ★★★★	143
Naomi Olsen (Loki) ★★★	211
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Nature Spirit or God +★	154
Necromancer +★★	154
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Paweł Zima (The White Rose) ★★★★★	192
Petty Crook ★	147
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Reporter ★★	144
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Security System ★★	150
Smuggler ★★	147
Social Butterfly ★★	144
Sorcerer or Witch +★	154
Spearheads ★★★	191
Spider (Spider Grandmother) ★★★	163
Spider Souls ★★★★★	211
Street Gang ★★	148
Swan Maidens ★★★	202
Swat Team / Elite Security ★★★	150
Swift-footed +★	154
Tar Baby ★★	210
The Reeds (Nature Boy) ★★★	158
Thief +★	156
Thunder Kincaid (Quetzalcoatl) ★★★★★	203
Time Bomb ★★★	151
Trendsetters ★★	200
Trickster +★	156
Troubled Individual ★	144
Violent Drunk ★	144
Warrior +★	156
Weapon Bearer (Relic) +★★	156
Webflo Reporter ★	210
Winged Creature +★	156

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MYTHOI IN THIS BOOK

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Mythos	Logos	Description	Danger
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CITY OF MIST BACKERS

We at Son of Oak would like to extend a special "thank you" to everyone who backed City of Mist on Kickstarter – this game could not have been made without you!

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Tague, Talya and Aviram Shahal, Tam & Danks, Tamar Levanoni, Tammy Ninyo, Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds' Kennedy, Tanya Itkin, Taylor Fisher, Tealeaf Frenziedrat, Ted Sanne, Ted Wallerstedt, Tegan Victoria Smith, TERRENCE Patrick "MAGI" Joseph MICHEAU, Terry L. Gilbert, Jr., Thalji, That Damn Mouse, The Bloody Daggerites, The Fox, The Great Amir, The Link, Theron Teter, Thiago Goncalves, Thierry Michaux, Thomas (Darkling) Wittkowski, Thomas Behrens Jr, Thomas Faßnacht, Thomas Frank, Thomas Jetzfellner, Thomas Piekarski, Thomas Ryan, Thomas Zuliani, Thorsten Dellbrügge, Thozmp, Tiffany Korta, Tiger D. Swan, Tim Craft, Tim Czarnecki, Tim Ellis, Tim Gonzalez, Tim Lund, Tim Mcbu, Tim Wojcik, Timo J. Sand, Timothy Carroll, Timothy Fredricksen, Timothy Lutz, Timothy McGowan, Timothy Totten, Timothy Walsh, Tobias Niemitz, Tobin Snelling, Toby Chang, Todd Biggs, Todd Gibel, Todd Tucker, Tom, Tom "palfrey" Parker, Tom "the Monster" Hoefle, Tom Daniel Brooks, Tom Le Tissier, Tom Miskey, Tom Snow, Tomas Burgos-Caez, Tomas Enrique Diaz, Tomer Bar-Shlomo | תומר בר-שלמה Tom-Ar.com VRDate.com, Tomi Sarkkinen, Tommaso De Benetti, Tommy "Night Eye" Rayburn, Tony and Bethany Aguad, Tony Ridgway, Torben 'LeGit' Jones, Torben Bellinghoff, Tore, Tr, Travis Stodter, Travis Stout, Travis Tessmer, Trefor Davis, Trent "Ax_kidson" Boyd, Trever Harwell, Trevor A Wirgau, Trevor Hannon, Tristan O'Neil, Troy "Wrongtown" Hall, Troy Ellis, Ty Prunty, Ulf "McWolfe" Andersson, Ulf Hillebrecht, Uri Shilo - 20 Tivee, Uriel Joe Haran, Uriel Shashua, Vaillant Rafael, Valentin Roussel, Vance Rawson, Vegar Fristad, Victor Diaz, Victor Lopes, Victor W Allen, Victor Wyatt, Vince Usher, Vincent Arebalo, Vincent Baker, Vincent Bezic, Vincent BÉZIÉ, Vincent Henrotte, Vladimir Filipović, Volker Bugl, W Ryan Carden, W. David Pattison, Wade Jones, waelcyrge, Wai Kien, Walter PERSECHINI, Warren Finnie, Wayne "Darkslayer" Harris, Weidlich. Michael, Whitney Mattson, Whitt., Will, Will Blankenship, Will Goring, Will Kertz, Will Phillips, Willard Rafnsson, Willem Sullivan, William Adams, William Beckwith, William Cuthbertson, William Grimaldi, William Helms, William Palmer, William S. Tolliver, William Weiler, Willy kaceres, Wim Deca, "Wrincewind Windsor", Wyldstar, Xantos, Xavier Brinon, Xavier Spinat, Yael the III of House Rosen, Yehuda Halfon, Yiftach Raphael Govreen, Yiu-cho Jason Chan, Yoki Erdtman, Yonatan Shtorchan, Yonni & Michelle Mendes, Yu Tsai Su, YupUMad, Yuriy Volkov, Yuval Sapir, Zac Braddy, Zach Brown, Zachary Balgeman & Cody Johnson, Zachary Coleman, Zachary Norton, Zack Schwartz, Zack Wenning, Zeb Walker, Zed Lopez, Zeke Hubris, Zeraphita, Zivp, Zoe Farr.

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MC MOVES SHEET

MC PRINCIPLES

- Communicate with the group
- Play to find out
- Be the characters' biggest fan; make their lives interesting
- Think cinematic

MC INTRUSIONS

At any point in the game, even when a player has the spotlight, you may intrude...

- ... to translate the story into rules, e.g., add a story tag.
- ... to reveal a custom move that has been triggered.
- ... to ask for more details about a player's action.
- ... to tell a player what player move their action triggers.
- ... to intervene when a player determines Power, e.g., invoke a weakness tag.
- ... to choose the outcome of a move, when the choice is yours or when the player foregoes an option.

SOFT MC MOVES

- Complicate Things
- Hit Them After A Fair Warning
- Optional: Activate Their Weakness Tags as Flaws

HARD MC MOVES

- Complicate Things, Bigtime
- Deny Them Something They Want
- Make Something Horrible Happen
- Turn Their Move Against Them
- Give a Status
- Reduce or Remove a Status
- Burn a Tag
- Force Them to Choose

NARRATION

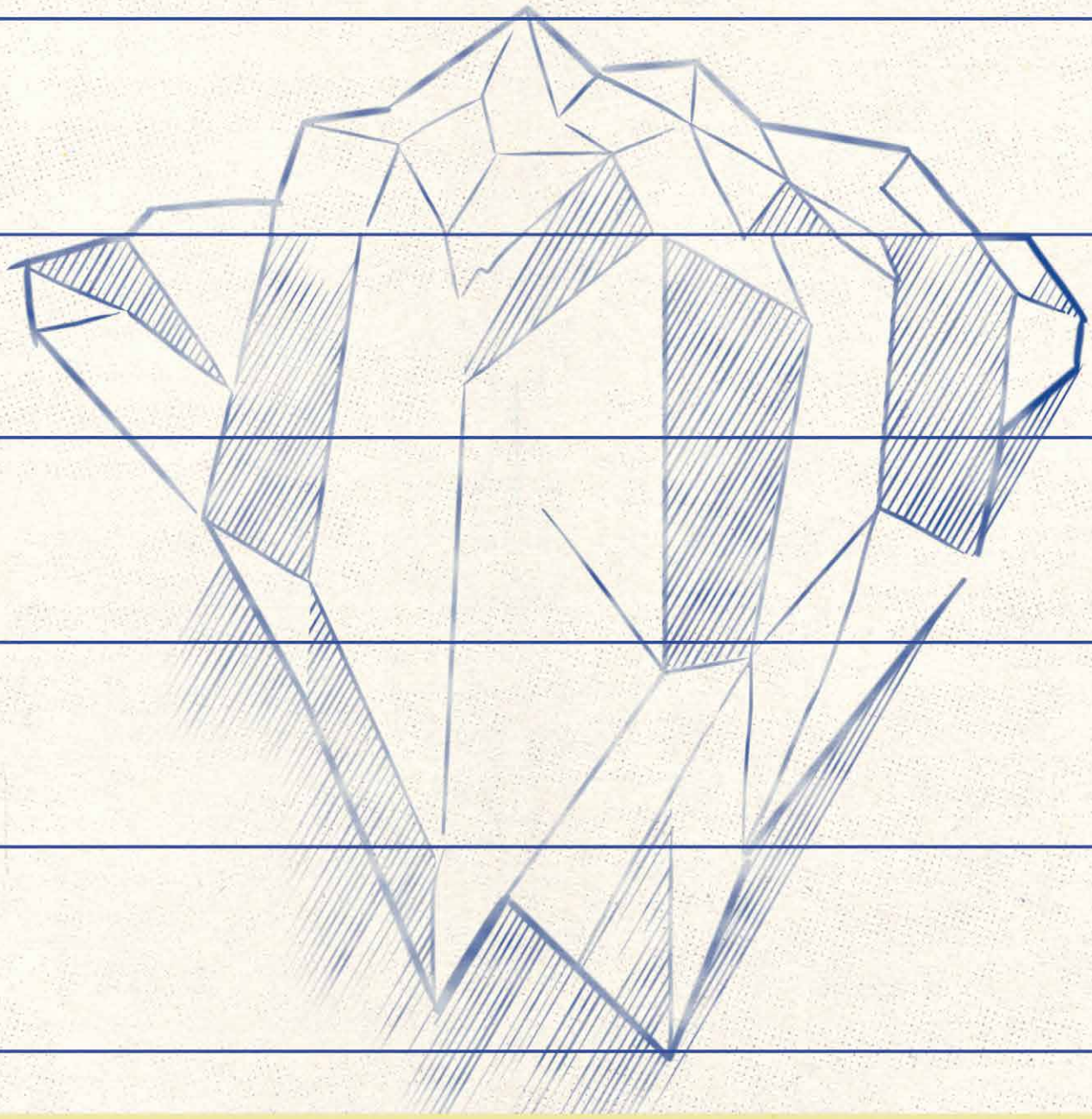
- Emphasize the atmosphere
- Make your characters real and human
- Keep it a mystery
- Ask provoking questions
- Stay consistent
- Make the City feel alive

NOTES

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CITY OF MIST

ICEBERG SHEET



NOTES

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MC TRACKING SHEET

CHARACTER TRACKING

CHARACTER NAME

PLAYER

MYSTERIES & IDENTITIES

WEAKNESS TAGS

CHARACTER TRACKING

CHARACTER NAME

PLAYER

MYSTERIES & IDENTITIES

WEAKNESS TAGS

CHARACTER TRACKING

CHARACTER NAME

PLAYER

MYSTERIES & IDENTITIES

WEAKNESS TAGS

CHARACTER TRACKING

CHARACTER NAME

PLAYER

MYSTERIES & IDENTITIES

WEAKNESS TAGS

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SERIES RESOURCES SHEET

BURNING QUESTIONS

STORY ELEMENTS

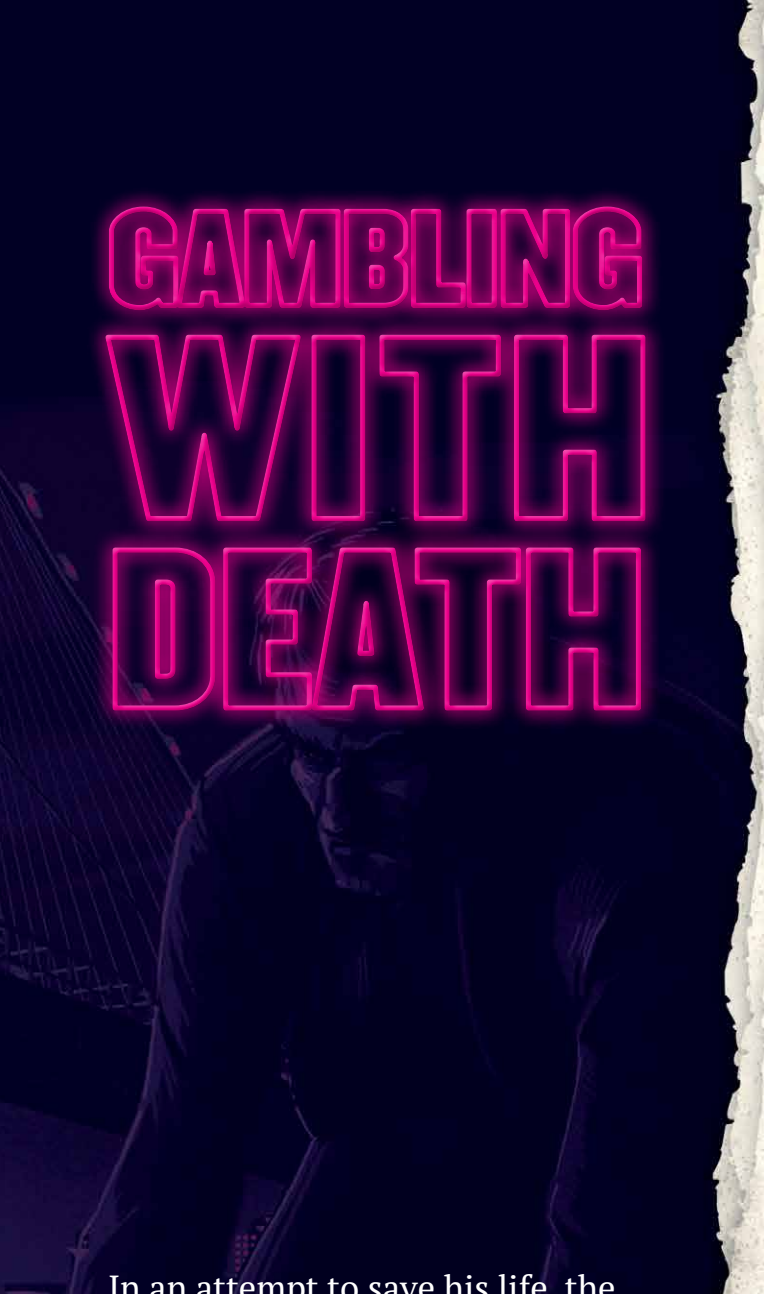
PLOT IDEAS

STYLE GUIDES

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GAMBLING WITH DEATH



In an attempt to save his life, the ruler of a casino empire who is up to his neck in debt captures a legendary hustler who he hopes could be his salvation. However, not only do her powers fail to stop his creditor, Death himself, from collecting his due, but Death also demands that the ruler sacrifices his fake savior as punishment. Now the casino magnate and his security team scramble to cover up the murder as the crew ventures into the dark secrets behind the glitz and glamour of the Royal Plaza Hotel.

HOW TO USE THIS CASE

Gambling with Death is an introduction to the Dying branch of Anatoli Vidales' Avatar operation. *Shark Tank*, the case included with the Starter Box, explores the Living branch of Anatoli's operation.

Anatoli is the Avatar of Hades, Greek god of death and the underworld. In this case, he is referred to only as Death and is represented by K9, the Rift of Cerberus, the three-headed dog that watches over the gates of Hades. Read more about the Living and Dying branches of Anatoli's operation on page 177.

You can use this case as a standalone, or as the opening shot for a season focusing on Anatoli, together with *Shark Tank*.

THE BACKSTORY

Gambling with Death is inspired by the fairy-tale *The Nightingale*, by Hans Christian Andersen. In *The Nightingale*, the Emperor abandons his favorite songbird for a bejeweled mechanical bird, but when Death comes for the Emperor, the real nightingale returns and with her beautiful song convinces Death to let the Emperor live.

THE EMPEROR

Kenny Liu (the Emperor) is a hotel and casino magnate, relatively young at forty years of age. He leads a flashy lifestyle, wearing only the finest garments and jewelry and enjoying every conceivable luxury while entertaining a retinue of gold-digging false friends and business partners. Three years ago, his life of debauchery came to a screeching halt when Kenny was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. Rather than allowing the cancer to kill him, the casino tycoon cut a deal with Death's representative, K9 (Cerberus), to pay a stupendous

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amount of money every month to stay among the living. And so, Kenny Liu became a resident of Hades (see Anatoli's Modus Operandi, page 175).

The payments were taking a toll on Kenny's business, dragging down his hospitality and gambling empire. It was going to end badly for him, if not for the caring love of a Rift named Jenny Applebaum (the Nightingale), a school teacher he met at the hospital where he was diagnosed. Jenny used her special ability to ward off Death's servants with her song, protecting Kenny from his creditors.

Eight months ago, Jenny disappeared. Whether she had enough of Kenny's vain lifestyle or she was spirited away by Anatoli's people remains unknown. Cornered by his angry creditors, Kenny Liu had to start paying three times what he had paid before for his continued life. Needless to say, his business could hardly withstand the hit and he has been desperately searching for a way out ever since.

THE MECHANICAL BIRD

His salvation presented itself unexpectedly ten days ago, when his casino's Chief of Security, Carlton Cooper (a Chinese dragon), reported to him about a heist team planning to hit the casino. Surprisingly, one of the team members not only had a striking resemblance to Jenny, but she could also mimic any voice and any appearance to the point of fooling the casino's security systems. Cooper was hoping this person, Ashley Lind (the Mechanical Bird) could stand in for Jenny and buy his boss more time against Death.

Last night, during the heist team's planned hit, Cooper seized Ashley Lind and brought her to Kenny Liu's private suite, where he was scheduled to meet Death's representative, K9. Held at gunpoint, Ashley perfectly mimicked a recording of Jenny's song, but K9 was not impressed nor affected: the plan had failed. As retribution for the attempt, K9 immediately upped Kenny Liu's price: if he wanted to live, he had to pay with a life, right there and then. Angry at her failure to protect him and thinking it would be easier to cover up the murder as a suicide, Kenny Liu used his commanding powers to force Ashley Lind to jump to her death from the rooftop of the Royal Plaza Hotel.

THE HEIST

Ashley Lind wasn't even supposed to be there. She was entrapped by a con artist named Marty Brooks (a Sleeper) and forced to take part in his operation. Marty was amazed at Lind's "disguise and impersonation technology and skills" (which, as a Sleeper, he could never accept as a legendary ability), especially the fact she could fake voice and retina signatures.

The casino's cash reserves are kept in a vault in the Box, its security center. When a player wants to withdraw their winnings and the sum is too high for the cash registers on the floor, they are taken into the Box where they are screened for fraud and where their winning money is brought in from the vault, usually personally by Cooper, who is the only one except Kenny Liu who is authorized to open the vault (using his voice and retina signatures).

Marty's heist plan was clever and straightforward:

- He recruited a professional card player, Théo Blanc (Sleeper), to win the minimum amount needed to withdraw from the Box.
- At the same time, Marty planned to supplant the Chief of Security, Carlton Cooper, with a disguised Ashley. That was the most difficult stunt to pull as it depended on his ability to trick Cooper into a trap inside the casino's men's room.
- Once swapped, Ashley would make her way into the box with Marty, who would act as Blanc's representative asking to cash out.
- Disguised as Cooper, Ashley would fool the security guards and systems, fake the fraud screening, and get in the vault, where she would pack Marty's briefcase with all the money she could get in (a lot more money than Blanc won).
- By the time the casino found out the money was missing, the team would be long gone, and either way, Chief of Security Carlton Cooper would take the blame.

Unfortunately for Ashley, during one of their dry runs the heist team was spotted by Cooper, who followed Blanc, beat the plan out of him, threatened him into playing along with his plan, and ran back to his boss to tell him about Ashley Lind.

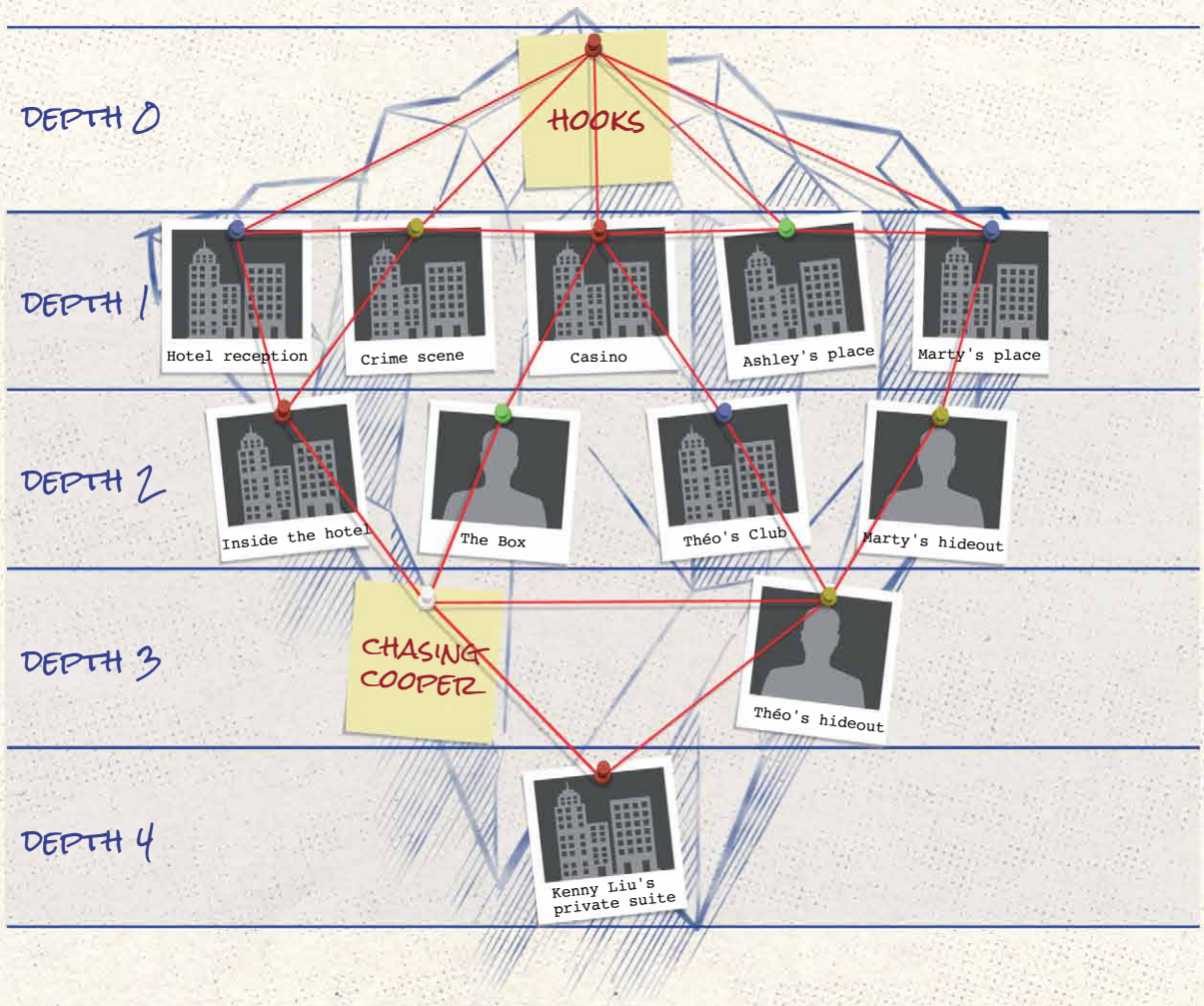
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On the night of the planned heist, Cooper was ready for them. Blanc walked off into the night, Marty Brooks sensed a turning of the tides and made his usual miraculous escape, but Ashley Lind was apprehended by a not-so-knocked-out Cooper when she made her way to the men's room to take his place. The events that transpired then led to her death.

BATTLE OF THE MINDS

The toughest moment in Marty Brooks' planned heist would have been tricking Cooper into following him into the men's room and taking him out there. Marty noticed Cooper was a very hands-on Chief of Security, who handled many complications by himself. Masquerading as Blanc's lawyer, Marty planned to fake a medical emergency and arouse just enough suspicion to get Cooper involved, fooling Cooper into thinking he was dealing with a small-time con man. Once in the men's room, Marty would shoot Cooper with horse-grade tranquilizer, which he hoped would be enough to knock out the veteran (and strangely durable) security expert for a few hours. Alas, we'll never know which one of them would have emerged victorious from that encounter.

THE CASE ICEBERG



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DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The case begins immediately after Ashley Lind's death, before dawn or in the morning of the day following the attempted heist. The crew can learn about her death in a number of ways:

- **Watching for crimes:** If the PCs are involved with the police or seek out unusual crimes, they will learn about Lind's death from participating in or tracking police activity, from a police contact, or from the morning newspapers and news reports. This would lead them to the crime scene.
- **A concerned relative or friend** could recruit the crew to help find out what happened to Ashley Lind, or even pay them to do it. This person may not even know that she had died, so they might lead the crew to Ashley's apartment.
- **Tip-off:** An enemy of Kenny Liu could tip off the crew about a link between the suicide and some shady dealings in the casino. It could even be K9, seeking to put more pressure on Kenny while possibly setting a trap for the crew. The tip could lead to the crime scene or the casino.
- **Mystical source:** Visions or omens revealed to a crew member (perhaps someone walking by the hotel) could indicate that dark forces are at work at the Royal Plaza, perhaps hinting to the nature of the Mechanical Bird. This could lead to the crime scene or the hotel reception.
- **Invitation from Kenny Liu:** If a crew member has death-defying powers (like Post-Mortem) or has gained a reputation as a miracle worker (like Declan L'Estrange), Kenny Liu may be interested in them as a way to escape Death. He'll have his Chief of Security, Cooper, contact this crew member and offer to do business, giving the crew a chance to snoop behind the scenes. Such a meeting would begin at the casino and move on to the Box if Cooper gets the right impression, but could take a bad turn if anyone was caught investigating the Ashley Lind death.

DEPTH 1: BLOOD, GLITZ, AND COGWHEELS

The Royal Plaza Hotel is a historic downtown building that has been a center of revelry and entertainment for the City's socio-economic elite for almost a century. More recently, about a decade ago, it was purchased as a part of a hotel chain deal by then up-and-coming hotel and casino magnate, Kenny Liu. The hotel towers over an open marble plaza, spans over multiple city blocks and is forty stories tall. Its spacious ground floor holds the reception, service area, and the luxurious Royal Plaza Casino.

THE CRIME SCENE

The rain falls heavily from the overcast heights of the Royal Plaza Hotel, washing over the marble plaza at the front, swirling with blood and gore. Like the rain, so did Ashley Lind fall the distance from the light-bulb-studded letters at the top, crashing into the hard ground. What was she thinking, in those last moments, as she was plummeting to her death? Was she hoping a miracle would happen and she'd fly away from there? Was she done with the world and readily accepted the end? Did she have someone special in her thoughts? No one will ever know. Soon, Ashley Lind will be an ever fading stain on the worn marble steps. Gamblers in tuxedos and evening gowns will walk all over her. And she'll be forgotten. Maybe that's what she wanted.

At the time of Ashley Lind's death, sometime between midnight and sunrise, the plaza in front of the Royal Plaza Hotel is all but forsaken. Except for a handful of vehicles and pedestrians in the outlining streets, hundreds of feet away, no one is there when she breaks through the roof of the glass canopy above the entrance and hits the ground.

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Ten minutes later, a small crowd gathers in the rain amidst giant floodlights and glass debris and someone calls the police. Thirty minutes later, the area is closed off by the precinct police, with detectives and a forensics team following suit. The crowd grows bigger and bigger, media teams arrive, and the police orders the casino and hotel to call it a night, sending guests to their homes or hotel rooms. Pedestrian traffic in and out of the hotel is diverted to other entrances. By dawn, the body is already at the morgue and cleaners are scrubbing off the blood in an area delimited by police tape. A beat officer stands guard, ready to collect additional witness reports. Sometime during all that, the crew might arrive at the scene.

Depending on their time of arrival, the crew can find the following individuals hanging around:

- **Detective Johnny Nicholson**, a forensics specialist; a brusque, sturdy, middle-aged man who grunts, growls, and barks more than he talks. He would share the forensic details of the case with anyone who has the authority or some whiskey.
- **Detective Farrah Enkidu** (if she's not a PC), a local detective who is equally rough around the edges as her co-worker, and seems to nervously exchange banter with Det. Nicholson, which does little to hide her heavy heart. She suspects foul play and is more inclined to investigate the case than others in her department, but lacking any evidence, her hands are tied.
- **A hodge-podge of eyewitnesses**, most of whom have seen nothing and are just succumbing to a macabre need to be close to the drama. One witness, Macy Kraus, saw the moment of the fall and can confirm the time and the fact that Ms. Lind was not screaming.

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- **Beat officers** patrolling and watching the potential crime scene (use the Beat Cops / Security Guards Danger on page 148). At your option, they may start with a status of *watchful-1*.

The body will remain in front of the hotel, covered in tarp until sometime before dawn when it will be moved to the morgue.

The deceased is a dark-haired, white female, lean, in her late 20s to mid 30s.

She was wearing a **beautiful yet inexpensive evening gown** made of strangely shaped golden sequins (reminiscent of cogwheels).

Her body came crashing through the glass canopy hanging over the hotel entrance. **She died from the impact.**

A careful investigation would reveal **bruising around her wrists**, as if she was restrained by force (but there is no usable DNA).

There is a **concealed loaded pistol** tucked in a holster on her thigh.

Stashed in **a hidden pocket** at the back of the dress, there are her driver's license (identifying her as Ashley Lind) and a few bank notes.

At the crime scene:

One witness, an elderly gambler named **Raymond Frank**, said he noticed Lind inside the casino that night and that she was alone (this was during the heist).

Some of the **golden sequins** from Ashley's dress can be found here.

Policemen say there is nothing on the roof indicating a struggle.

The police think it was suicide, but they don't know for sure.

There was no major event happening at the hotel or the casino.

BEYOND THE MIST

Anyone using their Mythos to **Look Beyond the Mist** could discern a lot of mythical activity around the case, although the earlier this occurs in the investigation, the more vague you should be about what the symbolism truly means.

- **Ashley Lind, Rift of the Mechanical Bird,** is represented by golden cogwheels, precious stones, and copper springs all shifting in an ever-changing array and taking different shapes and forms and echoing beautiful harmonies (she's a mechanical mimic).
- A ruler, such as **a king or an emperor**, represents **Kenny Liu** and his power and influence. As the original story relates to the Emperor of China, you may want to incorporate Chinese symbolism of royalty, such as the color yellow.
- The ruler has a watchful and dangerous **Chinese dragon** in his service: Carlton Cooper, Chief of Security.
- **The presence of Death** hangs over this case, but while Death seems to take a special interest in it, its involvement is unclear. Its representative, if you wish to reveal him, is a vicious black three-headed dog (K9, the Rift of Cerberus).

As a surprising twist, characters who can usually contact the spirits of the dead cannot contact the spirit of Ashley Lind around her body, at the place of her death, or at her grave. Her spirit seems to simply not be there. Read more under **Aftermath** (page 247).

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THE HOTEL RECEPTION

Looking at the reception hall of the Royal Plaza Hotel, you wouldn't know anyone had died just a short distance out the doors. High mirror ceilings and walls refract the luxurious chandeliers into a sea of crystals and gold. Sparkling marble floors echo the art deco glory. Mellow jazz music is playing, lulling you into intoxicated relaxation. Only when your gazes descend to eye level do you notice the hosts of guests accosting the reception desks. Even more guests can be found drinking in the nearby lobby and bar, where the sounds of the live band mix with clinking cocktail glasses.

At the reception, for at least a day after the incident, **the staff is struggling to contain the commotion**. The reception desks are flooded with in-person and phone inquiries about the suicide outside (as the hotel has already labelled the event). Anyone trying to approach the staff during that time will find them *overrun-by-guests-2*.

The security team is closely monitoring the place, with *security guards* and *security cameras* covering the floor. Anyone snooping around who is not a guest will be escorted out, while guests will be warned and asked to return to their room. The security team will protect the interests of the hotel, rejecting any inquisitive persons short of a detective with a police warrant. All access to the casino and other areas inside the hotel is strictly limited to staff and guests.

Security camera footage from that night does not show Cooper apprehending Lind.

A professional analysis of the footage will show that it was tampered with and may even reveal it was overwritten with footage from another point in time.

The staff and guests at the reception know very little, but cross-referencing their stories could reveal valuable details:

There was no major event happening at the hotel or the casino.

One or two guests can claim to have seen Ashley Lind at the casino on the night of her death.

One guest has seen her enter the Box with a tall dark-skinned man in an expensive black suit.

Asked for identifying features, the same guest will recall something like a snake embroidered on the man's suit.

If pushed to recall more details, the guest will say Lind seemed distressed, **"like a bird in a cage"**.

If approached indirectly, staff members may unwittingly identify this person as Carlton Cooper, Chief of Security.

A friendly or justice-seeking staff member or guest may help the crew to sneak into the casino or inside the hotel.

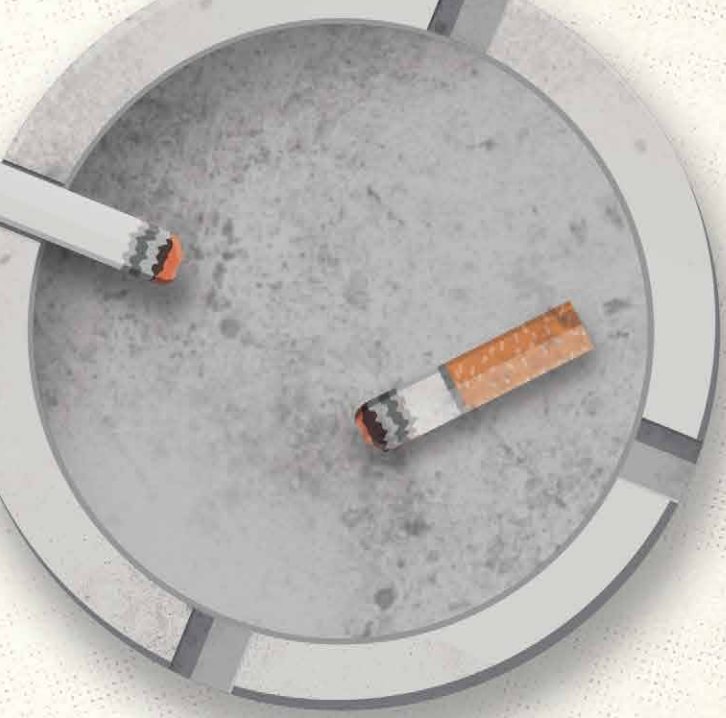
GOLDEN GEARS

Ashley's Mythos allowed her to shift mechanical parts inside of her to look and sound like other people. The illusion was never perfect: Ashley was Touched but was far too distracted by the everyday world to focus on the mysteries of her Mythos. Still, the parts that shifted and cranked inside her were real, and like with any delicate contraption, gears, pins, and springs popped out of place when handled with force.

Ashley's altercation with Cooper and Kenny Liu left a trail of clockwork pieces all over the Royal Plaza Hotel. It leads from the casino men's room where Cooper apprehended her to the Box, up the elevator, and to Kenny Liu's private suite. It ends at the crime scene below, where her body hit the marble floor and some of her parts scattered. The Mist may mask these as golden sequins from her dress, but a meticulous awakened investigator can spot the difference.

The best use of this detail is as a sporadically recurring motif that hints at what happened. Don't let the crew trace it all the way to Kenny Liu and give away the mystery. Instead, drop it as a sign now and then that they're on the right track - right before distracting the crew with new complications, as the Mist always does.

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There's a trail of golden sequins leading from the casino's men's room to the nearest security door. This is a pretty big clue, so if you'd like to challenge the crew, they could find the sequins in the janitor's mop or vacuum cleaner, not knowing where to place them in the casino.

If the crew has **legendary means of investigation**, such as psychometric abilities or visions of the past (like the character Flicker), they may be able to ascertain that Lind was here on the night of her death, that she was in distress, and that she made her way into the Box, accompanied by Chief of Security Cooper.

All data and footage from the casino's security cameras and other monitoring devices are stored in the Box, inaccessible from here (and as mentioned later, it was also edited like the footage from the reception area).

THE CASINO

As news of the gruesome death outside spread, the casino staff slowly and reluctantly closed all bets at the tables. The guests left, leaving this glittering hall of exhilaration, occasional victory, and certain demise to stand in silence. But not for long; tomorrow night this place will again be packed wall-to-wall with compulsive risk-takers, ladies of luck, strung out fools, naive beginners, and yes, some drunk on the rush of a winning streak. Nothing can stop this money-making machine, least of all a poor bird caught in its gears.

The Royal Plaza Casino is a fine exemplar of the magic of the gambling industry. Designed by the best, it lures you into the action with bright lights, sparkling drinks, the cheers of the crowd, and the sounds of roulettes, slot machines, and shouting card dealers.

There are three security doors (two on either side of the casino and one at the center) leading into guard rooms and corridors that converge at the Box. Each such door is guarded at all times by security guards (use the Security Guards Danger, page 148) and a sophisticated alarm system (use the Security System Danger, page 150).

On the day following Ashley Lind's death, the casino is empty. This allows for some time to investigate:

On the subsequent night and every night thereafter, the Royal Plaza casino is open for business but its security staff is *on-edge-1* trying to make sure the night goes by uneventfully. Two of the regulars may recall useful details:

- **Rhonda Giles** is a high-society high-roller, a top-of-the-line risk management specialist who gambles as an outlet, usually dressed in a daring black number and sporting a martini. While she is burning through her hard-earned money, Rhonda may be inclined to share information about the night of the incident at the casino, but she will try to counter-investigate the crew and later sell the information to Cooper (use the Reporter or Social Butterfly Dangers, page 144).
- **Billy Cash** (Jin Chan, Chinese Money Toad spirit) is a flashy thrill-seeking gambler from the southern US who works the casino in a lime green sequin jacket and a pair of shades hiding glowing red eyes. He will let the crew know he has something for them, if they care to bet on it. Every time they win, he will let loose an important detail. You can play the gamble as an **Investigate** move using the PCs gambling tags or, if you want to up the stakes, use Billy Cash as a Danger.

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Note that Chief of Security Cooper and his team are anticipating someone would be snooping around; if anyone scores 7-9 on their Investigate roll, use the counter question option to allow Cooper to find out important details about the crew.

Here's what the casino patrons can reveal:

Ashley Lind was at the blackjack table as a "floater", hanging around and pretending to be a friend of one of the players.

Ashley's eyes were following a middle-aged man in a mustard-colored suit and big sunglasses, a known sleazebag named **Marty Brooks** (could lead to Marty's place).

Marty was representing a professional named **Théo Blanc** who won a nice sum and cashed out soon thereafter, uncharacteristically.

As soon as Théo Blanc and Marty left their table, Ashley made her way to the mens' room.

She was forcibly dragged out of there by Chief of Security Cooper moments later and walked into the Box.

Billy Cash knows Théo Blanc and can point the crew to his usual haunt, the **Ace of Clubs** (Théo's club). As for Rhonda, she spent the night with Blanc and found an *Ace of Clubs casino chip* (temporary tag) in his jeans back pocket as she was going through his stuff. She hasn't seen him since.

BILLY CASH (JIN CHAN) ★

LOSING STREAK 5 **HURT OR SUBDUE 1**

- **Okay, Okay, Maybe I Saw Something:** Every time Billy Cash takes a status on his *losing streak* spectrum, he reveals one clue from the list above. When the *losing streak* spectrum maxes out, he reveals everything he knows.
- **Lucky Toad:** When Billy Cash enters the scene or as a hard move, give him *lucky-1*.
- **Sticky Prosperity:** When Billy Cash takes a status that would affect his luck, gambling, or money (including *losing streak* statuses), reduce the tier of the status by 1.
- **Paranoid:** When you try to attack or threaten Billy Cash, he has already signaled security (or the cops). Create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards.
- Win someone's money in a gamble (*a-little-over-budget-1*, *overspending-2*, or *financial-risk-3*)
- Looks at his hand, then sets the cards down, eyes flickering in red





ASHLEY'S PLACE

This is where she lived: a crummy studio apartment tucked under the railway in a rundown neighborhood. This place has all the signs of a lost soul: dilapidated walls, dripping faucet, empty fridge, and an eviction notice from six months ago that was never acted on. What happened to you, Ashley? Why did you fall so low?

Ashley Lind lived in the Blue-Collar Residential, in a small apartment she could hardly afford. She survived mostly thanks to her petty scams, using her abilities to steal money from strangers.

Profiling Ashley or **asking around** could reveal she lived mostly on her own; friends and lovers came and went. Though she lacked the clarity to see it, Ashley didn't really know who she was. Perhaps having the ability to become what others wanted her to be made it difficult to truly find her own identity.

Searching the apartment (or the computer) would reveal **a folder with incriminating photos** of Ashley with her victims, which may have been used to blackmail her. In each photo, Ashley looks completely different, and in some cases it's hard to recognize her (thanks to her mimic powers). These are the photos Marty Brooks used to entrap Ashley, promising to give her the originals and delete all copies if she helped him with the casino heist.

There are **golden mechanical gears** in the shower and on her bed covers.

Call records could reveal that Ashley made single calls to many various numbers (her fraud victims) but numerous calls to two numbers: one at Marty's place and the other a private number (calls from her sister, see sidebar).

THE REAL NIGHTINGALE

Ashley's older sister, a school teacher named Jenny Applebaum (she changed her last name), was Kenny Liu's real Nightingale. Kenny Liu never cared enough about these women's personal lives to connect the dots, but Chief of Security Cooper had suspected the two nightingales were related.

Jenny's powers have made her a potential threat to Anatoli's (Hades) operation because she could prevent people from dying and ward off Death and its agents. It's possible that she was murdered for that and that she now exists in Hades. Perhaps she made herself disappear because she started investigating the Avatar's operation, and if so, maybe she used Kenny Liu as a platform to learn more about K9 and his superiors. She could even be the same person as Perry Kennedy, once Anatoli's wife and his only love (see Anatoli's History, page 177).

If you choose to incorporate Jenny in the story, her involvement may open up a can of worms much bigger than the scope of this case. Ashley Lind may have been searching for her sister when the heist took place, so she may have had additional motives unknown to any of the other characters (perhaps except Cooper). You can drop some vague clues about the identity of Ashley's sister, such as a photo of the two at Ashley's place; leave the big reveal about her to Cooper, Kenny Liu, or K9 at the end of the case.



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MARTY'S PLACE

Marty's dump takes up three store spaces under a cheap tenement. Painted letters on the frontispiece read "Brooks Cleaning and Maintenance Co.", but you can see through the paint that the business was renamed, more than once. No one in this neighborhood would trust Marty Brooks as far as they can throw him. It takes a real scumbag to build a reputation like that.

Marty Brooks worked out of a makeshift office doubling as a moldy apartment and masquerading each month as a different company. The three rooms he rented out are big enough to store all the crap he accumulated from various fake gigs, such as exterminator gear or a janitor's cart. One of the rooms has a desk, some file cabinets, a sofa to sleep on, and a shower. It seems fortune did not favor Marty lately.

All of the above can be seen through the broken blinds on the windows. Since no one is around, breaking in would entail picking the lock or busting through the door, which may alert the neighbors. Unless disarmed, **a silent alarm** will flash a red light in the office, but it does very little else (it certainly does *not* call the cops).

Good detective work or accounting skills could reveal Marty for what he is: a con man. The **straw companies**, the **disguises**, and the **shady but clever bookkeeping** in his cabinets all show he's an expert in fraud. It can also reveal Marty had some windfall in the past but that his spending spirals out of control every time, sending him back to crime.

Checking Marty's police records shows he's never been incarcerated for more than a couple of months; the police just can't seem to make allegations stick.

There is a photo on Marty's desk of Linda Brooks, his ex-wife. Public records or a quick phone call to her number can show she owns a house in the suburbs, which is currently serving as Marty's hideout.

DEPTH 2: A HEIST GONE WRONG

INSIDE THE HOTEL

Up here, the dimly-lit corridors stretch silently forever. On the higher floors, the fancy red carpet muffles the guests' steps and luggage trolleys. Overpriced art, gilded mirrors, and marble tables with mint bowls line the walls. Waiters emerge from hidden elevators, pushing silver room service carts with gourmet delicacies and chilled champagne, reminding you that somewhere below, folks are working hard to produce all this affluence.

The hotel and its rooms can provide very little to further the investigation. If the crew questions the guests, they can reveal the same information available at the hotel reception and at the casino (**Rhonda Giles** and **Jerry Chan** can be found in their rooms until the night after Ashley's death, when they hit the casino). However, access to the Box or Kenny Liu's private suite is only available through the hotel and its security systems (although the Box is also accessible through the casino, and boasts even tighter security). If the crew got this far, they also have easier access to **the roof**.

SECURITY!

The main stake of a scene inside the hotel is whether the crew will clash with security or manage to elude them. **Kenny Liu's private security team** is all over the hotel like a cheap suit. There are dozens of them on standby, from the roof to the casino.

- The hotel is equipped with **a sophisticated security system,** both computerized (or electric, if you are playing True Noir) and monitored by security personnel (use the Security System Danger, page 150, but setting off the alarm alerts the security squad as below).
- If the alarm goes off, **a squad of Kenny Liu's private security** (use the SWAT Team / Elite Security Danger, page 150) will show up within minutes and escort the crew out of the hotel, with or with-

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out their consent. As a policy set by Cooper, they won't hesitate to injure anyone who resists in order to deter them from any recurring attempts.

- If the squad faces significant resistance, **Carlton Cooper** will show up as support.
- As a last resort, **the police** may be called in (which may alert the Gatekeepers, depending on the mythical nature of the report and the degree of strain to the Mist in the area).
- **The police have no warrant to search any part of the hotel**; Kenny Liu's lawyer, **Trish Maloney** (use the Corporate Lawyer Danger, page 142) will make sure it stays that way, denying any involvement and requiring proof. She will also arrange for detaining orders for any crew members caught in the hotel.

THE ROOF

Up above, the wind is blowing wildly. The exposed roof is surrounded by a stunning panoramic view of the City, accentuated by either a colorful sunset or overhanging clouds and persistent rain. The giant flashing Royal Plaza sign, made out of hundreds of light bulbs, towers over the side of the roof facing the plaza. Vents, air ducts, and AC units dot the naked surface, as well as half a dozen stairwell and elevator entrances.

Access to the roof is limited to staff, going through service stairs, elevators, and corridors. Unless any crew members can fly or magically transport themselves there, the crew will have to break through some security measures to get here. A few security guards may be watching the roof and the plaza for any snoops (especially if the crew had it easy so far).

The famous golden gears / sequins show Ashley Lind was here on the night of her death.

Cooper, Kenny Liu, and K9 were also on the roof that night but it will be much harder to place them there. Divination can help, with Cooper being the easiest to scry and K9 the hardest.

No one pushed Ashley Lind off the roof. Kenny Liu threatened her with his gun and used his commanding Emperor voice to urge her to do it. No shots were fired, so forensics would come up inconclusive. Only power from beyond the Mist or deduction based on further evidence can expose what happened here.

THE BOX

If you get on the bad side of the house – and make no mistake, that includes winning – burly security guards in tight suits and mirrorshades will walk you down a luxurious hallway lit in red. The next room looks more like an interrogation room than a VIP lounge. Behind the one-way mirror, you can only assume, lies a dark room lit only by screens, where the best minds in fraud detection and casino security watch over Kenny Liu's money.

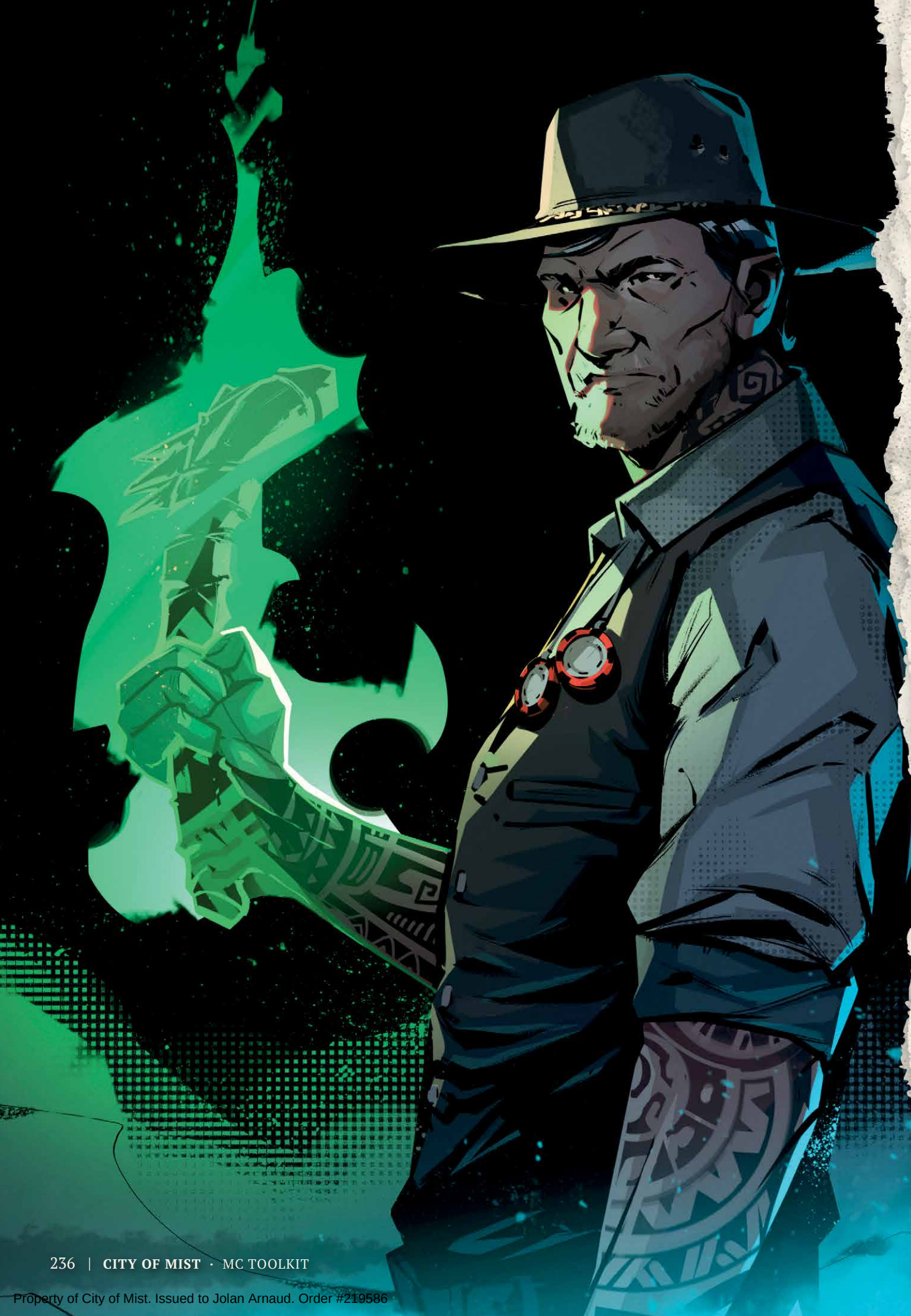
The Box is the security hub of the casino, holding the command center, the vault, and the security team's facilities. To break into the Box undetected is essentially as challenging as robbing the casino, but if the crew can pull off such a heist, much may be revealed.

Use the hotel security Dangers given on page 234 to represent the Box, but update the Security System Danger's spectrums to *alarm:2* and *override:5* and give it this custom move:

> **Cutting-edge:** When Security System enters the scene, give it *cutting-edge*. The MC can renew this tag as a soft move after a player makes a move without it.

The Elite Security in the Box starts with *watchful-1*. If relevant, security and fraud analysts are monitoring the casino, its entrances, and the hotel perimeter at all times (use the Detective / Investigator Danger, page 148). Note that if anyone moves any money or chips belonging to the casino, Cooper's Dragon powers make him aware of it no matter where he is.

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The command center holds the security camera footage from the night of the incident, which has been overwritten with some everyday footage. If the crew can get the tapes to a professional analyst or a Rift with the right powers, they can extract the original footage, showing everything that happened that night except for Kenny Liu's private suite (no cameras) and what happened on the roof (which was out of the cameras' field of view). This also reveals Marty Brooks and Théo Blanc's involvement if it was not already revealed.

In Chief of Security Cooper's office, there are photos of Ashley Lind in the casino (taken during one of the heist team's dry runs a few days before the heist) and records of Théo's club and apartment (not his current hideout). One of Lind's photos is circled with a red marker with a scribble: "Songbird?"

In the private elevator going up from the Box to Kenny Liu's private suite, **tiny bronze and gold gears and pins** can be found (or are they golden sequins?).

THEO'S CLUB

It wasn't easy finding the Ace of Clubs. Slipping through the back wall of the sweet old couple's pantry takes you to a speakeasy no bigger than a hotel room, snugly fitted with a bar and two round poker tables. Despicable unshaved gents and sultry women lay your soul bare with their gazes, trying to pick up your tell through the curling smoke.

Hidden in the basement of an Old Quarter townhouse, the Ace of Clubs is a private club for professional gamblers and a favorite haunt of Théo Blanc. Théo is not here, but the owner, **Marla Costa** (the Ace of Clubs Card Soldier from Alice in Wonderland) knows where he is hiding (a stadium by the Industrial Zone) and from who (Cooper, who will be coming to wrap up loose ends now that Théo is a witness in a potential murder case).

Marla is a wiry and intense woman in her 30s, usually sporting a tank top, jeans, high heels, and a leather jacket. Few notice it, but her profile is remarkably thin. The last thing Marla wants to do is give away her pal and occasional lover; she and a few of the less savory patrons will throw punches at anyone looking for the handsome gambler.

Marla's Danger is given below (she's a Hired Thug with a Warrior Mythos Power Set, page 156). For her crew, use the Hired Thugs Danger (page 147).

MARLA COSTA (CARD SOLDIER) ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 THREATEN 4

- **Card Manipulations:** Marla can move cards without touching them, even within a sealed deck. When she plays cards, give her *the-cards-are-stacked-in-my-favor-3*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Trained combatant:** Increase the tier of mundane physical harm or subdual statuses caused by Marla Costa's moves by one (already factored into the moves below).
- **Unbeatable:** When Marla Costa enters the scene, give her *parry with club*, *incredibly thin profile*, and *light as paper*.
- **Legendary Clubsmanship:** When you attack Marla Costa, you first take *blackjacked-3*.
- Bully (*threatened-2*), beat up with a baton (*broken-ribs-4*), or throw a card at an exposed artery (*bleeding-out-4*)
- Warn someone to mind their own business, or else

MARTY'S HIDEOUT

That lowlife Brooks chose a nice place to lay low: a five-bedroom house in Happyville, which he probably bought with money he swindled out of old ladies. Now it's listed under his ex-wife's name. You wonder how he was able to slip the casino security that night. Is he going to pull the same stunt here?

When the crew arrives at Linda Brooks' suburban house, Marty will try to make a run for it by foot through backyards and private homes (he knows Linda's car is compromised). Use the Con Artist Danger (page 145) for Marty, but start him off with

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three-steps-ahead-3 thanks to his knack for leaving before trouble starts. If the crew misses one too many moves, **Deny Them Something They Want** and make Marty disappear and skip town.

Marty is a balding middle-aged man in a distasteful cheap suit and large shades. If caught, he will try to con his way out, but threat of physical violence will make him spill the beans fast enough. Note that being off the grid, **Marty still doesn't know about Ashley's death**. Hearing the news will fill him with genuine sorrow and he will burst into tears. For all his lies, the middle-aged con man had a soft spot for Ms. Lind. The crew may also be able to guilt him into helping them.

Marty will share the heist plan and how it all went smoothly until he noticed Cooper was on to them.

He will admit to walking out on Ashley after he had sensed that something was amiss. He saw her walking to the men's room to replace Cooper as planned, but had no way of warning her without exposing himself.

He will blame Théo Blanc for selling them out, pointing the crew to Théo's club or even Théo's hideout, depending on your cinematic considerations.

DEPTH 3: THE RUSH TO HUSH

With the details of the heist revealed and the kidnapping of Ashley Lind by the casino private security all but laid bare, the main question on the table is "**Why was Ashley Lind kidnapped?"**. Besides Kenny Liu and K9 (who may yet be inaccessible to the crew), Théo Blanc and Chief of Security Cooper are the only two who know the answer.

THEO'S HIDEOUT

The stadium is remarkably quiet when it's empty, silent except for the rain tapping on tens of thousands of plastic seats. The bright flood lights above the field make it hard to look into the tiers. Somewhere below, a small door leads to a dingy caretaker's apartment, but he won't be there until the season starts. That's where Théo is supposedly crashing. It shouldn't be too tough to bring him in. So why do you have a bad feeling about this?

The stadium where Théo is hiding until he can safely get out of town is located somewhere at the edge of the Industrial Zone. It's up to you to determine whether it's abandoned, off-season, active but not right now, or actually hosting a game when the crew arrives. Théo has been hiding in the on-site apartment (a cell would be a more appropriate term) of the stadium caretaker, who owes big money to Marla Costa. The window of the apartment peers out into the stadium. There are other rooms, such as broadcasting rooms, restrooms, locker rooms, stairwells, etc. within the stadium building – all excellent locations for the bloody assassination chase that is about to ensue.

If the crew is looking for Théo here, then so is Cooper. Since Théo may testify how he betrayed Ashley Lind to Cooper, thus linking Cooper to Ashley's death, he's a liability the Royal Plaza Casino can't afford. Shortly before or after the crew arrives, Cooper or a hitman he hired will show up too

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(use the Hitman Danger, page 147, or use Cooper's Danger with the necessary spectrums and moves from the Hitman Danger).

However, Théo knows he's in trouble and has planned a gambit of his own. He has the apartment rigged with explosives (*mortally-wounded-5*) in case someone comes after him (crew included), and he is hunkered down somewhere in the stands, watching for pursuers and waiting to make his move. The *heavy rain* and *flood lights* (as well as possibly the *roaring crowd*) make it very hard to locate threats around the stands. By the time the crew locates Théo and the hitman, it may be too late.

If the crew does manage to apprehend Théo, they find the gambler – a boyish man in his 30s – soaked to the bone in a tracksuit and undershirt, a far cry from his dashing casino garb. Théo may reveal that Carlton Cooper caught him after a dry run of the planned heist and forced him to tell him about Marty and Ashley. He will describe Cooper as a 'freak', who somehow knew where Théo hid a few chips he stole from the casino. Finally, he'll describe Cooper's immediate interest in Ashley's mimicry and disguise skills, and how he threatened Théo into betraying Marty and Ashley. With that, Théo confirms that Cooper's kidnapping of Ashley Lind was not merely the casino taking disciplinary steps – it was a premeditated crime.

CHASING COOPER

Cooper steps out of the car, smoke coiling around him like a slippery scaled tail. His jaw clenched, he cuts through the smoke, inhaling it without flinching. As his arm comes up, holding a high-end assault pistol, the embroidery on his black suit starts glowing. Bullets start flying everywhere; but what you should really be watching for is the smoke drawing into his nostrils and the sparks flying out of his mouth...

Carlton Cooper is the focal point of the case. While Kenny Liu is the vile Emperor who decreed Ashley Lind's kidnapping and death, Chief of Security Cooper was his draconic executor, taking care of everything needed to first snatch the Mechanical Bird and then hide his master's crimes. The Emperor is shielded by Cooper, his battery of lawyers, and friends in high places. To reach him and to find out the final details of the case, the crew should first apprehend Carlton Cooper (unless they explicitly decide to tackle Kenny Liu first and find another way to get to him).

Luckily for the crew, the old dragon does get around:

- If he was involved in or even watching the showdown at the stadium (Théo's hideout), the crew may want to pursue him there and then.



- The crew may try to follow him in his private life, such as when he leaves the casino to blow off some steam in a downtown bar.
- You can have Cooper attack the crew (in his hit-man mode described above) and then flee.

If Cooper thinks the crew will pose a problem in the future, he will try to take them out (and bet on Kenny's lawyers to prove self-defense). However, if the crew proves too difficult to handle, he will attempt to flee. Depending on the outcome of the conflict, Cooper may do any or all of the following:

- Confirm the information gathered by the crew thus far
- Complete the puzzle by telling the crew about Kenny Liu's sickness, his deal with Death, and the real Nightingale
- Laugh cynically, telling the crew that they have no way of proving Ashley was murdered since Kenny only convinced her to jump
- Provide the crew with access to Kenny Liu's private suite, such as the codes to override the elevator in the Box
- Kidnap one of the crew members, or someone important to them
- Retreat to Kenny Liu's private suite

CARLTON COOPER, CHIEF OF SECURITY (THE DRAGON) ★★★

Carlton Cooper is a stern, gray-haired, middle-aged black man. A graduate of elite military training, he has served his country for over a decade and then moved to a career in private security. His guardianship of his clients' greatest treasures awakened the Dragon in him and, while he largely remained preoccupied with his duties, he is learning to rely on his legend more and more every day and has already gained a reputation as the City's foremost casino security expert.

HURT OR SUBDUE 5 IMPLICATE 4

- **Ultimate Predator:** When Cooper enters the scene, give him *alert-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Servant of the Emperor:** When someone tries to sway Cooper against Kenny Liu for the first time, give him *subservient-5* (he is under Kenny Liu's control).
- **Hoard Keeper:** When you take something of value from the casino, Cooper knows where it is in town.
- **Slippery Scales:** When Cooper takes a physical harm or subdual status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Bodyguards:** When Cooper takes a status his bodyguards can protect him from, the bodyguards (Elite Security) take the status instead.
- Hide, destroy, or tamper with evidence (*lack of evidence*)
- Keep the private security team efficient (*efficient-2* or remove 2 negative tactical status tiers or 2 impeding story tags)
- Spot a greedy character and offer money (*greased-3*)
- Use martial arts to restrain or hurt someone (*restrained-3* or *painful-injury-3*) or fire accurate bursts with an expensive assault pistol (*multiple-gun-wounds-3* to multiple targets)
- Breathe fire, exhausting himself (*burns-4* to everyone in front of him, giving himself *exhausted-2*)
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they arrive) (create a new Danger: Kenny Liu's Private Security, or increase its collective size if they're already here)
- Analyze the scene astutely, slowly piecing together the crew's next move
- In the hotel or the casino, vanish into a service elevator or back corridor
- Call Kenny Liu's private security (they're on their way)
- When in trouble, stop everything and inhale deeply (preparing to blow fire)

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COOPER'S DODGE CHARGER (RELIC) ★★★

CATCH OR OUTRUN 5 DECOMMISSION 4

- **Vehicle:** Cooper can emerge from the car as a soft move. This happens automatically when *decommission* is maxed out.
- **Fear the Dragon:** When you're on a frontal collision course with Cooper's Dodge Charger, you first take *chicken-4*, compelling you to swerve.
- **Burn the Road:** When Cooper's Dodge Charger enters the scene, give it *fast-2*. The MC can renew this status as a hard move.
- **Armored:** When Cooper's Dodge Charger takes a damaging status, reduce its tier by 2.
- Ram into a vehicle (*lose-control-3*), an obstacle (burn two obstacle tags), or a person (*multiple-fractures-4*)
- Race away into the night (hard move)
- Shake off pursuers with combat driving maneuvers
- Accelerate and leave a trail of smoke behind it



DEPTH 4: A DEATH OWED

Once the crew connects all the dots, it becomes clear that Kenny Liu pulled the trigger on the legendary power that made Ashley Lind jump to her death or, at the very least, that he was involved in her death and benefited from it.

The crew may have different plans for Kenny: they may wish to interrogate or interview him, capture him (and perhaps exact vengeance), or incriminate him and leave him to the cops (if they don't know about his powers). But how do you take down an emperor?

The final showdown with Kenny does not have to be a fight. It may very well be **an intense dialog** that will force him to confess, **a legal battle** to get him to pay for his sins, or **a heist** aimed at securing (or planting) evidence, bringing down his casino, or discovering who is pulling Kenny's strings. Use the security specifications in Depth 2 (page 234) to represent the challenges in getting to Kenny Liu's private suite.

KENNY LIU'S PRIVATE SUITE

Kenny Liu's private suite is a lavish residence of multiple open-plan spaces. Custom lighting accentuates the designer furniture and contemporary art that was thoughtfully placed here to create an impression of elegant power. Kenny Liu entertains guests in a lowered section of the suite, where plush sofas and a cocktail bar await. The unobstructed, full panoramic view of the City hits you with vertigo. The higher they go, the harder they fall.

When the crew arrives to face Kenny, the suite is surrounded by his private security force, with Cooper heading it (if he still can). Depending on circumstances, K9 may also be present, especially if he was the one who tipped the crew off or if the crew is starting to undermine his interests with the Emperor (see K9's Danger on page 182).

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FLOATING LOCATION

By default, Kenny Liu's private suite is located at the top floor of the hotel and it was there that Ashley Lind was taken before she was forced to jump to her death. However, if the crew somehow penetrates the hotel suite early in the case, you can choose to have Kenny's private suite be in his Downtown penthouse instead. In this variation, the hotel suite where the fateful meeting with Ashley Lind and K9 took place is a separate location from the penthouse, where Kenny Liu usually resides and where the crew finally finds him.

Kenny Liu is not going to roll over and give himself to the crew. He has survived worse enemies than them (or so he thinks). Just like when he aspired to escape Death (twice!), he's willing to use any means necessary to permanently rid himself of the crew and weather the Ashley Lind storm. If the opportunity presents itself, he will try to take command of a mentally vulnerable crew member and push the crew into fighting themselves, hoping to later spin a story and tack the Ashley Lind blame on the crew members.

Talking to Kenny Liu, the crew may learn about:

- Kenny Liu's history with Death, the real Nightingale, and Ashley Lind
- His botched gamble that Ashley Lind will be able to save him from Death and the price Death made him pay by sacrificing Ashley
- How he made Ashley Lind jump to her Death

At the apartment, the crew may find:

- The **cogwheel, springs, and pins** indicating Ashley Lind was forced to be there
- **Artifacts of death worshipping**, such as an incense holder made of a skull
- Medical files about his terminal disease

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KENNY LIU (THE EMPEROR) ★★★

Kenny Liu is a medium-height, fit Asian man in his 40s, usually wearing a designer suit in gray or black. He has an air of smugness and sophistication about him, but also a certain ruthlessness that comes from a feeling of superiority. He is a personification of the Emperor ideal, and he is very much used to things being done his way. Unfortunately, he does not embody the admirable qualities of the great emperors: he lacks a vision or a desire to serve something greater than himself, so he's been using his powers for nothing more than glorified self-indulgence.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 THREATEN 5 IMPLICATE 4

- **Mandate of Heaven:** When you attack or try to influence Kenny Liu in his presence, you first take *obedient-3*.
- **Make Me an Offer I Can't Refuse:** When you refuse Kenny Liu's offer, you are **Taking the Risk**.
- **Bodyguards:** When Kenny Liu takes a status his bodyguards can protect him from, the bodyguards (Elite Security) take the status instead.
- **Never Rest:** At the end of every downtime or as a hard move, Kenny Liu can give you *besmirched-reputation-2* or *wanted-2*, or create a new Danger to go after you (choose from Corporate Lawyer, Detective, Elite Security, or Hitman)
- **Relentless:** At the end of the scene, remove any statuses on Kenny Liu's *threaten* spectrum.
- Decree the will of the emperor, commanding absolute obedience (*obedient-3*)
- Pull out a hidden pistol and fire (*well-placed-shot-4)*
- Subtly and chillingly threaten someone
- Be suspiciously nice to someone

AFTERMATH

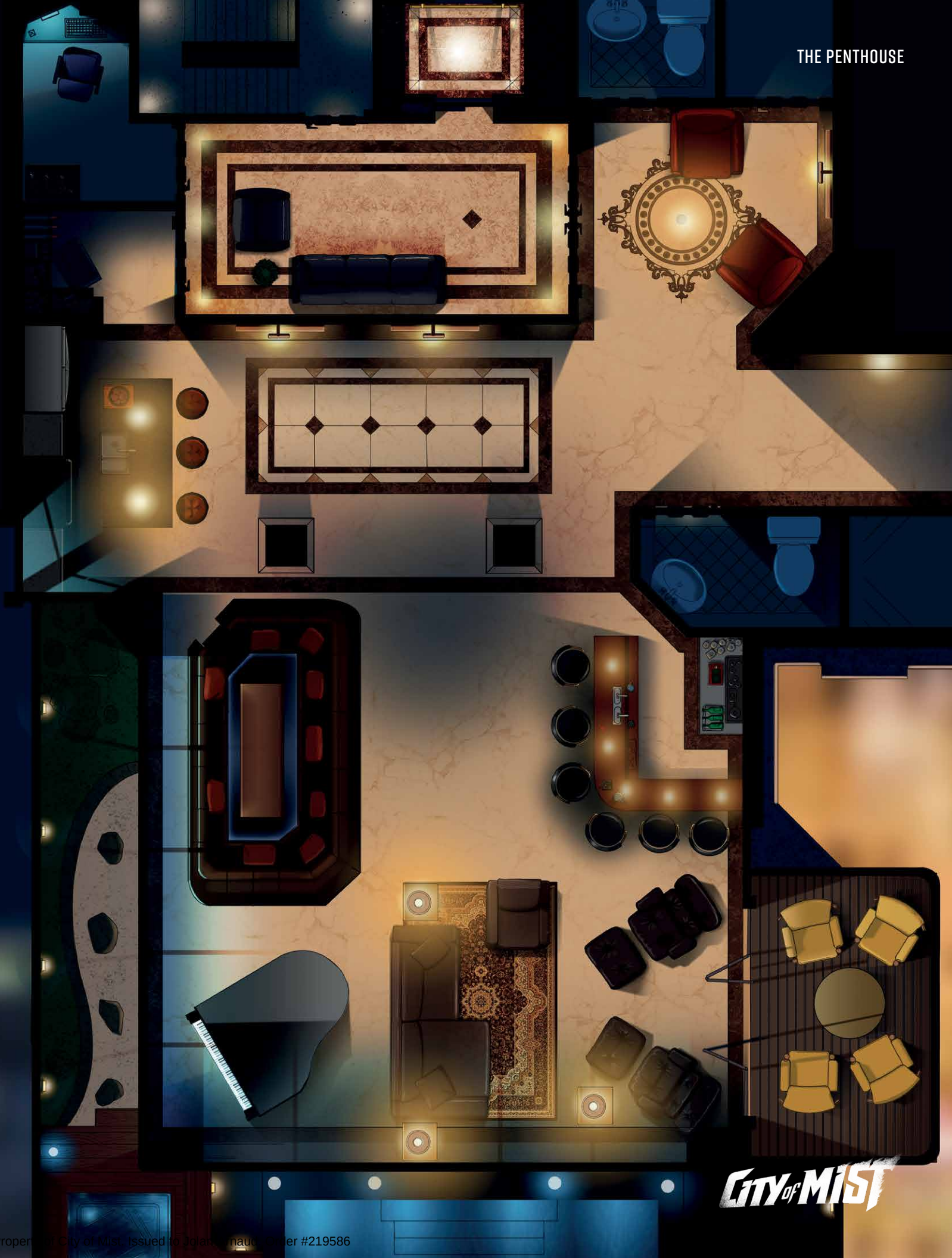
While the case can end in many different ways, here are a few points to consider before wrapping it up:

- **What is going to happen to Kenny Liu?** If he's dead, is he going to come back with the help of Death, or is it the ambrosia refineries for him (see page 179)? If he's in jail, what prevents him from simply walking out using his ability to command others? Or perhaps in jail he gains even more power or has an epiphany about what he should do with his life? If he is free, does he hold a grudge for the crew and continues to haunt them?
- **Where is Cooper at the end of all this?** If his involvement was purely due to Kenny Liu's hold on him, perhaps now he is a changed man. He could be interested in recruiting the crew or help them. Other powers in the Rift underworld may have noticed his capabilities and wish to hire him. And if the casino is finished, perhaps he will ascend to Borderlinehood.
- **Death, AKA Anatoli Vidales**, certainly has the crew on his radar after this. Whether or not K9 became directly involved with the crew, Death will want the threat removed. He may send his people to threaten the lead characters or their loved ones or offer them life beyond death.
- **Marty Brooks**, if he stayed around, could be interested in the crew's abilities and may have a few new heists to propose to them. Though unlikely, his love for self-gain may actually help him awaken and see the potential in Rifts.
- **The police** could take a special interest in the crew, following the unfolding of the investigation. From the beat officer on the street to the head honchos in command, each department may see the crew as a threat, as allies, or as both.
- **And what about Ashley Lind?** Is she really dead? Or has Death simply coveted the Mechanical Bird to himself? The crew members may very well see her again (and possibly her sister) in future cases related to Anatoli's operation. For now, a befitting ending shot could involve one of the crew members seeing someone that looks very much like Ashley Lind, only a little sadder, staring at them on the street as the downtown crowd billows all around… only to disappear in the stream of pedestrians moments later.

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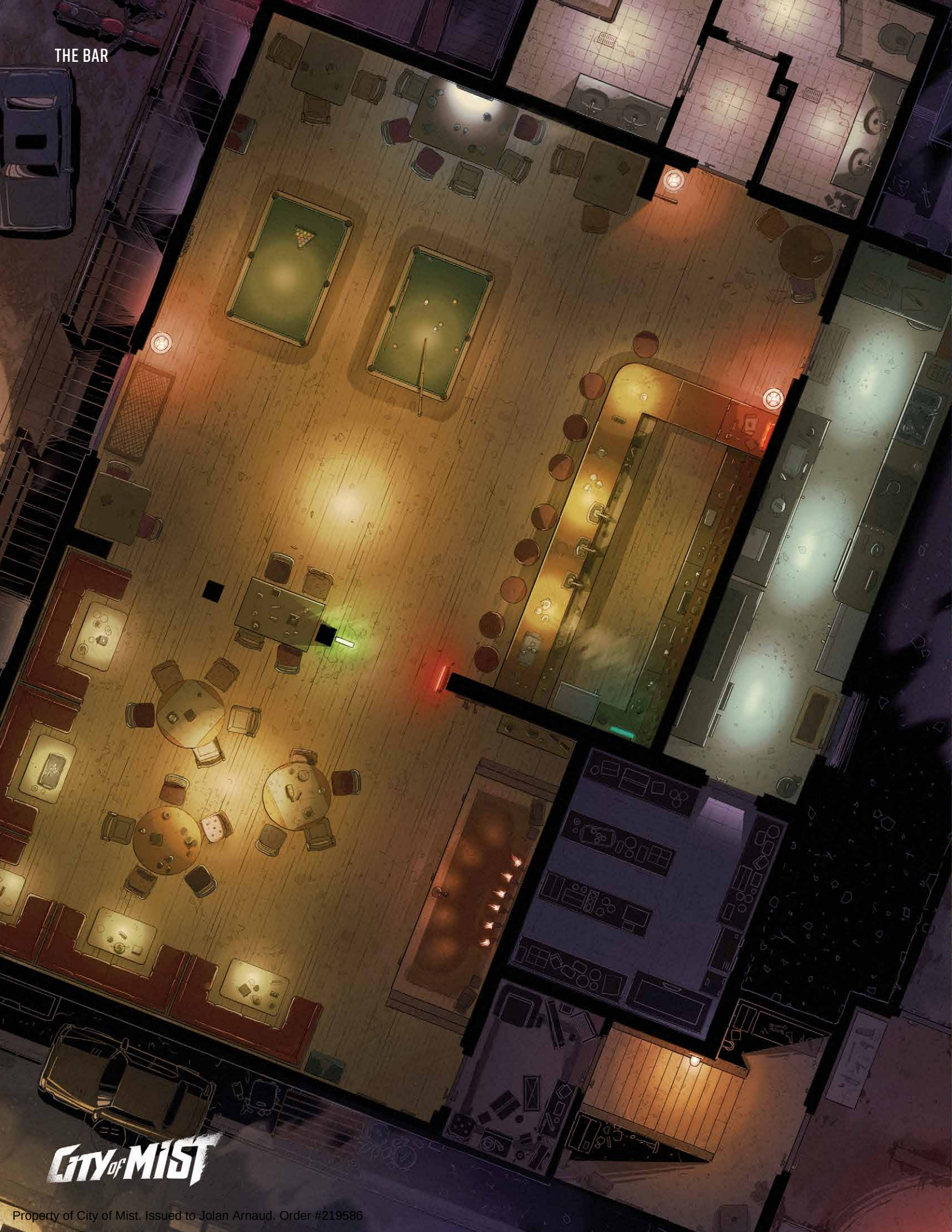
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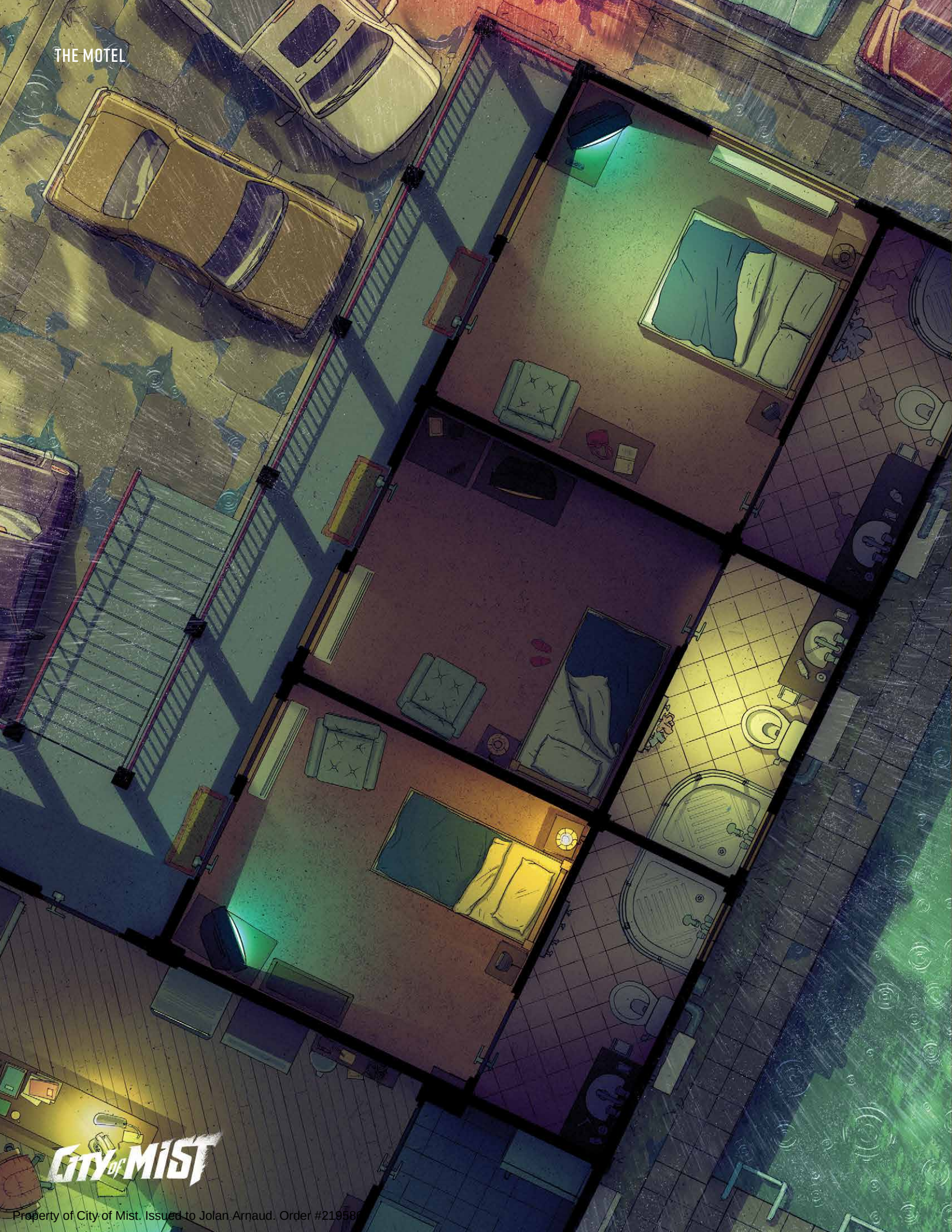
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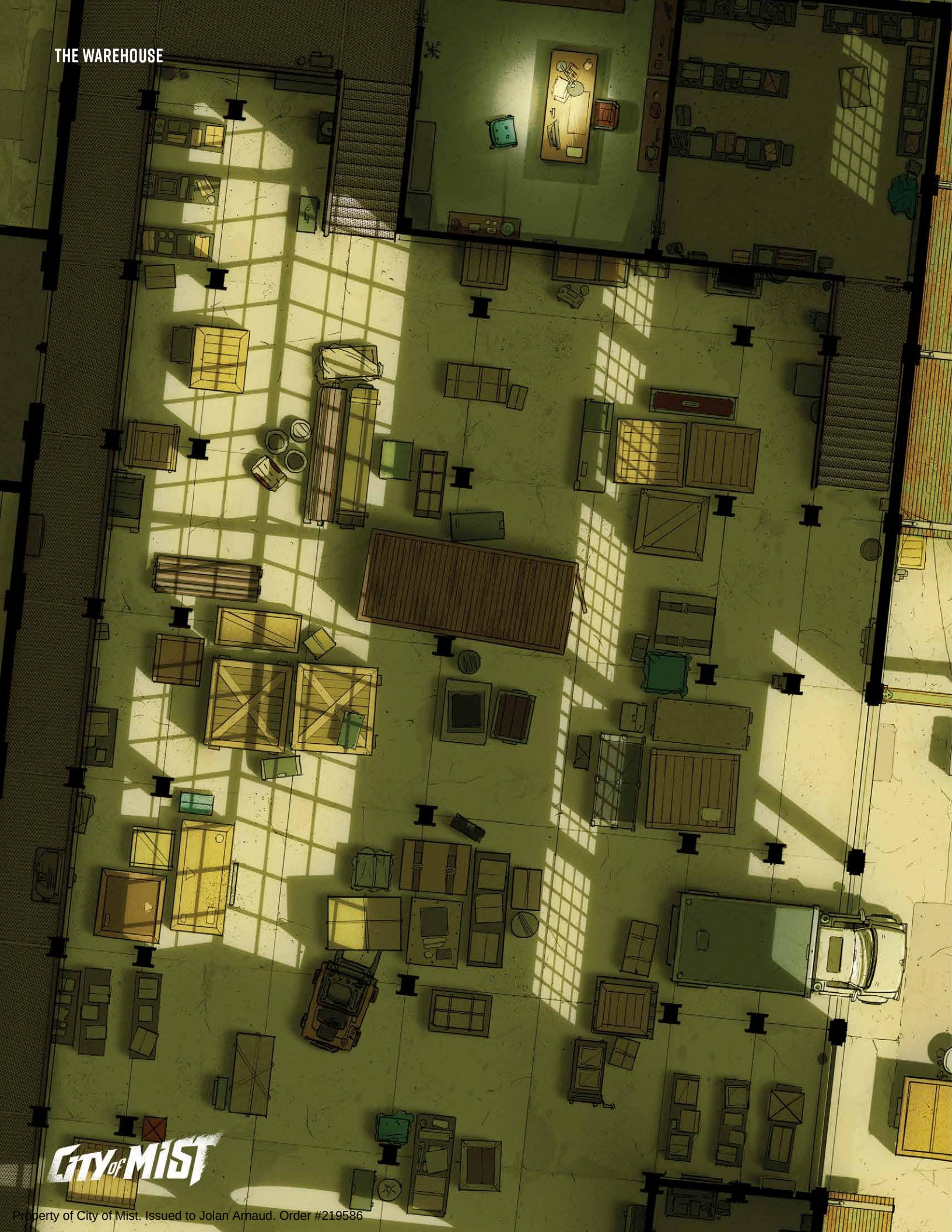
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