



T H E
V E I L

CYBERPUNK ROLEPLAYING
POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE



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ADDITIONAL THANKS

Kyle Simons for development editing and creating the MC tools for question based campaign play.

Jacob Rose for in-depth development editing of playbooks and mechanics.

Kate Bullock for an inclusivity statement and for feedback that lead to making the Sway move sing, a much more inclusive game and the coolest look any protagonist could hope for.

My eternal gratitude to the playtesters

Thanks to Amber Hutchison, Jonathan Gallant, Kyle Simons, David Wyble Jr, Thomas Minser, Jacob Rose, Red Scare, Jake Currier, Ryan MacKay, Taylor Hall, Lawrence Hatez, Andrew Fish, Jojo Allen, Bob Bersch, Michael Kennedy, Kate Bullock, Rob Deobald, Rachele Shelkey, Hannah McLean, Paolo Ian, Alex Dudka, Kai Poh, Ivan Tam, Nicholas Otomen Seoh, Edmund Wong, Joshua Nicholas Aeria, Navin Nathaniel Innasi, Luc Mahsun, Razzman Khaliff, James Ong, Ben "Flowers" Chong, Erik Isaac, the Technical Difficulties gaming podcast, and to anyone I may have missed, thank you!

COMMUNITY SHOUTOUTS

Special thanks to <http://www.gauntlet-rpg.com> community and podcast for creating a vibrant and inclusive community that talks about all games, including small press titles like this one. If you like to play tabletop games online, I encourage you to go play games with them, they're wonderful!

Once Upon a Game: <https://goo.gl/pc6aGD> Eric Vulgaris's show where anyone can sign up and play with him live on Twitch! He's also got an extensive library of actual play files filled to the brim with small press and indie tabletop games.



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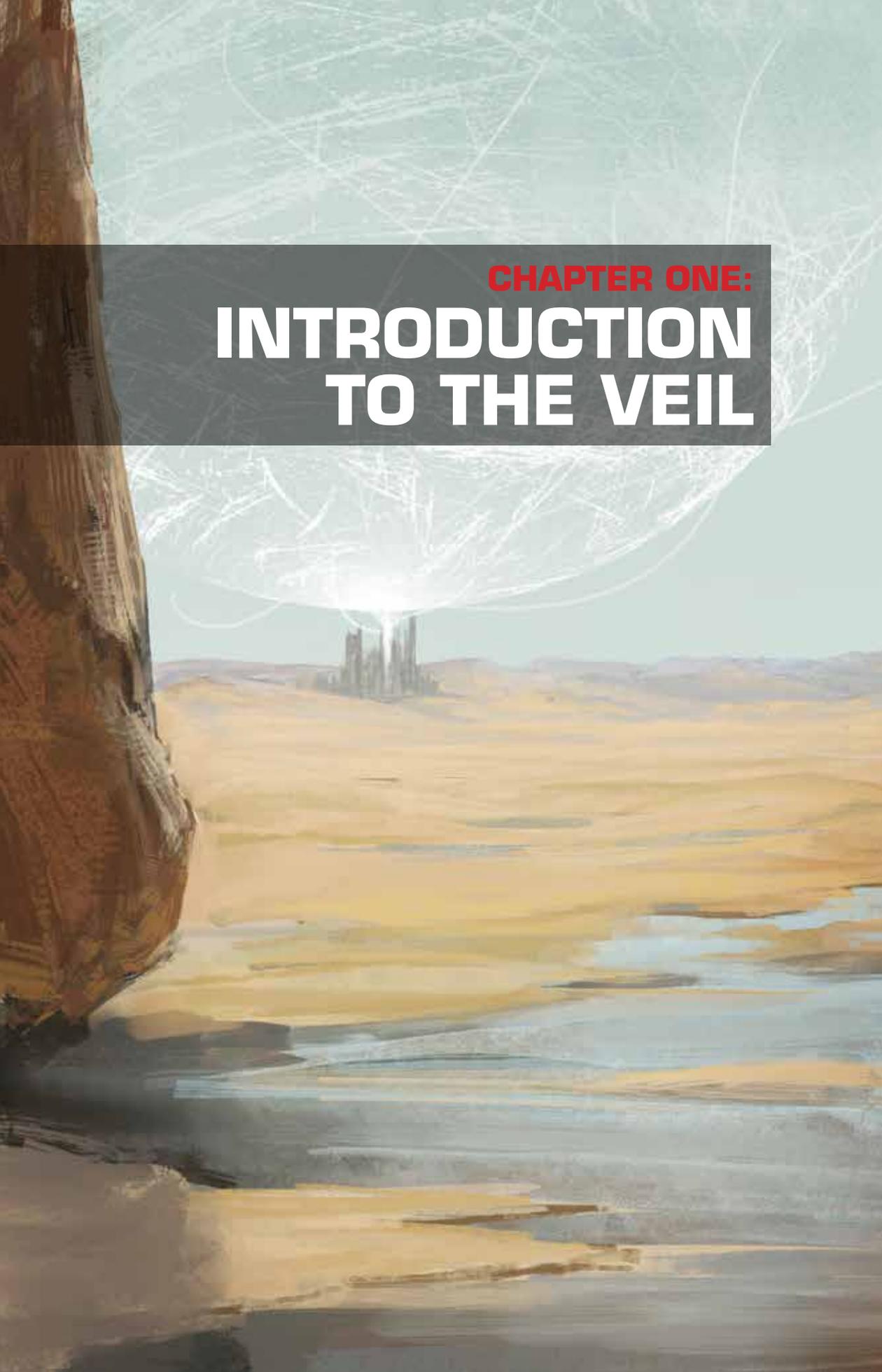
PREFACE

YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG

with the world. The fact that it's the future doesn't matter. Not much has changed, but there's still something here you can't put your finger on, and it's driving you mad. Everyone is connected through a technology called neurochips and it has pulled *The Veil* over everyone's eyes. It is our new reality. Mixing our reality with the digital, we now traverse a new world. One where the digital and physical occupy the same space and interact with us as though they were one and the same. We see and feel our future emblazoned on our minds and on our skin as it holds or caresses or destroys the humanity we have left. Our reality is a hybrid one—full of possibility. Of more, yes; but, perhaps, of less too.

When you wake. When you sleep. When you smell the air and when you taste your food. When you brush your teeth, when you strap your weapon to your hip, and, most of all, when you look into each other's eyes; you can see it, lingering there. That feeling that the machines are out there, turning, using you for their own ends.

Here's the good news: you're here to change it, and that's what makes you different. There is no way to break free of the machine without becoming a threat to it—and make no mistake, you are. Whether you're working against the system from the inside, upholding the only social contracts that keep us from tearing each other apart, pitting corporation against corporation, breaking into crystalline, technological towers full of secrets, diving directly into the digital world to put back what was broken, or searching for the only true words left in the world, you're trying to break free and you'll need help to do it.

A surreal landscape featuring a large, textured tree trunk on the left side. In the background, a glowing, ethereal portal or structure rises from a desert-like terrain. The sky is filled with intricate, white, web-like patterns. The overall scene is bathed in a soft, golden light.

CHAPTER ONE:
**INTRODUCTION
TO THE VEIL**



YOU WILL TAKE ON THE ROLE OF A PROTAGONIST in your own story which is being created as you play. You'll speak as they speak and decide what actions they take. It will be a conversation between you and the other players that will push the game into new, unexpected places. You and the other players play the protagonists of the story. The protagonists might be lovers, friends, enemies, allies, or acquaintances. However, they all know one another, just like the cast in a movie or TV series knows one another. Sometimes you might feel what your protagonist feels and act accordingly; other times you might have them act based on what their goals are in the fiction, or what will be the most interesting thing to have happen in the story.

When you decide to take action or say something, sometimes the rules of the game will come into play and you'll have to roll the dice in order to see what happens next. Because of this, the story will be unpredictable for everybody, including the player who chooses to be your MC, or Master of Ceremonies, and who will portray everything else in the world, besides the protagonists. This element of chance means that you may not always be able to direct the conversation in the direction you would like. That said, the mechanics of the game help to ensure that the story is interesting, regardless of the outcome of the dice, and the element of chance keeps things interesting for everybody. When we have a conversation with one another to build a world and tell a story within it, we refer to this world we play in as "the fiction". It's important to note that since everyone contributes to it, the story belongs to everybody. You are piecing the world together as you have your protagonist move through it, and so are the other players. Sometimes the dice weigh in and dictate how the game and conversation progress.

These mechanics that inform the fiction are not completely haphazard and random. Everyone's motivations are being fed into the story, and sometimes the thing you want will happen, other times, they won't. The game is about embracing these dynamics as well as finding out the answers to the questions that will come up in play. What does the landscape even look like in your world? Has humanity destroyed more of the world? Are you trying to save it, or get what's yours before the end?

The Veil is designed to help you and your friends explore the major themes found in Cyberpunk media. Questions like what it means to be part of the human race so far in the future? What does it really mean to be human? Do "things" have souls? Could they? Will we be more united in the future or even less so than now? What would a digital world mean for us? What would we find, should we explore the vast recesses of our own minds if such technology existed?

Your protagonist will have to confront their problems and face uncomfortable truths. *The Veil* assumes that the players are in a mixed reality (or hybrid reality) at all times. What this means is that the real world and digital worlds have merged, which provides a whole new kind of environment. One where physical and digital objects are both occupying the same space and interacting with one another in real time. You'll have to lift it to find the answers you're looking for and how you go about doing that will be up to you. Maybe you'll talk your way past problems, while the people you play with may solve their problems with violence. One thing's for certain—the obstacles placed in front of you will be formidable and you'll have to vary your approach and be as clever as you can to get by.

The world might be dirty, disgusting even; but it's yours and you're going to take it back at any cost. Sometimes, you may even leave your mixed reality behind and leap into the minds of friends and foes alike, hopefully unraveling the truth and attempting to escape with your mind intact. Other times, you'll be asserting real change in more subtle ways, making enemies and gaining allies as you do. Confront humanity and explore questions that drive the future and do it with the help of technologies featured in movies like *The Matrix* and *Inception*. Struggle to lift the veil that has been drawn over your eyes for far, far too long now...

This book has everything you'll need to build your protagonist and the future they live in. You'll do so in collaboration with the other players at the table in order to create a fiction that has a bit of all of you in it, making the fiction you build—all of yours.

In this book you'll find:

- Rules for creating your protagonists. Their look, their gear, their beliefs and what is intrinsic to themselves, are all easily accessible and customizable to create the unique individual you want to portray.
- The mechanics of the award winning Apocalypse World system, tweaked to fit the setting and tone of a cyberpunk future envisioned in *The Veil*.
- Tools for creating intrigue, drama, and the means to explore a new culture and society, as well as injecting a question you'll explore—giving your game an overarching depth and sense of purpose as you do so.

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

As you play *The Veil*, you'll find out that there is actually no set plot or predetermined story laid out in this book or by the player who chooses to be the MC. You and the other players are all taking part and telling a collaborative story together, and for that reason the story does not belong solely to anyone at the table. You all tell the story, but no one controls it; there is no way to prepare for the next set of circumstances or dramatic set of scenes coming up. Your protagonist is probably going to end up being something different than what you imagined after you spend some time with them, and that is what makes the engine *The Veil* runs on so great—everyone is playing the game to find out what happens next.

One of you will choose to be the MC. They're going to be in charge of a few more things, like:

- Building a loose framework around a major question that the players want to explore in play.
- Having the world feel real and consistent to everyone at the table.
- Embodying and enriching everything other than the protagonists in the world.

**Culture is like a smog.
To live within it, you must
breathe some of it in and,
inevitably, be contaminated.**

Richard K. Morgan, *Altered Carbon*

WHY PLAY?

The Veil gives you eclectic characters right off the bat with its first session process. Just following these people around in their lives in the future would make for a good story. But, at its heart, *The Veil* also is designed to have you ask important and compelling questions that you find interesting primarily about the cyberpunk genre, since that's the setting. But, depending on what you're going for, just about anything could be thrown into the mix! Then, when you take those questions and reverse-engineer them into your play while also having the backdrop of your story, you also have the option to explore something more.

When you combine this exploration process, the characters you create, and then also have everyone playing to find out what happens next, you get a unique story that really allows you to explore the breadth of cyberpunk and even push and pull at the known works of the genre. Whether you stick to the tropes established or subvert them in your story, it's important to note that what you'll have will still be cyberpunk. It will be your own cyberpunk, your own story.

The world as we know it today is already an interesting place; lots of questions you find interesting may well be in the process of being explored in the present day. By taking your interests and extrapolating what those interests might look like in the future from what we know now, we can explore subject matter as a collaboration we may never have touched on before.

Whether what you bring into the story are deep social issues, specific genre tropes, or the answer to a question you've had rattling around in your head from time to time—the important thing is to bring something of yourself into your story. Not every game should be expected to focus on what might be considered “heavy” subject matter but, as a tool, *The Veil* can be used for the exploration of just about anything.

Gender, race, the ramifications of technology on humanity, social issues and constructs—or even to envision a future where all of this has already come and passed. Are we in for a bleak future, as some of the genre contributions suggest? Is your future really as bad as some predominant cyberpunk stories would have us believe, and if so, will you be working towards the exploration of solving some of those problems? Or, could the future be something entirely as yet unexamined by the medium? This story is shaped by you, subverted by you—the players. The future is whatever you want it to be, wish it to be. Play to find out what your version of cyberpunk is while you play to find out what happens next with one another.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

The only thing you really need to play, other than this book, is at least one other person to play with! Anyone who wants to make a world and tell a story in it with you will do—four players total, including the MC, is ideal, but the game will run just fine with anywhere from two to five players. Any more than that and it's going to be hard to keep everyone involved and the tension high.

Generally, you'll be breaking up sessions of play into 2–4 hour blocks of time. You can play the game a single time in a one-shot session and leave it there, or turn it into a campaign and play for as long as you want. In fact, the best stories will probably be the ones that continue for some time, with your protagonists evolving along with the fiction.

You'll also need to print out the character playbooks and reference sheets that came with your digital copy of the game. You may want to have a copy of this book on hand as well in case you need to reference something.

DICE

You'll need two standard six-sided dice. Although you could get by with one set, it's best if everyone has their own. Six-sided dice are very common and should be easy to find. If you've got board games in your house, you can probably co-opt some from there.

PLAYBOOKS

There are a number of different archetypes that you can choose for your protagonist when you create your character. Each one is unique and has their own approach as to how they may fit into the fiction and interact with the world. Each one also has a special sheet you fill out and use when you choose it. These are called playbooks and each player needs to have a copy printed and ready for use when they sit down to play. You can print one of each of them and players can choose which one they like when you sit down to play your first game.

PENCIL AND PAPER

There are spaces and choices in each character sheet to fill out, so everyone will need something to do that with—pencils are best since things will need to be erased or changed as the story progresses. Make sure you keep it safe! If you lose your character sheet, you'll have to remember all of the options you chose and any information you selected and wrote down.

ODDS AND ENDS

The game is more immersive if you are familiar with the cyberpunk media everyone else is riffing off of, but if you aren't, a great way of getting people into the mindset and aesthetic you're envisioning is printing off pictures. Photos help with portraying themes, concepts, and what the setting might look like. When you sit down to your first session you and the other players will talk more about this.

Finally, there are some more handouts you'll want to have at the table other than character sheets, mostly for use by the person who chooses to be the MC. Everyone should have a copy of the basic moves and the MC should have all of their first session worksheet and a copy of their own moves in front of them for their reference at all times.



TERMS

In cyberpunk, a prevalent theme is how cultures might mix together in the future. *The Veil* has also taken this into consideration and has incorporated some popular elements into the game itself. Giri, enlightenment, and humanity are concepts in every culture. Giri is fairly common in cyberpunk fiction, whereas enlightenment is a universal concept exemplified by Buddhist monks and other individuals and all faiths around the world. Lastly, humanity as tied to the concept of identity and the prospect of having characters confront their own along with the potential harm that could do to a person is explored via a specific mechanic as well. I felt that using the Chinese characters for the following three terms lent itself well to the aesthetic of *The Veil* in my own game, so I encourage people to similarly change any terms used as needed to suit the culture they choose to play in.

GIRI: The concept of debt as pertaining to a duty or obligation to another.

ENLIGHTENMENT: A form of currency used in the game for the Seeker playbook.

HUMANITY: A type of harm endured when a protagonist is faced with a hard truth about themselves or their beliefs are shaken.

AGENCY: The protagonists you portray in the game all have control over their own actions, what they say, what they do, all has an impact on the story. In most role-playing games this is normal, in this one it's more prevalent because it's a collaborative world being created by you. The players have a lot of agency and it directly impacts what happens next and where the story is going. Your decisions have consequences, you will have the information necessary to make decisions based on that information and the result will be a story that is improvised from what you say and do as protagonists in the game. When you do these things, this is your agency being asserted.

CHARACTER SHEET (PLAYBOOK): Every protagonist will have a sheet of paper with the important information that they need describing their character. If it's pertinent to the protagonist, it will be on the sheet in order to help you remember what you need to know about them.

CYBERTOME: A term referring to a device possessed by one of the character archetypes you can play, known as the Onomastic, described more in detail on that playbook. What "it" is and what is contained within it is chosen by the Onomastic when and if they are able to open it.

DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT/DIGISCAPE: Within the fiction of the game, there is both a physical environment that overlaps with the digital one, and one that characters in the world interact with by entering it, interpreting and manipulating information directly in their minds. In this purely digital space, every person has a representation of themselves (essentially, very much like *The Matrix*).

EMOTION SPIKES: A currency within the game that quantifies how much of any given emotion a protagonist is feeling. There are five check marks next to each emotion, which are the stats used in *The Veil*.

ESSENCE: An essential resource managed by the Wayward playbook that allows them to do some of their unique abilities.

THE FICTION: When the players are having a conversation about what happens within the game, the fiction is what is being referred to. This applies to anything to do with what's happening in the collaborative world you build together via your conversation.

FLAVOR: When someone describes what's happening or says something that furthers the tone of the game or embellish their actions or description of the world around them that does not interact with the mechanics of the game, such as rolling dice to find out what happens next.

FLOW: A resource managed by the Empath playbook that enables them to manipulate emotions as well as other things unique to them.

HARM: This is the term used to quantify damage, whether physical or mental, in the fiction of the game world.

HIT: A hit is a term used to describe a positive outcome on the dice. It can be a weak hit or a strong hit. A weak hit means it is not a complete success and that there may be a cost to succeeding, whereas a strong hit means the player succeeds without cost.

MC: Master of Ceremonies. The player who portrays the fiction and the characters other than the player characters in it. They are also responsible for setting up and framing most scenes, and moderating the conversation at the table.

MISS: A miss is a term used to describe a negative outcome on the dice.

MIXED REALITY: A reality where the digital and the physical are intermingled into one reality with both occupying the same space.

MODIFIERS: An integer that is added to a die roll.

MOTIVATIONS: Non-player characters have one defining Motivation within the story to get something specific. When the person running the game portrays them, their Motivation dictates how they act and react in the game.

MOVES: The major way players interact with the game fiction from a mechanical perspective. The conversation about what is happening in the game sometimes triggers moves, which influences the direction that the story then takes. More on moves on page 28.

NEUROCHIP: Most of the people in the fiction will have a neurochip, which constantly feeds them with information on what the world looks like, smells like, feels like, etc. It alters normal perceptions of reality to present something new; this is referred to as mixed reality or a hybrid reality.

NEGATIVE TAGS: A negative tag is the same as a normal tag except that the MC uses them when a player misses on the dice and makes a move against the players. It's also giving the MC ideas as to how to have things affect those specific players in general during the course of play.

NPC: Stands for Non-Player Character—anyone in the game that is not a protagonist under the control of a player. This means the MC controls them.

PC: Player Character, also referred to as a protagonist.

PLAYBOOK: Playbooks describe a holistic approach to a character a type of player you can choose to play when you create your protagonist. Each one is unique.

PROTAGONISTS: Also refers to PC, they are the main characters being played by the players of the game other than the MC.

S HARM: A type of harm; the “s” stands for stun. Stun damage renders the target unconscious and does no lasting physical damage.

SPIKE: Refers to emotional spikes. A check mark is marked next to an emotion every time a player uses the corresponding stat. Each check mark signifies that the protagonist is experiencing this emotion more intensely.

STATE: A state is one of six core emotions a protagonist can feel during the game. Each one has a modifier assigned to it during character creation.

TAG: A tag is a word or sentence used to describe what something is or does in the fiction. It helps to define and characterize an object.

THE VEIL: In many references in this book, *The Veil* may refer to either a depository of information not unlike The Internet of today, except that in this game, it also may possess an entity or will within it—depending on the type of cyberpunk story you end up telling. Other times it is simply a reference to this game and the play experience you get from it.

XP: Experience Points are a currency used in the game that is spent to improve a player character.



THE CONVERSATION

As mentioned before, the game is a conversation. Your job as a player with a protagonist is to describe what your character does, how they do it, what they care about and how they react to what other people are doing. In so doing, everyone else at the table will get a picture in their head of what they look like, how they act, and how their own characters, or other characters in the fiction feel about them.

Sometimes you'll slip right into your character and speak using their voice. On the other hand, you might describe what they do as seen by a camera in a movie, or a disembodied narrator. It's up to you how you talk about your character, what they feel, and what they do. You'll probably switch back and forth as needed, and that's fine—do whatever is natural and fun for you.

It's everyone's job, though, to keep things interesting. The mechanics of the game, the rules and some tips will help you push the story into interesting places and find a pace to avoid the minutia of everyday life that we deem uninteresting and don't need to know or care about, and that wouldn't be shown in a movie or TV show. We look at the characters when they're being interesting, and we cut away to a new scene when they or the current scene aren't.

**To love light, you have to
love dark. I'm not trying to
be profound, I know you'll
understand. I don't mean that
you have to hate to love, or
that you have to die to live.
I mean that sometimes,
you turn out the lights
just to turn them back on.**

Alaya Dawn Johnson, *The Summer Prince*

SCENES

The main way that we accomplish this fast-paced, only-interesting style of play is through the use of scene framing. The best way to find out what is interesting about your protagonist is by putting them in a conflict of some sort and seeing what they do to resolve that conflict. They want or need something. They have something they want to accomplish. They aren't your average person; they're the one who wants to face conflict and resolve something significant going on in both their life and the world at large.

The MC is the one who will usually be framing scenes, but lots of times you and your players will be the ones filling in the scene; the protagonists' reactions and feelings to what is going on in the scene and in the fiction inform the fiction more than anything else. It's the MC's job to cut and wrap-up a scene when appropriate, moving from one scene to the next, and the conversation will make when to do this obvious. That said, it's everyone's responsibility to make sure that these scenes go someplace meaningful for the story.

As an MC, all you need to do is begin the conversation. Look at what your agenda is, think what you could get from this scene in terms of the story, as well as what the protagonists want to get out of playing *The Veil*, then go from there. The mechanics of the game will do everything else for you and, to that end, there are lots of tools to help you out in the MC section beginning on page 278.

Gina decides to get the ball rolling by trying to populate the scene with as many protagonists as she can to get everyone involved.

MC: Alright, guys. We haven't seen your characters yet but we know Harper and Hugo live in the same place, we know they use a pub as a dead drop and we can say they just finished a job and need to make the drop. Phil and Claire, you guys are out at this pub when Harper and Hugo walk in, what does this place look like?

HARD FRAMING

Sometimes the MC is going to aggressively jump from scene to scene like in an action movie. When they cut to the scene and it's a hard frame, it usually means the protagonists are in the middle of something or about to react to something right away. It might be a bit disorienting for players, but the technique makes up for it by introducing something interesting and it keeps the pace quick. Hard scenes are all about posing the question to the character immediately rather than a scene where it builds gradually.

When a new character is introduced into a game, it's a great time to use hard framing as the MC, especially if you aren't sure how to fit them into the narrative just yet. Just give them something to react to that involves the other protagonists.

MC: The guys make the drop, sit down, and start talking business with Fill and Claire. Just as you guys sit down though, we are going to cut to Hannah. Hannah, you're walking by this pub and see a man slip in via a side door. At his side you see some kind of a pistol, maybe? From where you are, it's sure hard to tell—but he looks like he's trying to be discreet, that's for sure. Black everything, a trench coat, and it looks like he's making an effort to not be seen by one particular booth off in the corner despite making his way towards it. You're scanning the scene as you look through that very same side door now. What do you do?



WHAT DO YOU DO?

This is the most important question being asked in the game at any given time. Every time the MC frames a scene or tells a player what just happened in the scene, you'll probably hear them ask, "What do you do?" The question usually puts you, the player, in a situation where you have to react without thinking and that can be really helpful for immersion. You'll find you can learn a lot more about your protagonists if the MC prompts the players and the players respond in kind.

Go where the story is most interesting and remember not to get bogged down in minutia. The MC will be putting your protagonists in situations where they are constantly propelling the story forward and finding out what happens next. Sometimes you'll take the time to act on a decision and other times you'll have to act on an impulse. Each and every time, you'll have to accept the consequences of your actions.

The moments when protagonists have to overcome things, how they are affected by them, and the scenes in which they reveal personal, interesting details and secrets about themselves are the gems of the conversation. Action scenes will be frequent and fun, but there should always also be time to find out who these people are at their core and why they do what they do. These people have substance, let it pervade the conversation when it feels right to do so.

FICTIONAL POSITIONING

Within scenes, we use a term called fictional positioning to refer to the things we know are true within the game world. When you select a playbook and fill out everything on your playbook sheet, you already have a list of things that give your protagonist fictional positioning. You know some things they can and cannot do. These are the things everyone has agreed are in the story already.

Every time you reveal more of your character and the MC reveals more of the world, you are all building and contributing to this shared world which your characters inhabit, possibly generating more fictional positioning for NPCs or PCs alike.

CLARIFYING THE FICTION

Sometimes things go poorly for your protagonist—they make mistakes, just like everyone else does, they make an impulse decision that you later reevaluate or regret. Unfortunately, once you say you do something, you do it and then deal with the ramifications of those decisions. If you say you do something and that triggers a roll, we find out what happens after the move informs the fiction. There's no going back after that.

Other times, a lack of clarity can cause people to have a different picture of things going on in their head. The best thing to do in order to avoid situations where there could be a misunderstanding is to clarify what you want to do, and how you see the events taking place in the fiction. Don't be afraid to ask questions when other protagonists, and especially the MC, are describing things.

CARLOS: So, I'm going to run up and kick open the door!

MC: Sure, well remember though, those guys who walked in did look pretty professional. It follows that as a cop you'd know these guys are serious and you may get the drop on them, but who knows?

CARLOS: Right, right...Ok, well I'll draw my pistol and kick it open and sweep in SWAT style, checking doors and corners to minimize the risk then.

It never hurts to clarify, and the MC is not out to get you. With the same description of events going on at the table people can simply envision things differently, so it's very important to make sure everyone's on the same page. If they're not, take a couple minutes to clarify how you see the fiction and continue on once the fiction is clear. Clarification is important not only because it makes sure everyone is on the same page, but what we say in the fiction can also trigger moves and tells us when to roll the dice so we all need to have the same accurate depiction of the scene in order to know if we are triggering a move or not.

THE X-CARD

Sometimes during play, we start exploring subject matter people aren't comfortable with. Depending on who you're playing with you may or may not already have a sense of what the people playing with you are comfortable with and what they aren't. Either way, when you're gaming you want it to be a safe place where you can explore what you want to, but also not step into territory that others find uncomfortable and don't want to partake in. That's perfectly fine and perfectly reasonable for anybody playing a game. Making sure everyone is ok with the tone of the game and what you want to explore should be done when you're making your protagonists and world building—but what do you do when you get into the game and something comes up that makes you uncomfortable? This is when the X-Card, designed by John Stavropoulos, comes in. Sometimes content people aren't ok with will be introduced that you can't plan for, especially in a game where you're playing to find out. John has this to say about his tool:

“The X-Card is an optional tool that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen till it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise.

To use, at the start of your game, simply say:

I'd like your help. Your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way... [Draw X on an index card] ...just lift this card up, or simply tap it [place card at the center of the table]. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X-Card to protect myself from all of you! Thank you!”

More on the X-Card can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>.

Whatever it is, you express that this makes you uncomfortable, and if it's something people feel the story needs, simply substitute it for something else that does the same thing it was doing in the fiction. Or, if it's not that important, just delete it out entirely. There's not much worse than a player at the table who is uncomfortable and ends up having a bad experience with the game because of it. Be mindful of your own boundaries and the boundaries of others and you'll all end up having a much better time!



CHAPTER TWO:
**BEFORE YOU
GET GOING**



BEFORE YOU SIT DOWN TO START PLAYING your first session, there are a few things you should know about the way the game works. A conversation between the players takes place, and that conversation is how the game is played. Through the course of this conversation, certain things that are said by the players might trigger moves. When a move is triggered, the player who triggered it rolls the dice and then uses the result to consult the move, which influences the fiction and then the conversation continues on again until another move is triggered. Moves can influence the fiction in a lot of ways and the following section is going to talk about the various ways in which they do that.

MOVES

Moves are a mechanic in the game that let everyone know that the rules of the game are being activated to help figure out what happens next. If you're doing stuff that isn't covered in the basic moves or the moves in your playbook, well then it just happens and the dice don't need to come out.

When players playing a protagonist describe themselves doing something in the description of a move, that's when you roll dice to find out what happens next. If they don't say anything that triggers a move, the conversation continues as normal without the need for rolling the dice. The only time you're rolling dice should be when you're doing something described in a move. There are two types of moves; basic moves that any player can trigger, and special moves for specific playbooks that are only on certain character sheets that only the player of that specific character can trigger. Anytime a move is triggered, the dice are rolled and a modifier is applied to the sum of the dice. In *The Veil*, the modifier is determined by the state the character triggering the move is in at the time. There are six states that represent any point on the emotional spectrum a character could be on at a given time – Mad, Sad, Scared, Joyful, Powerful, and Peaceful. States will be talked about more in depth at the end of this section, but for now just know that each emotion has a number assigned to it, and that number is the modifier that either increases or decreases the number rolled on the dice when a move is triggered.

JOAN: So that guy is creeping up towards the table, has a weapon, and is trying not to be seen by them. I'm guessing he's going to start some shit, but I'm really far away from them, right? I'm going to draw my weapon and squeeze off a few rounds into the lights to shatter them and start a commotion to hopefully draw the guy's attention.

MC: Alright, for a second the room kind of flickers, when the glass shatters and it starts raining down on people. There are some screams from the tables around you and people hunker down further in their seats, trying to get low. You see the guy in black immediately fire off a few shots at you, an immediate reaction to the sound of a gun being fired. You've got cybernetic eyes and quick reflexes though, and you feel adrenaline shoot through your veins. You can almost see the hammer on his pistol snap back and a shell eject. What do you do?

JOAN: Ah damn. Alright, I'm going to use my eyes to calculate the bullets trajectory and I'm going to try and roll underneath them, then pop up at a run to close the distance with the guy.

MC: Alright, sounds like you're at Risk. Why don't you go ahead and roll that for me? And don't forget to add your modifier to the roll. How is Hannah feeling right now?

JOAN: Hmm, well she's got adrenaline pumping through her and she lives for a fight, but she's probably actually afraid since she didn't expect that guy to react so quickly and try to straight up murder her.

MC: Sounds good, add your Scared modifier to the roll then and let me know what you get.

When Joan tells the MC that Hannah, her protagonist, tries to roll underneath the path of the bullets so they don't hit her, she triggers a move called "*Risk*". Detailed within the move is the description, called a trigger, which reads, "When you are aware of and act to avoid imminent danger, say how you do it and roll". So Joan rolls her two six-sided dice, which turn up a 5 and a 3, for a total of 8. After considering the circumstances, Joan decides that her protagonist is scared because she's getting shot at. Looking at her character sheet, she checks to see what modifier she wrote in at character creation for the "Scared" state. It says she has a +1 in Scared, so she adds that to the total for a final result of 9. The move's instructions say that on a 7-9 result on the dice, there will be a cost or complication in order for her protagonist to be successful in what they were attempting to do, so she waits for the MC to tell her what that cost or complication is.

After the move triggers, it will tell you what you need to do next. If you are ever in a situation listed here and a move has not been triggered, check out the basic moves again and make sure a move has not been triggered. All moves can:

- Ask you to roll dice, with the results of the roll informing you what to do next in the fiction.
- Give you a bonus to certain rolls made afterward.
- Give you more options to choose from in situations where they describe what is taking place.

Your stats in *The Veil* are your character's emotions, called states. What this means is that every time you do something that triggers a move, you could be adding a different modifier every single time depending on the state of your protagonist. Unless what your character is experiencing is eliciting the same emotion each time you roll, chances are that at any given time your protagonist will be experiencing different emotions when the move is triggered.

Every core emotion has a number assigned to it, which helps give us a picture of what your protagonist is doing in the fiction, and how they look and feel when they're doing it. Whenever you need to roll, you add the appropriate modifier to the total of your dice roll.

A strong hit means the sum total was over 10. A weak hit means the sum total was between 7 and 9, and a miss means a result of 6 or lower. Each move has a description of what happens for each of these possibilities. In general, what this means is the narrative shifts from the MC asking questions about what you're doing, to a temporary focus on you and what your character is doing. On a strong or weak hit, you have the narrative control to say how your protagonist does what they do and how they are successful, up to a point. The amount of harm you deal a person is predetermined by the weapons and armor involved, but what happens in that scene is up to you; you do what you set out to do, so tell the table how you do it! Then, the MC will describe what happens afterward as a result until the next time a move is triggered. On a miss, however, you don't do what you set out to do, or you do and there are complications or a cost introduced for doing so. The MC maintains control over the narrative when this happens and the players simply listen to find out what happens next.

JOAN: Ok, with my Scared modifier, that makes for a total of 9.

MC: Alright, so there's a cost or complication. Hmm...ok, got it. So your cyber eyes instantaneously trace the trajectory of the bullets coming for you, you expertly duck down and roll super-fast, making use of those cyber eyes and other enhancements. Just when you roll beneath their projected path, you hear some bullets slam into something metallic behind you. Right away, you're up and sprinting, but for some reason you feel really light.

JOAN: I dropped something, didn't I? I'm going to use my hand to pat down my bag to make sure I've got all my stuff, just in case.

MC: Sure, as soon as you reach your hand across and do a quick pat-down, you realize that one of the bullets must have shredded a part of the bag lining. You're not sure what you're missing—unless you want to spend more time to check it out, but you know something's tumbled out for sure, something heavy. In the meantime, the man in the trench coat starts running toward you even though you're going right for him! Suddenly though, he throws his trench coat backward, revealing something with a black hilt at the small of his back. His other hand draws out two metallic objects. He's lightning-fast. If you didn't have your cybernetic eyes you probably wouldn't have seen the motion. You tense up for a second, seeing his own muscles flex as he makes to throw something shaped like darts, maybe!? Then time seems to slow down as you quickly realize that he's moving his body to pivot and throw the darts at the people in the booth, not you! What do you do?

Because there was a cost or consequence associated with the 7-9 result that Joan got, her protagonist, Hannah ended up losing a resource. The MC continues to narrate up to another point to put Hannah in a position where she has to react and do something quickly. Depending on what Joan says her character does, she might trigger another move.

MAKING A MOVE

In order for a move to trigger, a protagonist must actually do something in the fiction of the game to trigger it. The rule is: to do it, you do it. If a player just states the move's name and does not describe themselves actually doing the thing that triggers a move, it does not trigger, because how the player goes about describing what they do will affect both what move is triggered and how best to inform the fiction from there. The trigger is the protagonist doing what is described in the text of the move.

MC: Alright, for a second the room kind of flickers, when the glass shatters and it starts raining down on people. There are some screams from the tables around you and people hunker down further in their seats, trying to get low. You see the guy in black immediately fire off a few shots at you, an immediate reaction to the sound of a gun being fired. You've got cybernetic eyes and quick reflexes though, and you feel adrenaline shoot through your veins. You can almost see the hammer on his pistol snap back and a shell eject. What do you do?

JOAN: Ah damn. Alright, I'm going to Risk not getting hit by those bullets!

MC: Ok, how do you go about Risking that, though? There are a lot of ways to avoid getting hit; what exactly do you do?

JOAN: Right. I'm going to use my eyes to calculate the bullets trajectory and I'm going to try and roll underneath them, then pop up at a run to close the distance with the guy.

MC: Now that sounds like you're at risk—the danger obviously being getting shot. Go ahead and roll for that.

When you look at the move to see if what the protagonist is doing triggers the move or not. The move will tell you what to do next, most of the time it will ask you to roll. Other times it will indicate that something else happens, if that's the case do that instead of rolling.

FORWARD

Some moves mention terms you might not be familiar with. One could be +1 forward or -1 forward. What this means is the next time you roll the dice, you should add a +1 or -1 to the total you get once you roll. Roll and apply the state modifier as normal, then apply that +1 or -1 to get your total afterward. Then see if it's a hit or not. Taking something forward is for the next roll only.

MC: Alright, Red, remember when you heard some commotion from outside this place? Well, you step through the automated sliding doors to find the place a wreck, with a ton of people in a massive brawl. Jack's nowhere to be found. There's a red, plastic-looking chandelier hanging from the ceiling that is now swaying from side to side from all the ruckus. The bar has a domed shield around it to displace anything coming at it or the staff but it looks like there isn't any staff here anymore. Mirrorwood tables and other faux décor tell you this place could have been classy, at least until everything went to shit. What do you do?

LUKE: Crap. Jack, what are you up to? Hmm, ok, well I'm looking at all this chaos and I really just want to find a path through this mess without getting caught up in it.

MC: OK, well it sounds like you're analyzing the situation, Red. The trigger for analyzing is, "When you use what you have at your disposal to assess a place or situation, roll." So the camera zooms in when Red's checking this scene out, what do we see?

LUKE: Well, Red's been chasing Jack for what seems like forever now, so when the camera is on Red, you can tell he's getting angrier by the second. Somehow, Red just knows in his bones that this is something Jack did just to slow him down. I'll mark that spike in Mad since I'm pissed and I'll add the modifier to my roll – looks like I'll end up with an 8.

MC: So you wanted to know your best way through? It's total mayhem. People laying into each other every which way, but it's all pretty centralized in the center right now, it looks like. You should be able to skirt the sides and dodge past anyone that comes at you, with some luck. The analyze move nets you +1 forward when you act on information you found out too, so that should help. How do you want to go about getting through?

HOLD

Another term is hold. This is a sort of currency in the game that can be spent. Whenever hold is generated, the move will tell you how it can be spent. Hold is generated in certain circumstances only, and how it will be able to be spent will be explained in the move that generates it. It may only be spent in the way that the move states.

MC: Welcome to the party Crawford! When Crawford enters the same bar shortly after, he finds the same pandemonium breaking out. You don't see Red anywhere. He stands out too, with his vest and old-school cowboy hat, so you'd probably know if he was around. What you do see, though, is this young guy stumbling back, right into you. He's startled and careens off of you on his way out of the place. What do you do?

HOLDEN: Crawford grabs him by the collar and shakes him a bit. "A man came in just a few minutes ago. He had a cowboy hat and a vest with a scorpion on the back, you would have noticed this guy." I narrow my eyes at him make my voice as menacing as possible. Before he answers I'd like to look at this guy through my narrowed eyes and grab him by the wrist to try and get an idea of whether he lies to me or not.

MC: Sounds like you're probing this guy so let's see what the dice say.

HOLDEN: Crawford is pretty content right now. Shaking trees and seeing what falls out is his thing, and he's gotten good at it. I ended up with a 9, so that should net me 1 hold. When the kid goes to answer me, I study his pupils and face for micro-expressions while keeping track of his pulse.

MC: Ok, he looks really spooked and kind of glances behind you into the crowd in fear. He says, "No, no, I don't know what you're talking about. Just let me go, ok? I've got to get out of here."

HOLDEN: I'm going to spend my 1 hold to see if he's telling the truth.

MC: What do you think? You can tell he's definitely scared, but you saw some recognition flash in his eyes when you mentioned the scorpion just before, and his heart rate is jack-hammering, though it's mostly because he's really scared.

ONGOING

Ongoing is a term similar to forward, except that it will apply to every dice roll until it is resolved. With forward, you just take the number and apply it to your next roll. In contrast, ongoing will list when that number should be applied to a roll and when it will end. Very few moves call for an ongoing effect because it is a substantial advantage. Most likely, you will be told to take something forward rather than ongoing.

MC: After you're knocked unconscious, you awaken later to find your sword missing. You're in an abandoned warehouse with those low hanging, ancient sources of light they use in low town still. The place is filthy and smells like formaldehyde. Since you chose the Attached playbook, Takeshi—you have your object that you're unable to be parted from without repercussions! Your sword being your object, when you are parted, you start to get sick. What does that look like? Has this happened to you before? Also remember, this means you're taking -1 ongoing until you get your sword back as per your playbook.



ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE

When you have advantage on a roll, it means you roll three six-sided dice (3d6) and you take the two highest dice to get your result and then add your state, unless otherwise specified. When you have disadvantage, you roll 3d6 and take the two lowest dice instead of highest.

JAKE: So we're in this megacorp and there's spiraling ceilings and holo-tech that is as tangible as anything else, but I'm the Honed. Joe doesn't care about any of that and he's the best at what he does. I look at Manny and, after a brief pause, I tell him that he's so connected to the digital and invested in this fake world that he's blinded—it's all he can see. "If you weren't connected like me, you wouldn't be so held back. Sometimes you have to feel what the right thing to do is. Sometimes—you can't wait for all the data, you have to act, it's a part of being human! Now. We have to GO!" And I think I'll spend one of my humanity to inflict humanity harm on him so the point is really driven home, hopefully. Without waiting, I charge up the stairs. For the options under humanity harm, I'm going to choose that he take disadvantage forward and I want to know, "Do you think you're human anymore?"

TAYLOR: Hmmm, Manny doesn't even hesitate all that much. He sort of stares down at his metallic, chromed body and says that he doesn't think he's been human for a long time now. I think he's been asking himself that very same thing.

MC: Cool! So maybe Joe is running up those stairs and you start losing time. We go into bullet time between your artificial heartbeats Manny, and you start thinking about the time when you were human, right? Maybe those thoughts themselves are what cause you to take disadvantage as you dwell on them. So remember, next roll is going to be three dice and we take the lowest two, ok? Do you want to tell us more about Manny when he was human as well, that might be pretty interesting?

STATES

When a move is triggered it will ask you to roll. Whenever it says to roll, you will always add one of the states unless it's a start of session move and it says otherwise. Whenever you add a state, it will be because in the fiction, something happens that triggers a move and we are going to see how your protagonist feels at that point. Next to states are modifiers, which can be negative or positive; either way, you apply that number next to the state to the total of your dice roll to see if it's a miss, a weak hit, or a strong hit.

In *The Veil*, the states are your core emotions. The reason for this is to keep the players in-character, playing their protagonists and thinking about how their character is feeling when reacting to the world. Why a protagonist is doing something and how it makes them feel is a great way to add another layer of immersion to the world. Rolls become less about in what way a character does something, or how well they do it, and more about how they react to the world and what they're feeling. Based on that, we can create a fiction that feels believable and real because we can picture the protagonist and empathize with them and their actions.

Just like in real life, the protagonists could be feeling multiple emotions at once, but the game requires a player to choose the strongest core emotion behind the action that triggers a move. Sometimes, the action you're doing could be considered an emotion; maybe you're being sexy but you're feeling Scared. In that case, the core emotion is Scared, despite what you're trying to portray to others.

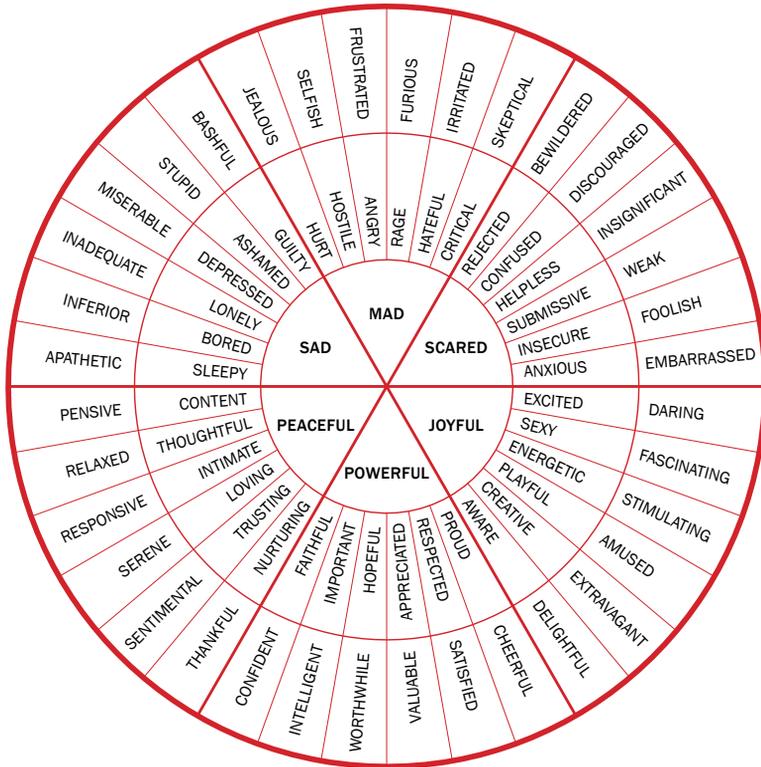
BEN: I think when Takeshi is parted from his sword he feels drained and not in high spirits. His first reaction is to search the area for signs of his sword and get more information. Maybe there's dust in here that's been disturbed, signs of how I got here or things in the room that appear out of place?

MC: Well, looks like you're analyzing. Let's see, we know Takeshi isn't cheerful or positive without his sword, so what is he when he's searching?

BEN: He feels isolated since his sword is missing so he probably looks pretty downcast on camera, and remorseful that his actions led to the separation. Looks like on the feeling wheel that fits within Sad. Makes sense – my Sad modifier is -1 so let me roll here and I'll add that on. Looks like after the -1, I end up with a 7.

There are six core states: Mad, Sad, Scared, Joyful, Powerful, and Peaceful. From each of these core emotions, almost anything that a character is feeling can be extrapolated. A feeling wheel follows to illustrate the point, and is part of the reference sheets along with basic moves, playbooks, and other handouts.

Note that the placement of the core emotions on the wheel do not correlate to one another. The playbook handouts themselves show you what emotions are in opposition to one another in *The Veil*, this does not. This is purely a tool to help you figure out what your protagonist could be feeling in any given scene when a move is triggered.



WHAT IS THE FEELING WHEEL?

The feeling wheel is used to get people into the headspace of their character, especially if they've never played a roleplaying game before. I use this wheel as a helpful guide as to what the protagonist might be feeling so that I, and the other players can get on the same page when picturing scenes and what their protagonist looks like when doing things within said scene. I've found it leads to more dynamic play because we are visualizing specific emotions and often emotions ordinarily we wouldn't have maybe thought of, too. Personally, I find it very helpful, however, some people will not need the tool at all. If you know your protagonist and yourself well enough and can describe how the protagonist is feeling, I recommend not using the feeling wheel at all. You can choose to go as in-depth with it as you want and use the example feeling wheel, or not. Whatever you find the most fun and the most helpful to do, in order to get the tone of the game right for your table, do that.

The origin of the feeling wheel was originally developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox, who self-published her book "Feelings: Converting negatives to positives" as a means of identifying the emotion you're feeling and tracing it back to the core emotion as well as a way to visualize what other emotions are associated with it. Since then, there's been numerous changes to the chart and even whole new feeling wheels created, because the emotion placements on the chart are so subjective. Some of these emotions may seem to be placed in odd core emotions based on your own personal experiences and emotions. Bear in mind that this is primarily used as a tool for counseling and therapy called "emotionally focused therapy" or EFT. There was enough research on this type of therapy and validation from its uses that I thought it would make a powerful tool for roleplay and decided to incorporate it.

EMOTION SPIKES

If you look to the side of the states on the character sheet, there are places to mark bubbles. Every time you roll that state, you mark a bubble on it. These are called emotion spikes. The more you roll that emotion, the more intense that emotion will become for that character in the fiction. When you reach the last check mark, you change that state, temporarily, to +1 and all the other ones to -2. In order for a character to get out of this state where they are experiencing a single emotion acutely, there is a special move, called alleviate. Alleviate is a different type of move from the basic moves in terms of how it works, and will be discussed later on, on page 44. For now, suffice to say that it is a mechanical tool in the game to help people keep track of how intensely they are experiencing the emotion during gameplay. When you continue to experience something, it grows until it is resolved. When you're triggering moves and you're in the same state, things are getting more intense for your protagonist.

In the example with Takeshi using his Sad state when searching for his sword, he rolled his modifier, which was -1. He also would mark one of the bubbles next to his Sad state since that's what he was when he rolled. Each time he rolls that state he would mark a bubble and, if he should ever mark the fifth bubble, he would trigger the alleviate move.





MITIGATING STATES

Describing in the fiction how the character deals with feeling a certain way is a means to mitigate these emotional spikes in the fiction. For instance, if a protagonist is almost maxed out in the Mad state, the player might describe how they become Peaceful when rolling the next state, as long as it makes sense for their character in the fiction. If they were to do so, they would add one emotional spike to Peaceful and remove one from Mad.

MC: Alright, let's cut back to Block perched on the electric billboard of the Origami hotel. Last time we saw you, you popped some guy using your mag sniper rifle when you saw that a group of guys were dragging Red out of the pub. When you shoot one of the guys, his head snaps back and the other guy that was carrying Red drops him. He starts firing off bursts around you and other likely vantage spots. So far he hasn't come all that close, but he could get lucky if he continues. His partner gets that glazed-over look people get when they're using their internal interface. So one guy's actively scanning for you, the other guy is taking pot shots in your general direction. What do you do?

JIM: Well, I think it's pretty unlikely this guy is going to tag me from here, whereas the other guy is probably trying to signal backup or something with his interface, right? I'm going to try and plug that guy first. For now, Red seems ok. I close my eyes and picture Carina in my mind. We're lying in the tall grass close to an LZ and she's teaching me how to shoot. She smiles when I miss a shot and tells me to take a deep breath, aim, and squeeze the trigger. She tells me to try again, and then I'm back in my perch on the sign. I open my eyes and I squeeze the trigger. Maybe the camera zooms in on Block and he's as serene as a Hindu cow as he lines a shot up right between the guy's eyes.

MC: Cool, I like it. Roll neutralize for me then and make sure you erase a Scared bubble since it's opposing Peaceful, which you were clearly going for.

Whenever a player is describing an emotion they may remove an emotional spike of the opposing state. The player still marks a spike in the state they use even when it opposes another state. You'll know if emotions oppose each other because they're grouped together on the character sheet. Mad and Peaceful, Sad and Joyful, Powerful and Scared; each oppose one another.

ASSIGNING VALUES TO STATES

Every player starts with the same six state values, but can distribute any of the numbers into any state that they like. These values are: -1, 0, 0, +1, +1, and +2. When you think about the implications of assigning the numbers, remember that a -1 in a state means that things tend to go wrong the most when the protagonist is experiencing that emotion, +2 things most often go their way, and work your way out from there. Furthermore, you could look at it from another point of view and say that the +2 means the protagonist is most comfortable with this emotion, and the -1 means they have problems dealing with or facing this emotion. The zeroes and +1 modifiers are something in the middle—they're probably pretty familiar with the emotions, and things can go either way for them when in these emotional states. Ultimately, how you go about assigning your states is up to you but it's good to have a justification in your head for why you're doing so.

During character creation, Joan goes about assigning her states to her protagonist, Hannah. She envisions her as an optimistic and cheerful person so she puts her +2 in Joyful. She sees her not really identifying with being fearful, because she's so optimistic, she's only Scared for split-seconds, mostly when she's surprised. Bearing that in mind, she puts her -1 in Scared. She feels like Hannah has a temper and feels confident most of the time, so she puts +1 in the Mad and Powerful boxes.

That leaves her with a 0 in Peaceful, which she figures makes sense given that some of the emotions coming from that core are pensive and thoughtful. Hannah is more likely to react impulsively than think on her actions due to her temper, and is generally pretty daring. When she's at her lowest is when she's feeling helpless, insecure, and anxious.

When you start playing, sometimes how you think or have your protagonist act or react is different than what you initially thought. Don't sweat it; at the end of the first session, work with the MC and swap state modifiers to fit your new understanding of your protagonist. After the first session you should have a fairly clear understanding of your character; after the first session, though, if they react differently than how you thought, it's just the character changing and growing, and being dynamic.

Remember to stay away from the idea of emotions meaning that your protagonist is bad or good at something while in this state; it's better to think of it as just the propensity for the character to act in a certain manner.

☒ ALLEVIATE

Alleviate is a special move that works a bit differently than the basic moves. The basic moves all trigger when something is described in the fiction. While this is also somewhat true for alleviate, what triggers it is the buildup of emotion, which is represented by the emotion spike bubbles next to each state.

When a PC marks the fifth bubble in an emotion all of the modifiers change and the state that the fifth bubble was marked in becomes +1 and all others are temporarily locked in at -2. In addition, the player chooses one of the following when another move is triggered:

To keep using the spiked out emotion, in which case the emotion spike in that state decreases by 1. When all emotion spikes have been removed, all state modifiers go back to normal.

To use a different state at a -2. If they do so they may erase all emotion spikes in the spiked out state. They must still mark an emotion spike in the state they just rolled.

**It seems to have become
a habit of mine, to refuse
the things that would give
me comfort.**

Sarah Lyons Fleming, *Until the End of the World*

- MC:** Alright Hermes, you took a shot at the drone and missed, and you spiked out your Mad state in the process, right? So I think what makes sense is you're just so pissed about missing! You're the best, but this thing is just too damn nimble and small, you know?! All you see is this bloody drone whipping around like it's taunting you. So now you'll take +1 in Mad, and -2 to everything else. What do you want to do about that drone?
- HERMES:** Oh, I embrace the rage 'cause this damn drone is going down! Let me decrease my Mad spikes by 1 here and then I'll roll. I'm going to just go full-auto with my plasma rifle, and pepper the whole area around it.
- MC:** Cool, it sounds like you're trying to neutralize it, so go ahead and roll that and add the +1.
- MC:** He screams at you Serena, no, he bellows. And then when he sees you not taking the bait, he tells you he knows what happened to your sister.
- SERENA:** He's a liar! She's dead!
- MC:** Remember you already tried to sway him, what do you want to do now?
- SERENA:** If there's even a chance...I crack him over the head with my gun, and scream at him to tell me what he knows or else! I'm anxious, so I'll mark a spike in Scared...and that's my fifth spike there. But I gotta know what this guy knows, even if he was just messing with me and actually knows nothing. I tell him to tell me what he knows, and press the gun into his eye socket to let him know what will happen if he doesn't answer.
- MC:** Alright, that's a pretty clear ultimatum. Doesn't seem like you're very anxious anymore though.
- SERENA:** Nah, I'm going to take the -2 when I roll ultimatum I guess, 'cause she's more angry than she is anxious at this point.
- MC:** Sounds good, erase all your spikes in Scared and roll it up for me.

THE BASIC MOVES

When a move triggers, this is an example of your agency in the fiction being asserted. Sometimes it happens exactly as you'd like, other times it's a compromise, and other times it just doesn't go your way at all. If we keep using the analogy that the fiction should be thought of like a movie or TV show, as scenes are being described as such, your portrayal of your protagonist and what happens to cause a move to trigger can be embellished and portrayed as you see fit as long as the tone is in fitting with the media you're trying to emulate. What you say you do, and how you do it, should flow organically from what's happening in the scene and what's already been established in the fiction. Remember that you can assert your own will on the fiction just as the MC does, and make it as evocative as possible in order to contribute and propel that tone and desired media emulation. Go into as much detail, or as little detail as fits your play style describing the moments of what you say or do leading up to and including triggering a move, bearing in mind your agency within the fiction.

Some of the basic moves were referenced earlier, now that you know some of the mechanics behind making a move, let's go into detail about each move:

**You will be required to do wrong
no matter where you go.
It is the basic condition of life,
to be required to violate your own
identity.**

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*



RISK

When you are aware of and act to avoid imminent danger, say how you do it and roll. On a 10+, you do as you describe and the danger doesn't come to bear. On a 7–9, in the doing of it there will be a cost, complication, or choice introduced by the MC.

You use this move when acting under extreme duress or direct danger. What the danger is should always be clear and obvious in the fiction. If it isn't, then there isn't an imminent threat to face yet so play should continue or the fiction should be clarified until the danger is made obvious and everyone is on the same page.

When you attempt something that is risky, requires concentration, or requires keeping your composure, it's fair game for triggering *Risk*. It's more of a catch-all move that can cover a lot of different things. When it feels like you're doing something that is risky, dangerous, or you're in a situation in which there's a lot of dramatic tension built up around doing a certain thing, the MC may call for this move. If they do, they will always explain what the danger is and make sure the situation is clear.

MC: While making your way across the street towards the Ishikara corporate building glowing in the distance, you hear a noise coming from down the road. When you listen a bit more intently you place the sound from back when you were in the first techno organic war. It's the low hum of an outfitted hover vehicle used by private military and it's getting closer towards you. What do you do?

EMBER: Shoot! I don't know if I have enough time before they get here, but I want to activate my thermo-optic camouflage while grabbing at my hood and pulling it over my head to make myself invisible!

MC: OK, you're going to be at Risk, with the danger being you can't do it in time and they arrive to spot you booting up your camo.

EMBER: I scramble to get it operational and covered, I get an 8 including my Scared modifier. I'll mark that emotion spike—the first of many the way this is going.

MC: You boot up the camo just in time as the hover vehicle swings around the corner. Its searchlight is piercing even when not aimed at you and it looks like they're going to sweep it in your direction, too. You realize that you've still got your backpack on though, and it's not integrated into your camo so there's just a floating bag in the street now. You can toss it if you want, but remember you've got some pretty sensitive explosives you salvaged in there. What do you want to do?

MC: You're scaling the massive Argento tower with ease using your hand grips. Just as you're about to hoist yourself up over the ledge, a man in sunglasses pokes his head out and smiles down at you. He shows you his gun and motions for you to come over the top and then cocks his head and raises his arm up to it. You can guess he's probably about to talk to someone and sound the alarm. What do you do?

HYPE: Instead of climbing up nice and slow like he expects, I'm gonna rely on my cybernetic arm to sling me over. I want to spring up vertically, draw my distortion blade and slice into his arm on the way down to stop him.

MC: That sounds pretty cool, only thing is he's got his gun out too. Let's see if you're quick enough to get the drop on him.

**I can't go underground
for a year, ten years,
my whole life, waiting for
freedom to be handed to me.
Freedom is something you
have to take for yourself.**

Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*

PROBE

When you pay attention, study, or examine someone's reactions during an interaction in an attempt to learn more about them, roll. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7–9, hold 1. Spend hold 1 for 1 to ask the following questions. When the interaction ends the hold expires.

- Are you telling the truth?
- What are you really feeling?
- What do you intend to do?
- What do you wish I'd do?
- How could I get you to_____?

When you interact with someone and decide to probe them, you're studying them, sizing them up, or paying attention to what they are doing and saying intently. You do it to gain more information about them—usually in order to then try and get what you want from them. It could also be for peace of mind, so you can believe the information you're getting from someone. These questions can be asked during the course of an entire interaction and do not have to be asked right away or in rapid fire. They can also be formulated in other ways, so don't feel obligated to use the exact wording, as long as the answers they drive at are similar.

KRIS: I walk up to Rez and motion for him to come closer. As he does, I want to size him up and try and figure him out while we are talking.

MC: Sure, so he walks up to you and you're studying his movements and body language. Let's see how good you are at it, go ahead and roll probe.

KRIS: I'm pretty pissed off after what happened to Zeke, I'm on edge and want answers so I'll add Mad. I'm at three emotion spikes in Mad now, and I get a total of 8.

MC: Cool, yeah, so maybe he's a little bit intimidated even. You're scrutinizing him and are clearly ready to bite someone's head off.

KRIS: Yeah, so I put a threatening hand on his shoulder and tighten my hold a little bit. I'll ask him where Harold keeps his prisoners, and, before he answers, I want to spend a hold to know if he's telling the truth or not.

MC: He looks at you and is sweating, his cheap cybernetic leg is not responding well to his adrenaline and is twitching all over the place. Finally, he licks his lips and his blue eyes look into yours. When he says he has no idea where he would keep his prisoners, his hands clench and you feel his pulse quicken, expecting you to hit him even without you saying anything, because he's lying and he knows you know he is. What do you do?

MC: Alright Jaxx, you walk into a pretty tight scene here. Your wife is in her eveningwear all dressed up and ready to head out with you, but her mascara is running. She's crying because the man you know as Graft is holding her neck with one hand, and has a pistol in the other. There's maybe 50 feet between you and them, looking down the hallway into your apartment. He's got her leaned up against the sink. Your wife sobs when Graft shouts at you. "Give me the disc Jaxx, or your wife is the one to pay for your mistakes!" What do you do?

JAXX: I zoom in on him with my cyber eyes and use my heads-up display to pull up everything I know about him, as well as anything that can be found quickly on the net.

MC: Sounds like you're probing him. Why don't you roll that for me?

JAXX: I'm rolling Sad, because Jaxx is feeling guilty. He was warned these guys were crazy, just didn't know how crazy. I think with just one emotion spike in it he's keeping it under wraps though. That's a 9. I look at him and wait for the info to be displayed about his biometrics in particular, I'm looking for what he intends to do.

MC: You can tell he means it and the biometrics support that. He's going to shoot someone if you don't do something, right now. What do you do?

🎲 LIFT THE VEIL

When you try to pierce the constant illusion of *The Veil*, search for information, or recall something you may already be privy to, roll. On a hit, the MC will tell you something new and interesting about the current situation. On any roll the MC will ask you a question or two; answer them.

On a 10+, the MC will give you good detail.

On a 7–9, the MC will give you an impression.

When you need more information but can't get it through a social interaction, you can try finding what you need through *The Veil*. It is at once the name of the mixed reality being piped into everyone's brain, the digital environment people can jack into directly, and a vast information database like the internet. It has a wealth of knowledge stored within it, but it also has a lot of misinformation contained within.

You also use this move when trying to “recall” something your protagonist may, or may not, know. It's a way for you to tell your MC, “Hey, I want to make something up right now and have it be true in the fiction.” The MC will ask you questions and the two of you will work together to generate this new knowledge within the fiction. If it wouldn't make sense that you'd know the information, then you're searching for it. If it would make sense that you know the information, we're just using this move to find out just how much and how detailed or accurate what you know is.

Remember that this move is used to generate information when your protagonist needs or wants to know about anything, but only by means of interacting with *The Veil*. The probe move is used when trying to get information out of people.

MC: As you approach the manor on top of the giant skyscraper, you notice that it's in immaculate condition. It calls to mind architecture from ancient Rome but has some strange modern elements as well. They clearly hold no reverence for the old and it comes off looking more tacky than tasteful.

KELO: That's weird. I want to try to ditch the digital illusion and see if that's what it really looks like or what. I'm Peaceful I think, more thoughtful and curious than anything else. As I look out at it I make a mental effort to see the truth of this place – and I get a 12!

MC: Nice! Yeah, the illusion peels back for you and the structure is actually much older than it previously appeared. The parts that appeared to be upgraded are actually not. It's untouched and it does look ancient. It's not exactly falling apart, but you can tell it would take a fortune to restore it. The upgrade ruse might be an attempt to dissuade people from taking too close a look at it.

MC: When she looks at you, Sree, she shoots you a look of surprise, before quickly smothering it. She tries to appear natural as she walks away from you, though it's obviously hurried.

SREE: Hmm, not at all suspicious, right? I want to frame that look she gave me and use my neurochip to search for her profile on any database I have access to. She must have recognized me somehow...maybe she's wanted? I'm being discerning and aware, so I'm feeling Powerful as I try to lift this veil...and that's a 10!

MC: Yeah man, she pulls up almost immediately, just not how you think. She's a missing person. And she's been missing for almost a year. Your firm handled the case but it dried up because of a lack of leads. It was a cold case almost the second it was handed over to your firm.

MC: The model that's flying straight by you doesn't seem to have a manufacturers brand on it actually, but I suppose it is possible you've seen it before. Want to try and lift this veil?

HENDRIX: Ok, I'm Peaceful I think, just curious and studying the thing. I got a 9.

MC: Well, the model's definitely modelled after a Keirasawa you're familiar with, but modified. There's quite a few places that would buy them and do that, though. Maybe when you were serving at that corp though, you overheard something you weren't supposed to. That corp and two others were bidding for that same model. Smelt fishy at the time. What two other corps were they, Hendrix?

ANALYZE

When you use what you have at your disposal to assess a place or situation, roll. On a 10, ask 3. On a 7–9, ask two. When you act on the answers given to you by the MC, take +1 forward.

- Where's my best way out/way in/way past?
- How is ____ vulnerable to me?
- Which enemy is the biggest threat?
- What, if anything appears out of place?
- What's my enemy's true position?
- Is this going to get worse before it gets better?

This requires more than just a quick glance. You need to be describing yourself in the world, attempting to figure out what the situation is, what you're looking for and how you go about doing it.

Choosing the best way in, out, or past option does not mean that an escape route is generated just for you. It just means that the MC will give you the best possible option for what you want to do. If there is a way through but there is an obstacle in the way, the MC will let you know.

How something is vulnerable to you could mean any number of things. It might mean finding an emotional weakness, or it could be noticing someone walks with a bit of a hitch in one leg. It might mean realizing a way to play two people off one another, or that a company hasn't kept up with tech to prevent intruders on their information systems.

The biggest threat is something the MC will be able to discern for you fairly easily. Unusually it will be the thing that is going to be immediately interacting with you, but it's also a good way to figure out if there's something more sinister at work, or if someone's trying to play up their worth.

If anything appears to be out of place, the MC will tell you. This does not mean that the MC should think of something that could be out of place, rather they simply call your attention to it if anything is. It could be something hidden, someone trying to hide their true intentions, it being "too quiet," or something revealing, like a CEO with rough, calloused hands.

When you want to know where your enemy is, this is what you choose. If you feel like there is more than meets the eye at work, like maybe a group of thugs taking orders from someone higher up, people hiding from you close-by, or a hacker who's routed his IP address through a number of routers, you've got an option to figure out what your next step is.

Sometimes the best solution is not acting, or knowing that your involvement could make things a whole lot worse. The MC will tell you what the situation is and where it's likely to go.

MC: A hoard of these crazy, mechanical, spider-like things starts making this weird chittering noise. Suddenly, they begin swarming towards you. What do you want to do?

CHARLIE: I take out my giant distortion blade and flick it on, watching the blades alternate with grim satisfaction. I get the AI in my HUD to tag them as they come in, but I'm hoping there's a head I can cut off something in there to win the day or I'm toast.

MC: Sounds like you're analyzing this situation, roll it up.

CHARLIE: I think Bez is definitely Joyful – I haven't had a good fight in a long time. I'm happy now, but we'll see how happy I am once they get here. That'll be an 8...what's my enemy's true position? Does it look like there's a leader... spider...thing?

MC: There's one hanging back, actually. It looks different. Slightly larger, but also more frail. It's got some sort of weird array on its back, too. And Bez? It's opening up...

MC: As you enter the room, the door recedes into an alcove fitted for it. Everything has a thin layer of dust covering it. Even without that, you used to be a cop so you can tell no one's been here for a while. Probably a couple weeks. Other than that though, it appears to be a normal study. There's a bunch of antique collectors stuff that are on some shelves. Some furniture, a desk. It's expensive stuff. You can tell it would have to be custom made. A couple pieces of furniture seem really strange to you though, and they scream money. What do you do?

GRIM: Yeah, well if there's anything I know about rich types from my years on the force, it's that beneath the surface, none of them are normal. I want to go around and inspect the room, looking for anything that looks out of place. Even if it seems small and inconsequential.

MC: Looks like you're analyzing this place. Is Grim frustrated or what? Just another day at the office for him?

GRIM: Just another day at the office, he's calm, so Peaceful I guess. There's probably something comforting in all this, working the scene like he used to. I get an 8 with the modifier from my Peaceful state. Is there anything that stands out based on past experience? (What, if anything, appears out of place?)

SWAY

When you want to get an NPC to do something you want and their motivations don't line up with yours, roll. On a hit, they do it and choose one. On a 7–9, choose two.

- You're gonna owe them some serious Cred.
- Your own Giri is in question now.
- You're gonna need to give them something now instead of later.
- You need to do them a favor first.
- You need to give a piece of yourself to them, body or heart.

There is going to come a time when you want something from somebody. There are lots of ways you can manipulate someone—you might threaten them with harm, try to seduce them, buy them off, or promise them something they want. To sway someone, you do not intend to follow through with a threat, otherwise it is an ultimatum. When their Motivations align with what you're doing to manipulate them, there is no need to roll, as the MC will have an understanding of what a non-player wants and, hopefully, why they want it. Based on the MC's understanding of the character and their Motivations, the MC may simply have them do what you ask, or they might have the character try to get something from you in return. If you know that all they care about is Cred and you use that knowledge in order to get what you want from them, chances are you won't roll as we already know that's what their Motivation is.

Whenever you try and sway someone and their Motivations don't line up with your actions to manipulate them, there is a dice roll. You may not already know what this NPC wants in the fiction as yet, or, for whatever reason, there is a moment where it feels appropriate for a roll to be made rather than the MC simply state how the scene unfolds. In turn, the ways in which an NPC could react to your attempts at manipulating them are many and, for this reason, we look to the dice in order to propel the story forward in an interesting manner that has all of the people at the table playing to find out what happens next.

Some of the things they'll want from you are self-explanatory, like wanting more Cred, or asking you to do something now, not later. But what does it mean to have your own Giri in question? Depending on what you're wanting from them, it might be appropriate to owe them Giri for it. After all, if they go out of their way to do this favor for you, or you're supplicating them because you're in danger—it might be the most appropriate option as this is what would logically follow in the fiction already. Depending on your roll, though, you may end up owing them this and more. When and if someone asks you for a piece of yourself, the MC will clarify what it is they want; depending on the circumstances, they may well want something physical from you, or another form of intimacy like divulging information

you wouldn't otherwise. A secret, a personal experience or memory, a moment of clarity, or relinquishing control of something or yourself could be something needed to persuade another. This, coupled with Giri, can make it a high price to pay if you're not in a position of power trying to get what you need from people more able to cut deals to the betterment of their own interests.

MC: Yeah so, Caster is looking a little uncomfortable, his eyes are darting around and his heart rate is way up. He's starting to sweat and shake his head, about to get out from the booth.

LUMEN: "Come on Caster, I swept this place clean. I don't take chances. We're fine. Sit the hell down and tell me what I want to know, ok?"

MC: Hmm. Yeah, sure, but Caster is paranoid, I don't see him staying here, let alone giving up intel on his boss. You're going to need to promise him something or he's going to bolt.

LUMEN: Alright, alright. Well I know he likes money, that's for sure. I'll throw a 2 Cred brick on the table. That should get him talking, right?

MC: You betcha!

TIARA: "Look, I know what you're after, plain as day. You aren't as suave as you think you are there, champ. But I'll bite. You give me what I want and we just might find ourselves a rendezvous, ya?" I'm lying through my teeth, but I've got him, right?

MC: Hmm, I could see this going multiple ways, he wants you—to be sure. But you're also lying and he's fairly savvy. Go ahead and try to Sway.

TIARA: Sure, I think I'm feeling intelligent predominately, so I'll roll that Powerful. Nice, I got a 10!

MC: Nice, yeah so you've got him for sure. He puts two fingers on his chin as he talks, you've seen this before. Usually what follows next is an attempt to modify the deal, and it's no different this time, either. He says he will tell you whatever you want to know but not now, not here. He makes a gesture with his hand and you get his info to reach him while mobile. It's got a location and time, roughly a few hours from now. You can accept the ping and get the info, which would send your info to him—or not. What do you want to do?

DIVERT

When you engage with someone in an attempt to distract, misdirect, or otherwise direct attention to yourself or elsewhere, roll. On a 10+, pick 3. On a 7–9, pick 2.

- Your actions create an opportunity for you or someone else.
- You glean a flaw or weakness.
- They become confused or flustered.
- You're able to slip away.

When your intent is not to cause harm, but draw attention or gain the upper hand for yourself or another, then the move will trigger. You could be distracting them from something or directing their attention elsewhere in order to pocket something. If there isn't something you want from your target; you're probably trying to con or distract them. If you have a purpose in mind and have a goal to your manipulation of the target, then you're swaying them. If you're harming or beating someone up, you're *Neutralizing* them.

In order for the move to trigger however, there must be a convincing plan of action; that is, there must be a chance of your plan succeeding. If your actions are obvious, your distraction unconvincing, or intentions easily discerned, the move does not trigger.

The MC will tell you what your actions have lent you in the way of an opportunity, depending on the situation in the fiction. Most of the time, *Divert* triggers when you're attempting to distract someone.

When the MC tells you a weakness or flaw, it could be in the actual situation and the plan you devised. It could be witnessing something you normally wouldn't.

When your target becomes confused or flustered, you've either bought yourself the time you needed, distracted their attention, or, most likely, both.

Being able to slip away ensures that you are able to extricate yourself from your situation without incident. If the slip away option is not chosen, the temporarily diverted attention could then fall on you, or the situation could otherwise heat up quickly. They may jump to the wrong conclusion or settle for taking their anger out on you.

MC: Roland looks at you and sneers. He's got a handlebar mustache and it's curving menacingly around his mouth. He says, "I'm never going to let you take the diamonds, they're mine. I know who and what you are, you have no power here. If anything I'm the one owed Giri."

SERENA: "Oh, is that so, Roland? Because I've got red in my ledger here under your name." I turn so if he wants to see it he will have to turn towards me. That should give Ember a chance to make the switch behind him. I'm cocky, so I'm marking Powerful and get a total of 10! Perfect! I choose to confuse him, slip out, and to create an opportunity!

MC: Roland moves aside and Ember makes the switch, no problem. As she does, she notices the table is translucent, and there's this whole other compartment inside with a bag of diamonds. If you had to guess, those are probably the real ones. Looks like he was planning on double-crossing you.

SERENA: As soon as the switch is made and Ember's out I stop scanning my ledger and whip it back into my bag. "You know Roland, whatever, I don't need this trouble. But I'll be back, and when I do I want those diamonds. Got it?" And I walk out at a normal pace onto the street making my way to the LZ.

MC: When you attempt to slide out of your seat Klyde, you're greeted with cold steel pressed against your knee cap. Ivan looks at you and tells you not to move. You hear this come through pretty clear on your coms, what do you do?

PETER: Hmm, when I hear that come over I make my way to the electrical room, still in my janitorial uniform from working the gig. I'm going to throw the main breaker and make the place go completely dark, see if that trips Ivan up! I'm feeling nice and secure here, without guns pointed at my kneecaps so that'll be Peaceful. Even with that, I only get an 8, though. I guess I'll create an opportunity...and then slip away.

MC: So the lights go out right, and for a second it's completely silent. Then, all at once, shouts, a few screams, and you can feel the steel move away from your leg for a split second. What do you do?

ULTIMATUM

When you say what you want and what you will do if you don't get it, roll. On a 10+, they have to choose: make you carry out your threat, or back down and give you what you want. On a 7–9, they also have these options; they can:

- Clearly remove themselves as a threat.
- Fortify themselves.
- Give you something they think you want.
- Attempt to remove you as a threat, after taking the established consequences.
- Tell you what you want to know (or what you want to hear).

Sometimes there's no swaying someone, or maybe you are just more interested in escalating the situation than speaking with them. When you tell someone exactly what you want and establish the consequences for not doing it, you trigger this move. For the purposes of the move, for it to trigger you must be willing to follow through. Whenever you do give an ultimatum, and they choose to endure the consequences, you immediately carry through with the threat. If you do not have the intent to follow through, you can only try to Sway them.

MC: He's not budging dude, he's got one eye on the door, though. His posture is slightly leaning towards it already and he's probably going to bolt any second.

ZONE: "Listen up, chump! You move, you die. Simple as that. Want to end up slag? I can make that happen." I prime the charge on the mag pistol. It hums to life and I'm feeling Powerful. I'm just getting started with one emotion spike in it, too. That nets me a 12.

MC: Damn, man. Yeah, he sighs and sits down and looks at you. "It ain't worth it. What do you want to know? Come on, man, I got a family."

GINGER: "Look, you leave these peace talks and there's no one out there who can help you. You're only useful to me so long as you're facilitating these talks with Cytec. The minute you step out that door, all bets are off." And I take out my particle blaster to reinforce the point. I'm Joyful, little bit sadistic I guess and the guy can probably see it on my face. I get a 7, though. Uh-oh.

MC: He gets up and eyes you. Then, he tries to bolt for the door. Looks like he takes a blast from your particle beam instead though. You do what, 3 harm?

GINGER: Aw, damn. I didn't really think he'd make me zap him. What a fool. Yeah, it does 3 harm, is he dead?

⚔️ NEUTRALIZE

When you use force to attempt to neutralize a threat, take control of a situation, or maintain hold of something you have with the chance of taking harm yourself, roll. On a 10+, you generate 3 hold and take no harm in the doing. On 7–9, you generate 2 hold and you will take harm in the doing. Spend your hold 1 for 1 during the scene to:

- Inflict harm.
- Take away an advantage (requires 2 hold to be spent).
- Suffer little harm.
- Force a change of location (1 hold and the MC chooses the new location, 2 and you do).
- Impress, dismay or frighten your opponent.

When you attack someone unsuspecting or helpless, simply inflict harm as established. If there's a chance you could miss, or take harm yourself in the doing in any way, *Neutralize* triggers.

At this point, things have escalated to the point where harm is a distinct possibility. As soon as the possibility of harm arises, in order to take control of a situation, remove a threat, or maintain your position or a belonging, you've got to roll to neutralize it. This applies to a really wide number of scenarios. It could be your safe house being attacked that you want to maintain control over, or it could be your eyes as someone tries to hack into your cybernetics, with an exchange of harm. It could be trying to steal something from someone else, or disable someone without doing harm but with the possibility of harm being done to you.

Whatever the circumstance, *Neutralize* is used only when there is a possible exchange of harm. It's for confronting direct, immediate threats.

When you roll a 10+, you do what you describe, choose your options and don't need to worry about being harmed. On a 7–9, you will be taking harm in the doing. Your armor might block all or some of it, or you might choose to suffer little harm in order to mitigate the damage done to you.

When you spend a hold, you deal the amount of harm your weapon does. Harm is described in more detail later on, on page 100.

Spending hold is not the same as choosing options. When you spend hold it's because you're choosing to do something in the scene as well as describing what it is you do. Think of your hold in the *Neutralize* move as a whole separate trigger of the move—each time you do it. And remember, to do it, you do it. You must actually describe what you're doing to spend the hold and then it considered "spent." Don't simply choose options on the list and have the MC narrate what will happen, or you'll miss out on having narrative control and getting to transcribe what you see your protagonist

doing in the scene directly to those at the table. Tell the MC what you do to have your hold be consumed by your protagonist's actual actions within the fiction. You the player have control over what your protagonist does and how they do it with that hold you have. The spotlight is on you and how you envision your protagonist doing the thing, while always keeping in mind it must make sense within the fiction. The MC will jump in when fictionally appropriate based on your roll and how everything but you would react to what your protagonist is doing.

An advantage is anything that gives your opponent the ability to do something they would otherwise be unable to do. Things like weapons, armor, or certain technologies they're employing to hinder you or aid themselves are an advantage. If you perceive an advantage they have what could be damaged, broken, or otherwise taken away, you can petition the MC and they will tell you if it is viable and makes sense in the fiction. This can have a very powerful, immediate effect on the fiction, and that's why it costs two hold to do.

When you choose to suffer little harm, whatever harm inflicted is reduced by one. You'll need to work with the MC to justify it in the fiction—maybe you dive out of the way and the bullet only clips you, or it does hit you but in a non-vital area.

When you force a change of location it also needs to make sense in the fiction. If there is nowhere the conflict could be moved to, then this option wouldn't make much sense to choose. If someone is advancing on your position though, maybe you spend this hold to drive them back or vice versa. Perhaps it makes sense to spend two hold and maneuver them into a trap or situation where another ally can act because you can't without exposing yourself. When you choose this and spend hold, you still need the fictional justification in order maneuver them or propel the scene in that direction. If you choose once, it happens but the MC decides the change of location based on the fiction instead of you.

Impress, dismay, or frighten can mean a lot of different things, and you are not the one who chooses which possibility comes into effect, although you should make your intent known with your action when you use your hold; the MC will tell you what happens depending on the circumstances and the fiction. Maybe a savage attack weakens resolve, or frightens a character in the vicinity, or ends up caught on tape and you're approached later on for a job.

- MC:** When you rappel down into the room you see motion sensors and some other sophisticated equipment. There are oscillating lasers moving around in seemingly random patterns and you know that getting nicked by that wouldn't just set off an alarm, it'd hurt, too. Below the lasers, there's a lone guard standing at attention by the case.
- KANE:** Ok, well I'm going to try to take this guy out without raising any alarms. I slowly place my distortion knife in my mouth and bite down on it, trying not to make a sound. I'm going to attempt to slide through the net and then deal with the guard.
- MC:** I think you're neutralizing him, then. Sound right?
- KANE:** Yeah, sounds good. I've never done this before...I get an 8 with Chip feeling insecure, which in the wheel tells me is lumped in with Scared, makes sense. So I get two hold, right?
- MC:** Cool, yeah so I'm picturing Chip sliding down, timing the decent to the lasers' movements. Then you pause as the guard starts moving around and maybe one of the lasers singes the side of your arm.
- KANE:** Ah! Ok yeah, it really burns and I start to sweat but I keep my cool. When I feel it, I twist so the laser hits up against my armor padding instead, 'cause I want to suffer little harm. Then, I drop down and grab the knife from my mouth, and bury it in the guard in one smooth motion.
- MC:** Yeah it singes you just a bit there before you react, so you take just the 1 harm. The guard pauses and begins to tense up as the room turns red once the laser hits, but collapses to the floor without a sound as you slip your knife between his vertebrae.

MC: You are all just hanging out around the table when a boot shatters the sliding door. You assume what it's attached to will be following it in soon. Glitch saw this coming, though, since he said he was standing beside the door the whole time. Let's see how this goes down Glitch, you know he's coming and he's on the lookout for trouble, what's the plan?

FRANCIS: Yeah, so, Glitch is feeling pretty confident, he's got the drop on this guy, or so he thinks. I'm going to roll Powerful and I'll mark another emotion spike there. Looks like a...9! I'm going to spend my first hold right away to blow him away. Oh! And I'm like, "Dodge this," when I do.

MC: Right, so Bun hears this as he steps through. He thinks he's ready, sweeping to the heavy side of the room. He knows how tricky you guys are after last time. His face has this half angry, half dumbstruck look on his face when he hears you say that so close to him. You blast him and send him flying into the wall, but as he goes down he's able to get a shot off with his Flechette rifle. You feel it slam into you just below the shoulder.

FRANCIS: Argh! Well, I've got 1 hold left, so maybe I'll use that to minimize that harm.

MC: Right, sure, so let's say that you take 1 harm instead because it clips your shoulder and ricochets off. You recover from the shot to see Bun on the ground, his body lifeless.

HELP OR HINDER

When you act to help or impede another player character, say how you do so and roll. On a hit, they take +1 (assist) or -2 (impede) to their roll. On a 7-9, you also expose yourself to danger, retribution or a cost.

This move is used solely when another protagonist is doing something and you want to modify the outcome of what they're doing. If your teammate is about to shoot an innocent or do something you think is wrong, you could actively try to have that not happen. If they're trying to take out some giant mechanized tank that's about to do some serious harm, you'd probably roll to help them out.

In a player-versus-player conflict, both players would probably be rolling this against one another, as long as they could come up with justification for the interference in the fiction. Of course, there are other situations when one protagonist might interfere with another player character—one could be trying to probe the other just to figure out what kind of person they are, for instance. As always, the player helping or hindering needs to clarify in what way they are assisting or interfering with the action in the fiction.

KAZI: I put up my gun and make sure the ammo pack is showing—they're my spider venom shells and they're marked as such. "Do not shoot that woman, we need her. I don't care what your problem with her is, we have to get to the bottom of these killings, ok?"

MC: Well, sounds like you're interfering with Yuri here, right? Let's roll that. Yuri already said he was going to shoot her, so at this point I'll have you roll to shake his resolve and then we'll have Yuri roll to see how it plays out.

REMI: I take out my vibro blade and charge at Stem, shouting Amy's name over all the chaos going on around us. I think I'm trying to neutralize...

JEREMY: Well I'm not just going to stand there and take it, I duck and spin myself out of the way of his crazy charge and pull out my guns. I'm using Powerful because I'm really not all that afraid of Remi; he talks tough, but in a real fight he couldn't take me. That's a 10, so he takes -2 to that roll now, right?

MC: Right. Remi, go ahead and roll neutralize then, but you'll need to minus 2 from the total, please.

🎲 BACKGROUND MOVE

When you defy the constraints of reality within a digital environment, make moves as usual and beware *The Veil*.

This move has no name; it is a reminder that when you are in the digital environment, it is not reality as you know it. As a collective you'll fill in what *The Veil* is as you play to find out. When you're completely in the digital world, is it like *The Matrix*? Or is it something else you all imagine, completely different from what's been posed in media already. When the digital can be present in physical space, how do people perceive information, complex systems, and ideas? Be creative and have fun! Always remember that the digital is a space in the game to primarily have your imaginations run wild and have it bleed into the reality of the fiction.

DUELS

You may find yourself wishing for a more cinematic, robust way to resolve a fight rather than relying on *Neutralize*. Maybe the two opponents are pretty evenly matched, or it's between two protagonists, or it'd just be more exciting to do a duel instead of neutralize and interference moves to resolve the conflict. This is an optional move that you can use when you feel it is necessary.

■ When you initiate single combat with another, answer the following questions and take +1 forward for each answer in the affirmative. Then, roll.

- Do you currently have the upper hand?
- Are you better trained than them?
- Does your equipment give you a particular advantage for this conflict?

On a 10+, you generate 3 hold and your opponent generates 1. On a 7–9, both of you generate 2 hold. On a miss, your opponent generates 3 hold and you generate 1. You may spend hold 1 for 1 at any time to do one thing on the following list as long as you justify your choice in the fiction.

- Inflict harm (minus armor if applicable).
- Block harm (reduces harm by half rounded down).
- Deflect all harm (choose twice).
- Force a change of location, or use the environment to an advantage (generates +1 hold for the next bout).

**The human eye is a
wonderful device.
With a little effort,
it can fail to see even
the most glaring injustice.**

Richard K. Morgan, *Altered Carbon*

FOR PLAYER VS PLAYER: At the end of a bout (once all hold has been used), should both parties wish to continue, the other person then gets to roll to initiate combat with the previous initiator for the next bout using the duel move. Both parties must spend all of their hold before deciding to continue on to another bout or not, if possible.

If one of the players does not wish to continue, the fiction continues to play out, but the initiator cannot simply decide they want to trigger and roll *Neutralize* now that they don't get to roll for the bout. If the initiator decides after their first roll that they do not wish to continue, but the other player does, then the initiator must either try to flee or be at the other player character's mercy.

If it is not obvious and cannot be decided by looking at circumstances in the fiction who should initiate the roll, then the two players can either flip a coin, have a game of rock-paper-scissors, or determine who should go first. However you like as long as they do so in a timely manner.

If you're using the duel move to engage with an NPC, the MC spends the hold during the bout. If you're using the duel move to engage another player character, the bout, and who rolls the duel move, alternates between players. The initiator makes the move first, and hold for both parties is generated as a result. Once all hold is spent, both players decide whether to consent to another bout or not. If they do, the player who initiated last is passive this turn and the other player rolls, generating hold for both parties again, and so on.

When determining the +1 forward on the answers, consult with the MC. Having the upper hand must be apparent within the fiction. If you're a small mousy kid against a battle hardened enforcer, you do not have the upper hand, they do. If you've got a pistol and the other person has a knife, you're better equipped. There are times when the answers are not clear, players simply cannot answer yes to said questions. Again, if there's any doubt, or if a player needs to make an argument that involves the specifications of a weapon, or diagrams, or anything else, just leave it at the question's answer not being obvious and so the player not being able to answer the question in the affirmative.

This is a move, so it does require the marking of any emotional spikes.

LIAM: It's been a long time coming, but I've finally got you just where I want you, Tak.

JACK: Alright, Nester, let's get this over with then. You should probably start since you're the one who found me hiding out.

MC: Cool. So let's see, you guys are both using 3 harm swords, so neither of you has better equipment. Tak, you're already at 1 harm so I'd say Nester has the upper hand on you, though. You were saying your shoulder was a bit messed up. As for better training, Tak has been enforcing his whole life with his sword...so I think he is. Does that sound ok to you both?

JACK AND LIAM: Yeah, ok.

MC: Ok, so you can take +1 forward to your roll.

LIAM: Shit, I got a 7. So I get 2 hold and Tak gets 2 as well. I'm marking an emotion spike in Mad, too. I'm seething—maybe that's why I don't have more hold; I'm way too invested in this to think clearly.

MC: Makes sense! You're dangerously close to losing it too, I'd say. That's your fourth spike in Mad, right?

JACK: So I think we circle each other for a bit, with dust kicking up from my soles as I fly toward you with my distortion blade. I'm going to spin around just as I get to you and use my momentum to come at you with the blade from a different angle. I'm going to spend 1 hold to try and inflict harm with that move.

MC: Alright. Nester, what do you do? His sword is flying out at you from his side!

LIAM: I think what happens is that I swing my sword up to deflect and his blade catches mine. It slides down until it finally cuts into my shoulder though as we lock blades. I'm blocking it instead of deflecting it, so I do take some harm. It's a 3 harm sword, so that's 1.5 because of the block, rounded down means I end up taking 2 harm still because my armor isn't made to block swords. Hmm...so I let him in and cut my shoulder in order to make it look like I'm losing strength, then fling him off me and that's when I strike; I try to drive my blade right into him!

JACK: I'm probably reeling from that hit that sends me flying, but instead of driving into me, I roll out of its way and it just cuts the back of my arm as I roll away from it. So, same deal with blocking, but I've got 1 armor that is made to stop bladed weapons, so I'll only take 1 harm.

MC: Yeah, so you roll forward Tak and you both turn to each other again, weighing your options. What do you think, are you guys going to keep going?

LIAM: Nestor's still pissed; she wants more blood now that she's got a taste for it so she definitely isn't going to stop!

JACK: Tak takes a finger and brushes it along his arm, coming away with blood. He looks into your eyes and then brings the blood up to his mouth, Bruce lee style. I think he's also Mad now, too, so I'll mark that when I roll here.

MC: Let's see, so you're just taking a +1 for being better trained than Nestor, but that's all, roll it up!

JACK: Nice, that's a 10! So 3 hold for me and 1 for you, Nestor.

LIAM: I see him going crazy and tasting his blood and think it's a good time to strike! I roll forward and lunge with my blade!

JACK: The sword plunges forward, but I'm not even there anymore. I spend 2 hold to deflect it, but I do that by just not being in its path. I end up right beside you, take my sword and drive it into your side, using the last hold to inflict harm.

MC: Ok. So, Nestor, that brings you to 1 critical wound, right? You're in pretty bad shape. The distortion blade sinks in and you can feel it working its way into your chest cavity after it pierced through your armor. You collapse. Ok, I'm going to say you're still able to fight though, if you really want to get up. What do you want to do?

JACK: I am not the one with the grudge; I'll only fight if she continues on.

LIAM: I will fight on!

MC: Nestor is pretty stubborn! Well, you don't have any advantages now, so it's just a straight roll.

LIAM: And it'll spike me out, too, in Mad.

MC: Oh, man, well I guess it makes sense why you're so stubborn now. You're not technically triggering a whole new move, though, just marking emotions and taking things forward, so as far as this scene goes we get a clearer picture of Nestor, but you don't need to worry about spiking out until you make a move other than Duel. You're clutching your side where the blood is pouring from and there's no weakness in your eyes. Just the flames of rage.

LIAM: Aw, crap I got a 5, so 1 hold for me.

JACK: I think he looks at you and sees that rage and respects you for not backing down. He smiles lightly, then strikes at your neck.

LIAM: Nestor rolls to the side but probably a second too late and takes some of the damage on the side of her head or something. With 1 hold being used to block, that's her last critical bubble anyhow, so what happens now?

MC: So yeah, I'll give you a detriment instead if you want it. If you can get some medical attention in the next 30 minutes or so, you'll be ok but otherwise you'll have to cross out one of those critical boxes permanently.

JACK: I have a 3 harm micromesh. I place it over your wound, activate it and watch as it knits your flesh back together. When your eyes open you see me standing over you. You hear Tak say you owe him one.

MC: Totally, yeah, saving her life definitely nets you 1 Giri from her. How does Nestor feel about that?



GIRI & PERIPHERAL MOVES

Giri is a Japanese value that translates to “duty” or “obligation” in English. The term has been used in some cyberpunk media and *The Veil* assumes a setting where this concept is still integral to social custom. As such, there are special moves to monitor this debt system in the game. You can get Giri on someone by saving their life, fighting for them, protecting them, or simply feeling indebted to them. Of course, Giri is specific to the person your character has a relationship with and is most easily thought of as an obligation toward someone (if they have Giri on you) or they to you (if you have Giri on them). It is possible to get Giri on another through indirect actions—like getting Giri on a father by saving his son, for instance. In *The Veil*, there is a specific playbook, called the Honorbound, that revolves around Giri so the player of that character plays a large roll at character creation by further defining Giri; otherwise, the moves will do so in a general way that follows from what has been said in this section. Giri is a commodity, except it tracks debts, obligations, social standing, and sometimes honor or face.

There are special moves for Giri that are used by all players, just like the basic moves. They work the same way as basic moves do in that they have a trigger and that some require rolling the dice and others do not.

**It's impossible to move,
to live, to operate at any level
without leaving traces,
bits, seemingly meaningless
fragments of personal information.
Fragments that can be retrieved,
amplified...**

William Gibson, Johnny Mnemonic

📊 STRING

When you deliberately go out of your way to do someone a solid, get them out of a tough spot, or anything else where both parties agree they are in your debt, mark down that you have 1 Giri on them.

The important thing to note about Giri is that both people need to know that there is this exchange going on. It should be crystal clear that they owe you one. If you save someone's life or you give them something they really wanted or needed, it will probably follow pretty naturally that Giri comes into play. Most of the time, Giri is going to be generated as a natural byproduct of what's going on in the fiction, so it can be easy to miss when it needs to come into play. The MC should be paying attention for situations where the NPCs feel like they would owe people and the players need to express it when they feel like they owe someone when they do something for them. Giri might work differently for different people and how the world and setting you create together works will have a lot of influence on this. If someone was trying to commit suicide but you save them, would they feel indebted to you? If someone is from a different area of the world, or from off-planet and they have different customs, it would probably affect the Giri economy.

VIK: "I don't know where she is, man. She just disappears all the time. She won't pick up or tell me what's going on. What am I supposed to do?" I look at you expectantly. What do you do?

FOX: Uh...I think for a bit, looking pensive to buy some time. "Hmm...look, Marie isn't doing what she says she is. She's been on the team a long time... but you deserve to know. She's stepping out on you. I don't know who with, but I overheard a conversation between her and someone named P, and it was not... platonic."

VIK: He gets up and puts a hand on your shoulder. "At least I know now, I guess. That's more than I had before." Also, I think that will net you a Giri, too. Mark down 1 Giri on me. You see some of the worry melt off of his face, replaced with anger.

VIK: I sneak up behind the dude shooting at Fox and throw him off the ledge.

MC: Sure, it's loud and he isn't paying attention, he's down and out with a Wilhelm Scream. Good thing too, what are you at Fox, 1 moderate?

FOX: Yeah, I definitely owe you one for that, I'll mark it down and you can, too.

LEAN ON

When you ask someone to do something you want and use *Giri* you have on them to make things square between yourselves while doing so, if they do it, you erase 1 *Giri* you marked with them for each thing you ask of them.

Other characters might try to get out of debt with you, or you could cash in by having them:

- Bring you something they know you want.
- Fight for you, or put themselves in harm's way.
- Transfer *Giri* owed to them to you.
- Answer questions or provide information you want.

When you collect, transfer, or settle *Giri* you need to reference the *Giri* that's being settled or you're simply just asking them for stuff—or attempting to *Sway* them. Remember, that has to translate from the fiction first. It doesn't have to be elaborate or super detailed, but everyone needs to know what's happening, particularly the MC. When someone does any of the things listed above, they're probably trying to square up on *Giri* and when a debt is settled it should be brought up and be made obvious so the parties involved can mark their sheets appropriately to what's happened in the fiction.

It may play out that someone in your debt just guesses and brings you something they think you want. In that case, it's up to you whether the *Giri* gets settled or not.

Also keep in mind that what you ask someone to do for you should reflect what that *Giri* was about in the first place. If they do something for you and the debt is settled, great, but they might choose not to. If what you ask makes sense for the context of the *Giri* owed and they don't do it, they trigger the *Refute* move. Play the conversations out naturally in the fiction and it should become clear when debts are settled, or not.

FOX: Hey listen, P. I did what you asked and now he's going to come straight to you, like you asked. But you have no idea what that did to the guy. This was a big ask compared to what I did for you. After this, not only are we square, but you owe me one.

MC: "That's fine. You just don't warn him off before he gets to me." Yeah, go ahead and mark a *Giri* on him now and you don't owe him anything, he's totally fine with that, which probably makes you even more uneasy about the whole thing.

REFUTE

When an NPC or a PC has Giri on you and they use it in order to ask you to do something they want but you can't or won't do it, roll and add the number of Giri they have on you. You'll have to make a promise in order to avoid your obligations; make it clear to them what your promise is. If they have 3 Giri or more on you, you cannot refuse them.

On a 7–9, they get an additional 1 Giri from you and it's up to you whether or not you keep your promise later.

On a 10+, they get an additional 2 Giri from you and need a concrete assurance right now to back up the promise.

Refusing a debt is something that is hard to do at all, and only grows increasingly difficult the more you do it. Eventually, you won't be able to at all. *Refute* only triggers if what is being asked of you is fictionally appropriate for what you owe Giri for in the first place. Since both parties agree together when Giri is exchanged, what's being asked of you should also make sense, given that context.

MC: So, Vik, you find Marie easy enough after the fight. What are you doing, Marie?

VALERIE: Me, I'm just smoking a cigar I think, reveling in the glory of work. There's probably a bunch of dead bodies around me. I'm in fatigues and I don't even notice. Just basking in the dawn.

VIK: Well, that's pretty creepy. Ok, well I walk up and I'm like, "Hey, I'm not going to beat around the bush. I just saved Fox's ass, I'm in no mood to mess about, Marie. You stepping out on me? You've been acting funny; I've got a right to know what's going on." And I want to spend a Giri to know if she tells the truth or not.

VALERIE: Ok, well I'm answering that. Out of game, you owe me one Giri too, right? So let me add that... I got a 9 to refute. Marie looks up at you and says, "Now isn't the time Vik, look around you. We'll talk, I promise. I'll find you later."

VIK: Alright, well I have 2 Giri on you now, then. So yeah, I just look at you and say, "You better."

VALERIE: So I approach Vik later that night and throw him my coms device. "Read up cowboy. I'll expect an apology later, jerk."

MC: Sounds like she's giving you something she thinks you want. What do you think?

VIK: Yeah, I think so, I'll take off a Giri depending on what I find. "What's on it, Marie?"

LEVERAGE

When you name someone who you have **Giri** on in order to get something you want, roll + the **Giri** you have on them.

On a 10+, their name is enough to get you what you need and the **Giri** is still owed you.

On a 7–9, in order for you to get what you want the debt might be considered settled if word gets back to them. The MC will tell you how much **Giri** is settled if it does.

As long as you're referencing the **Giri**, even indirectly, to get what you want, you're triggering *Leverage*. The move is mostly there to establish your luck and possible consequences when you name drop someone for effect. It could mean getting something for nothing and still having **Giri** on them, or it could mean having to settle up. It could even mean you owing them **Giri** depending on what you've done.

VIK: “Look buddy, I may not be on your list, but your boss and I go way back. I bet Leona’s sitting in her office right, drinking an electric Kentucky, isn’t she? If you make me call her right now, I’m going to be pissed. Which means she’s going to be pissed. And all of this anger will be directed at you. So what do you say, save everyone some trouble and let me through the damn VIP gate?”

MC: Alright, well it sounds like you’re trying to use Leona as leverage to barge your way in. Do you still have **Giri** on her?

VIK: You bet I do, I’ve got two.

MC: Ok, well go ahead and roll. You can add those two to it. Are you actually pissed?

VIK: Sure am, going to roll Mad...that’s an eight.

MC: “Alright, alright, last thing I need is Leona on my ass right now. Go ahead. Yeah, you’re good, but you just know that she’s going to find out about it at some point. I’ll let you know when.”

📊 STRATEGIZE

When you scrutinize, plan ahead, or confer with each other to achieve a common goal, you gain preparation. If you prepare for a day or two in the fiction, take 1 preparation. If you prepare for a week or longer, take 3. Whenever you enact your stratagem, any of you may spend 1 preparation to take +1 forward on any roll when carrying out your plan.

Sometimes, players will talk amongst each other, in character and out, about a plan they want to put into motion. The MC should take the opportunity to go round robin and spotlight each player once in order to see how they contribute to the plan and so that they all have an equal say as to what everyone should do. Based on the outcome of each person's spotlight and after a plan has been finalized, the players should decide, along with the MC, how long it would take to prepare said plan.

CASEY: "Looks like, based on what we know, this guy's really hard to get to."

MC: Rylan is not wrong; it definitely looks that way based on the data you all extracted. What does Jinx think about all this?

OLLIE: Jinx clears her throat and looks thoughtful. "We've got two problems here, right? One: we don't know this guy's schedule and habits yet. If we want to catch him unawares, let's find that out first. Second problem is a big one: he's super augmented and always connected, which means he's always able to dial out for backup, alert people, or otherwise get help, right?"

MC: Absolutely. What do you think you guys should do about that, Rez?

KARA: We all know Rez is down for some subterfuge, always. "I think we go get some custom tech built for us and then the others can tail this guy for a few days and learn his routine and habits so we know when to hit him."

CASEY: "I'm definitely on getting the tech, I know someone..."

MC: Nice, so who's going to tail this guy? How are you trying to avoid notice and how long are you going to be doing this for?

OLLIE: I'd say a solid week so we know what his patterns are for that entire time, maybe they change daily.

MC: Ok, well I think that's a plan as long as you all agree and everyone's had their say? If you're doing this for a week, you'll gain 3 preparation. I think what makes the most sense is to maybe have a scene with Rylan in the bazar and then Jinx and Rez shadowing this guy. Sound good to everyone?

LINK

The Link move is something any player can do whenever they like but is considered special because it's not something that's going to be used as much as the other moves. Link is used for a player to generate a non-player character. The roll will define some of the relationship already and the PC and MC will fill in the rest.

When you introduce a new NPC to the game by name, look, and outlook, decide how you know them and feel about them and roll. On a 10+, the relationship is in good standing. On a 7–9, it's strained or frayed in some way and they have 1 Giri on you. On a miss, in addition to what the MC says, they also have 1 Giri on you.

A relationship in good standing is one where you know what to expect from one another with no ill feelings involved in the dynamic. If it's strained or frayed, you don't get along all that well, there's something that's come between you, or perhaps time and distance has played a factor and you're not all that sure where the standing is. When you owe them 1 Giri, there was something that caused this exchange. Make sure you're defining this NPC with a name, look, and outlook, and then flesh out why you may owe them Giri and what exactly that relationship looks like. Then proceed with the fiction with them as an established named NPC.

MC: Alright so Rylan knows someone, eh?

CASEY: Yeah, I've known ol' Hemp since way back. She's a typical merch, always greedy and rubbing her hands together when you're making deals together. She's like this old hippie crony. She's always wearing the trend setting hipster wear and probably doesn't smell so great either. She's got a particular client base as all the hipsters do. You gotta usually be somebody for her to notice.

MC: Hm, cool cool. Alright, well let's see this Link roll then.

CASEY: Right, well. I'd say I probably find her amusing. She's extravagant and the fact that she only does dealings with certain people and I'm one of them makes me happy. So I'm going to roll Joyful. Which gives me an 11! Nice. So I think we've probably had some past dealings that have gone well. Actually, probably what happens is she usually uses me because I'm an easy mark. She's probably ripped me off the first few times and maybe I even knew that and kept coming anyways so now there's this comfortable relationship. One where I maybe don't get ripped off anymore, hopefully.



TAGS

In *The Veil*, lots of moves, weapons, and armor use tags; a tag is a word used to describe how a certain thing interacts with the fiction. They are concrete in that they have an effect on the fiction and that effect will always be the same. However, defining tags is left mostly to you and the rest of the players. For example, when someone gets shot by a weapon that has the “shock” tag, they take damage and get shocked. How that damage happens and what that looks like is a conversation between the players and the MC. It could be that when hit with a weapon with the “shock” tag, it stuns the target, or maybe it just blows through individuals like regular bullets today, or, similarly to plasma, burns through things, too. Maybe it lets out a small EMP blast and disables any cybernetics if it hits someone—it’s all about the world and how you and the rest of the players want it to work.

Casey’s group decided that their protagonists are playing in a really hi-tech, futuristic setting. One of her weapons is a futuristic pistol that shoots bolts of energy. It deals 2 harm, the range is close, and it has the “shocking” tag, which she describes as meaning that each bolt acts kind of like a blast from a Taser. It can disrupt the target’s nervous system in addition to just dealing damage.

If this blast were to hit armor that had a tag on it, the tag on the armor would inform what happens in the fiction as well. For instance, if someone wearing armor that blocks 1 harm and describes it as being a Kevlar vest by putting a tag called “Kevlar” on it, this means that when something like a gun or fist strikes the armor, the armor would block it and absorb 1 harm of damage each time it is struck. However, if someone attacked with a sword, the armor would probably not absorb any harm from it because it was designed to block bullets, not swords. A lot of the time, tags define things we already know about the world, but we aren’t always familiar with how certain things in the future work, so it’s a simple way to keep everyone on the same page.

Since tags help describe what happens in the fiction and the players build the fiction around them, there are no single set of tags that work for everything. Players and their MC should be making tags up as needed to facilitate game play and to make the things in the game more evocative and concrete in everyone’s mind. They can, and should, be applied to things other than just weapons and armor, too.

CASEY: Rylan wants to go and buy some specialized tech designed to block any and all communications immediately around her for the upcoming job.

MC: OK, yeah, you've been to this market before, you've done business with Hemp. She looks up at you after she hears what you ask. "Jamming hey? Well, that'll be 2 Cred. Assuming you want it just for a few feet around you. Further is gonna cost ya." She rubs her hands together and smiles.

CASEY: Rylan laughs, "Yeah, close will have to do Hemp. This is everything I've got on me right now." I take out my Cred stick and the sheen from my eyes kind of goes away as I see the color drain from my Cred stick when I place it into her console.

MC: She nods at you and hands you a metallic ball that looks like a thermal detonator. "This will do what you want. Turn that baby on and ain't nobody can make a connection through this. Only works so far though, like maybe 10 meters I'd say." You can go ahead and mark it down. It has two tags. One for jamming, one for close range.

The following tags are the ones that came up the most often during play and should be a great starting point. You can work with the MC and make your own tags, or just use these—whatever works for your group. Take tags into consideration when creating weapons and armor, gear, futuristic tech for the world, and custom moves of any kind. Don't worry too much right now about some of the implications of some of these tags since we haven't talked in detail about things like harm, you can come back to these and use them as needed when you start creating your protagonist and playing a game.

RANGE TAGS

AREA: This weapon affects an area with its fire, not just a single target. It ignores the group's size when determining harm inflicted only if the targets are grouped together enough for it to apply to them all. Use common sense and clarify the fiction if need be.

AUTO-FIRE: The weapon can use the Area tag, but when it does so it uses all of its ammunition and needs to be reloaded.

CLOSE: Somewhere between 2 and 10 meters.

CLOSE/FAR: Both tags apply.

FAR: All the way from 10 meters to about a block away.

FURTHER: Effective from a block away, to a couple hundred meters away.

HAND: Effective within an easy radius of movement. 1–2 meters.

HAND/CLOSE: Both tags apply.

INTIMATE: Used in close quarters, within arm's reach of you.

INTIMATE/HAND: Both tags apply.

DRAWBACK TAGS

LOUD: Draws attention when used; is noisy.

MESSY: Causes severe damage. It cannot be aimed for precise shots or work; it damages the surrounding target along with the target.

RELOAD: Weapon has limited ammo that needs to be reloaded often when used.

INDISCREET: Attention-grabbing; very noticeable.

ADVANTAGEOUS TAGS

N ARMOR: Every time this tag is chosen it means that it will block 1 harm for each time it is selected (may not exceed 2 armor).

QUIET: Makes little noise.

SILENCED: Makes little noise due to a separate piece inserted that degrades with use.

SIGHTED: Adds (+far).

SCOPED: Adds (+1 harm at further).

HI-POWERED: Adds (+1 harm).

AUTOMATIC: Adds (+area).

ORNATE: Adds (+valuable).

ANTIQUÉ: Adds (+valuable).

INFINITE: Does not run out of ammo.

VALUABLE: The object is rare or clearly worth a lot. It usually has qualities about it that would make someone think of its value rather than its function.

AMMO TAGS

When you have this type of ammo, talk at the table and with the MC about when ammo should generally run out. It doesn't have to be specific, but if a player has used a great deal of it, or the player has very little of it, they can expect to run out when it is dramatically appropriate. When purchasing ammo of these special types, it is assumed you're getting one clip or magazine's worth depending on the weapon you're buying it for. Once this special ammunition is exhausted, you're back to the normal type that does damage as normal without modification.

ARMOR PIERCING (AP) AMMO: Goes through armor.

AIRBURST AMMO: When you shoot these types of bullets, they sense the proximity of targets and explode beforehand. When you use this ammo, add +1 harm and add the area and messy tags to the weapon.

EXPLOSIVE AMMO: Blows up when it hits something; It does +1 harm and adds the area tag to a weapon.

SMART AMMO: Changes the harm to s harm (see Damage Tags) when fired.

TECHNOLOGICAL TAGS

MULTI-SPECTRUM: Can see multiple wavelengths.

AMPLIFICATION: Increases the range at which you see or hear something.

COMMUNICATION: Affords the ability to communicate by means other than neurochip.

MAGNIFICATION: Zooms in so you are able to see further than the human eye.

CAMOUFLAGE: Blends in with the surrounding environment.

RECORDING: Records whatever input it's given, generally from what you're seeing, hearing, or both.

DAMPENING: Cuts-off or weakens outgoing signals.

INTERCEPTING: Able to pick-up, and perhaps even manipulate outgoing signals.

HUD: Heads-up display, an interface that displays pertinent information by projecting it on the eye or other surface.

STORAGE: A compartment or drive, internal or external, which can be used to store information or objects.

REMOTE: Able to be controlled from afar.

DERMA-LINKED: Embedded within or otherwise interacts with skin.

MULTI-TASK: Able to perform more than one task at any given time.

ENCRYPTED: Difficult to access without the proper key or password.

COMPENSATING: Helps to correct for human error. Could remove recoil or compensate for a person's heartbeat, for example.

IMPLANTED: Housed within the body.

JAMMING: Capable of preventing any incoming and outgoing specified signal.

THERMO-GRAPHIC: Able to see and measure heat distribution.

RESPONSIVE: Reliable and intuitive to use.

DURABLE: Hard to break; long-lasting.

INTEGRATED: A system or piece of technology that is housed within another system.

DETACHABLE: Can be removed from its housing.

CUSTOM TECH EXAMPLES

FACIAL HAIR DART SYSTEM: (1 Harm AP intimate quiet reload poisonous)

MONOFILAMENT WHIP: (2 Harm AP close/area messy unwieldy)

B.I.R.D: Biosynthetic Information Relay Device. Communication systems through bloodstream and other organic substances that Relays pertinent information to other team members. Vitals, GPS, etc. (Multi-task Interface discreet intercepting communications)

DAMAGE TAGS

+N HARM: Every time you pick this it means that it will do 1 harm for every time it is selected.

+S HARM: Every time you pick this tag it means that it will do stun damage, which is not tracked like harm is.

HUMANITY HARM: Mental distress that specifically causes the target to question their identity.

DAMAGE TYPES

Damage types are only used to explain what type of damage is being done within the fiction. Anytime anything does n harm, where n is the number of harm it causes, it can also be a damage type tag. It still will always do the same amount of damage it's assigned, but within the fiction we now know what that damage looks like. If a weapon does not have a damage type assigned, it means the weapon is being used in the traditional sense and does not need to be modified with a damage type.

FLECHETTE: Fires clusters of small darts meant to damage or poison.

KINETIC: Discharges a wave of force.

SHOCKING: Discharges electrical energy, interferes with nervous system.

BURNING: Discharges thermal energy.

PLASMA: Discharges superhot, plasma energy.

PARTICLE: Discharges a beam consisting of particles.

MAGNETIC: Uses magnetic forces to propel some form of projectile.

EXPLODING: Discharges a great deal of energy and usually produces a great deal of volume and high temperatures.

DISTORTING: A type of damage that accelerates a round rapidly. Could also be applied to tech that interferes with something else.

EMP: Electromagnetic pulse, renders most electrically-operated devices inoperable for some time.

**The issue's not whether
you're paranoid, Lenny, I mean
look at this shit, the issue
is whether you're paranoid
enough.**

Strange Days

CYBERNETICS

Cybernetics often play a large part in cyberpunk settings and fleshing out what cybernetics are and how they are used helps to establish some ways in which your protagonist might interact with the world. It also establishes some negative tags that could come up in play that help the MC make the technology feel real and fallible.

The Veil assumes that everyone is playing in a setting where almost everyone has a neurochip that grants them access to a digital environment. They can search for information, stay in contact with others, and perform various tasks as you or I would but by using a computer. What accessing the digital environment looks like is up to you and the rest of your group. When you enter digital environments, you present a digital self-image with your appearance which is able to interact in the same manner as it would in reality. Aside from the neurochip, this game also assumes that some people in the general population have cybernetics, technology that replaces human appendages, which modifies the way in which they interact with the neurochip, the digital environment, and other humans. People have technological enhancements in all different ways and the tags listed previously are used to describe just what function these cybernetics serve within the fiction.

You can create and have any kind of cybernetics you'd like, with a tag describing it, as long as it is listed on your character sheet as an option. If it is not, you cannot start with that type of cybernetics. That said, nothing is stopping you from getting modifications done post-character creation. All cybernetics start with a set amount of tags that are based on size. To begin with, the smaller the cybernetic system, the more tags it can have and vice versa. Because cybernetics that take up more area could potentially be used to get more armor or physical tags, they needed to be limited. Do you want to have a unique tag with unique functionality, or do you want a cybernetic that provides more protection? If it's small, like eyes or ears, it has three tags; for really large ones, like a completely cybernetic torso, one tag. Anything in between can have two tags, such as the interface most protagonists begin play with.

For every tag you want after that, you'll have to handle obtaining it in the fiction after things get rolling. There is a move, called plasma and chrome, designed specifically for this that will come into effect when you find someone that is able to operate on you in order to enhance, remove, install, or otherwise modify any cybernetics that you have access to.

Here are some examples of cybernetics with some tags, but bear in mind that there are far more possibilities:



EYES (3 TAGS): An iris that could shift to view different forms of light in order to spot people, magnify, and record what it sees. The three tags would be written down as: multi-spectrum, magnification, and recording.

EARS (3 TAGS): Ears that could hear other broadcast frequencies, hear across further distances when desirable, and auto-dull sound in cases of explosions or other harmful noises would require three tags as well: dampening, amplification, and interception.

ARM (1 TAG): An arm that looked completely normal, but that housed a compartment within it, would require the storage tag.

LEG (1 TAG): Legs that responded quickly and increased agility would require the responsive tag.

INTERFACE (2 TAGS): If you wanted to be able to pilot a remote plane and do other things at the same time that required your attention, your interface would need to have both the remote tag and the multi-task tag.

Everyone at the table must decide what tags should be applicable in their setting, what effect they should have on the fiction, and use, remove, and add their own tags as necessary.

NEGATIVE TAGS

Every piece of cybernetics has a potential risk or downside to it as well, and that's why you need to choose negative tags for each and every one of them. They might generate feedback, require a great deal of power or energy to operate, be occasionally unreliable, not have all the senses the limbs were born with have, or perhaps be too sensitive and overwhelming. Are some models and manufacturers more reliable than others? Does having cybernetics come with any attached social stigma? In some cyberpunk media, people with cybernetics to augment their life or even just as a replacement for a missing appendage are seen as less than human. In the *Deus Ex game: Mankind Divided*, they are exploring precisely this.

Here are some examples you might find on your character sheet that came up fairly often in play. You can also work with the MC to create your own tags that make sense for the type of cybernetics you have and the game world you create. Try to make your negative tags descriptive so that everyone can mentally visualize what these pieces of cybernetics look like.

- Damaging
- Unreliable
- Susceptible
- Twitchy
- Scarred
- Addictive

After deciding on just what cybernetics you have, if any, the next step is to decide how you were able to get these cybernetics. If you think of a different way in which you were able to get your cybernetics, explore the concept with the MC and add that instead. Otherwise, choose one of the following:

- You struck a bargain for it; you owe Cred for it.
- You stole it or killed for it; you're wanted.
- You had it done in exchange for promises; you owe Giri for it.

KURT: For Holden, I think I want to have cyber eyes that can zoom in and amplify what he can already see. I get three tags for my eyes so maybe...he can see on a bunch of different spectrums. Like heat, ultraviolet, and all that. Maybe he can also record people too since he's kind of a P.I.? That'd be a great way to get proof and record video!

MC: Sure, so write down that it's got the amplification, multi-spectrum, and recording tag next to your cyber eyes option on your character sheet.

- KURT:** Also, I think it'd be cool if he had cyber ears that could amplify sound as well as intercept signals being broadcasted around him, he'd probably want to record that stuff, too. He probably wouldn't be able to see anyways but he could eavesdrop on a private conversation to get the dirt, too, and have a recording of it afterward.
- MC:** For sure. That'll be amplification, intercepting, and then recording again for tags. So, since you chose to have two cybernetics from your possible options, you also need to choose one negative tag for each.
- KURT:** Well, he's just a P.I., so it'd make sense he couldn't afford the good stuff and it was sometimes unreliable.
- MC:** And how did you get this stuff installed?
- HOLDEN:** Makes the most sense for him to have obtained them by owing some Cred. He's working it off, maybe sometimes doing jobs that don't sit well with him.
- MC:** Cool, sure. So who do you owe your Cred to?
- KURT:** Hmm, maybe to this shark on Canning street. He "helps" out everyone in the neighborhood. He's the only one I could get on the down-low.
- MC:** So what's this guy like? Tell me about his place.
- KURT:** It's probably like an old-school, mafia-style, Italian restaurant type of place, but obviously updated for the times. Everyone thinks it's this sweet mom and pop operation and the husband is the face of the place. But anybody in the know goes to his wife for the shadier side of things the restaurant organizes. She looks like the main actress in *The Good Wife* and is really pleasant, until she's not. So far, I'm all paid up, so I'm on her good side.

PLASMA AND CHROME

When you find someone willing to install, remove, or otherwise modify cybernetics for you, use the following options to modify your person:

- Is the surgeon trusted and reputable? If yes, take +1 to the roll.
- Are you having new parts, not used or refurbished ones put in? If yes, take +1 to the roll.
- Are the parts registered to a company, with tracking and legit registration? If yes, take +1 to the roll.
- Do you go through integration therapy in order to remove a negative tag? If yes, take -2 to the roll.
- For each additional tag beyond the default number of tags for the cybernetics being worked on, take -1 to the roll.

On a 10+, all is well. On a 7–9, the MC chooses 1 of the following. You may choose to spend extra Cred in the hopes of a better outcome. For every 1 Cred you spend, take +1 forward.

- It costs more Cred than expected.
- Your body is rejecting the enhancements so the cybernetics need some tweaking, you need some meds, need to get your head right, etc. Cross off an open playbook move until it's repaired.
- It's being tracked by someone or something, or it has a primitive form of A.I installed on it with its own Motivations.
- It will take you a while to get used to the operation of the new cybernetics, take -1 ongoing when using it until the MC says so.
- The cybernetic has more than one negative tag associated with it.

The body rejecting cyberware is a fairly common trope, and although the penalty appears severe initially, repairing should never cost more than 1 Cred. However, it may not be an issue with the cybernetics, it could be that you need meds, or you're having trouble coping. Until it gets sorted, one of your moves can't be used—you choose which one.

Someone could also be tracking the cybernetic for any number of reasons, especially accounting for answers asked previously to generate your roll modifier. Alternatively, if an A.I is installed on the cybernetic the MC determines what the Motivation is for the A.I and, in most cases, should be considered an NPC with said Motivation. More on NPCs and Motivations on page 314.

Since you're required to take a negative tag for any cybernetics you get, when you end up having to take an additional negative tag, the implication is that the cybernetic has more than one problem with it.

MC: It's a pitch black hallway with a thin layer of ice coating the surroundings. Further in the walls constrict into a single file passageway that gives birth to a much larger room. Bottles hang from the ceiling on coils of wire and a faint iridescent glow is the only light in the room. An older man in a heavy black suit made of some type of wool-like fabric works on the other side of the room. He's got a huge, metallic workspace lining the back of the room and, in the center of it all, there's an operating theater with sheets of translucent material hanging up. He turns to you as you walk in and smiles a huge toothy grin. What do you do?

KURT: Tyrell told me you're the one to see about upgrades. Konrad, right? This place is...nice...?

MC: His smile gets impossibly wide as he says, "Oh, yes. Whatever upgrades you need I can do right here, boy". He gestures to the operating theater and holds out a hand to you, "But first, Cred." You see a Cred stick there, empty and waiting to be filled.

KURT: "I just need to be able to smuggle something in...maybe in my arm, I'm thinking, old man." I think I'll spend 2 Cred. So I'm feeling pretty anxious, I'll mark that emotion spike. And I place my stick on his until it fills up to 2 Cred worth.

MC: Sure, so you're paying him 1 Cred for the tag storage and 1 Cred towards your roll for the plasma and chrome move?

KURT: Yep!

MC: Cool. Yeah he looks at the Cred stick, nods and tucks it into his wool coat and gestures toward the operating theater. Why don't you roll that for me?

KURT: Sure, nice. So I got double 4's, baby! That's a 9!

MC: You wake up and Konrad is smiling that toothy grin. From this close you can really see his age. He's got streaks of grey hair and his face is heavily lined—some from age, others obviously not. He nods down at your arm, and looks at his work approvingly. It's completely seamless and even your multi-spectrum eyes when amplified can't detect any grooves. He sees you looking at it and he looks up, avoiding your eyes, "I think maybe you don't want anyone to know you have this, yes? Maybe, for 1 Cred this never happened and I feed your serial into some software so you don't have to file it off. Filed off numbers are a dead giveaway. What do you say?"

CRED

Cred is used as the main commodity in *The Veil*. It's just a simpler mechanic than tracking dollar amounts, value for individual pieces of gear, and whatever else that is sure to come up. It's necessarily abstract because of this, and despite all attempts to make things consistent in terms of cost and value, there may be situations that may not make sense or feel unfair—if you just spent 1 Cred to get a gun, why did it cost 1 Cred to bribe some deadbeat guard who probably would have been fine with the equivalent of \$20? Obviously, the best way to avoid this is to be as consistent in the fiction as you can, but sometimes you might just have to hand-wave some stuff and remind yourself that it's just a lot better than having to do a ton of bookkeeping in order to play the game.

Every protagonist starts with gear, detailed on their character sheet. When you want to buy more stuff, you'll probably be spending Cred to get what you want. What Cred actually look like and how they operate is up to you and the rest of the table. They could be sticks that are handcrafted and are specific to each person, or a strange barter system revolving around water. Whatever you decide, here are some questions to think about:

In your setting, does it make sense for guns or weaponry to be easily accessible or is it outlawed and hard to get?

In the future what kind of medical technology is freely available? Are they able to grow skin, tissue, muscle, organs back with technology purchased off the street or is that something only doctors or hi-tech, costly equipment can do?

What does 1 Cred represent? Is it anything that is a “small” amount? Do you want to keep track of small things, like the cost of food or cigarettes, or hand wave that and only talk about Cred when it comes to gear or bribes?

**That's sad. How plastic and
artificial life has become.
It gets harder and harder
to find something...real.
Real love, real friends,
real body parts...**

Jess C. Scott, *The Other Side of Life*

YOUR JAM & EARNING CRED

You could be doing a ton of different things to get Cred in *The Veil*. If you're a cop working a case, you get paid to do that. Perhaps on top of that, you also shake some undesirables down from time to time or look the other way to get some extra Cred, too. Whether you specialize in delving into minds and doing psychosurgery, carry out long cons, hack into corporations for competitors on the side, or busk in the street, you get Cred for whatever it is you do as a profession, in your day-to-day life. If you have an idea of what you want to be doing and how that would end up getting you Cred, let the MC know. I suggest making whatever earns you your Cred be something that explores the cyberpunk themes and tropes that interest you since day-to-day work will inevitably influence the overarching story and tell the MC what you're interested in doing to boot. Here are some examples:

Bodyguard, hacker, bookie, preacher, muscle, cop, saboteur, dealer, fencer, fixer, scrounger, geisha, thief, courier, lookout, enforcer, entertainer, guide, social worker, vendor, laborer, crafter, artist, reporter, musician, media personality, soldier, private detective, scientist, psycho surgeon, politician, mixed reality tech, memory retrieval/eradicator specialist, researcher.

Whatever your idea is for making Cred, let the MC know that it is your jam. You may not enjoy doing it, but people come to you to do this thing for a living so you're probably pretty good at it or have a great story about how you manage to survive. When you have downtime, or the game fiction skips ahead in time, the MC will let you know what amount of Cred to mark down if necessary. How much Cred you make is up to your fiction. If a bodyguard gets paid 2 Cred per job, how much does a guide make? These are some of the questions you'll need to ask yourself, the table, and the MC. Aside from how much it makes you, bear in mind the fictional positioning your jam gives you, too. This is your "thing" so when the fiction comes into play where what you do could give you more fictional positioning, it should! Ask the MC if, since you're a cop and you're at a murder scene, you notice anything the others don't. If you're a courier and you're trying to get across town super-fast, maybe you know a shortcut.

If you're doing a one-shot of *The Veil*, it may not make sense for the protagonists to earn Cred that session, depending on the amount of time that session encompasses in fiction time. If you're playing an extended campaign though, talk it over with the MC. How much time has passed from last session? As a general guideline, I tend to give players Cred each session—depending on what happened previously. If no time has passed between sessions but you're cutting from one scene to another with time passing, it makes sense for you to get some Cred. Whatever fictional justification is needed can be injected into the fiction, too. Maybe you already had Cred coming to you, maybe during the time being skipped you were working your Jam. Life in the future is expensive, there are always

things you'll need to pay for. Fixing your guns, your cybernetics, and your vehicles ain't cheap. If you're in a fiction where there isn't much cost to things being introduced however, perhaps the MC gives you Cred less frequently as you need it less.

Jams are also a useful tool to tie protagonist's lives together, since everyone most likely has a lifestyle in mind after they've established what they do and how much Cred they get. You may know each other based on your lifestyle, and perhaps, jams overlapping.

Ultimately everyone at the table needs to clarify the following in terms of Cred:

- Write down their jam.
- Establish your lifestyle based on your jam.
- Explore if these jams are worth spotlighting on screen and how often people should be getting Cred for them, based on the economy within your fiction and what pace the story is going at, per session.
- Tie your protagonists with the others as loosely or as closely as you like by riffing off of one another's lifestyles and jams, if you want to know one another at all.



SPENDING CRED

By no means set in stone, here are some rough guidelines you and your group may choose to use for the worth and expenditure of Cred:

1 CRED might count for:

- Any basic weapon (1 Cred per tag).
- Gear or fashionable attire.
- Repair a piece of basic gear.
- Costs for medical treatment (1 Cred per 1 harm).
- A few sessions' maintenance and repairs for high-performance vehicles and cybernetics.
- Bribes or fees sufficient to get you into almost anyone's presence.
- Useful information from a contact.
- A session's worth of cheap muscle.

2 CRED might count for:

- Getting the base amount of cybernetic work done.
- A session's worth of some professional expertise (a hacker, driver, etc.).
- Repairing cybernetics that are heavily damaged or custom-built.
- A customized weapon or specific type of ammo. (2 Cred base; +1 Cred per tag)
- Bribes or fees that could pay off most people.

3 CRED might count for:

- Highly professional and trained help.
- The attention of people that could get you almost any weapon.
- Bribes or fees that would fix most problems.
- High-end, luxury items and technology.

EMPORIUM

An emporium is where you go to spend some hard-earned Cred. It's a catch-all term that can represent any kind of marketplace you go to get specific items or services.

☒ When you enter a place in order to find something not readily available, answer the following questions and take +1 for each.

- Is it a part of a corporation?
- Is it filled with a wide variety of merchants?
- Is it policed in some way?

Then, answer the following questions and take -1 for each:

- Are thieves and urchins circulating here?
- Is there a gang presence or other form of oppression here?
- Are you known to the sellers here?

On a 10+, you find just what you're looking for. On a 7–9, the MC chooses one of the following:

- It costs 1 Cred more than you'd expect.
- They don't have it, but they know someone who does.
- They just sold their last one to_____.
- They have something similar, but inferior.

The questions asked are meant to populate the place you are in and give everyone a general idea of what it might be like. It also provides possible complications that could arise depending on the situation so can be a boon to the MC. Whether it has a lot of merchants, is part of a corporation patrolled by police, or is a black market in the lower districts with urchins begging and conning foreigners, it goes a long way to setting the scene.

Remember also that the answers to the question could change each time you visit a place, even if it's the same area. Going to a market during daylight hours might mean different answers than bartering in the same market at two in the morning. It's up to the MC to decide if just such circumstances exist and whether it requires another roll or not.

PROXY

Sometimes you'll need to use a middleman and have what you need come to you, rather than the other way around. As long as you have the Cred, you can hire someone to get something for you.

- ▣ When you exchange Cred in order to have something brought to you, roll and add the number of Cred you spend doing so (max roll+3).

On a 10+, it comes to you, no strings attached.

On a 7–9, it comes to you, or something that is pretty close, but there is an additional cost to the endeavor; the MC will tell you what it is.

The MC always first determines whether what is being sought can actually be acquired by the person, or the means by which they go about doing so. If it's not possible, there's no need to roll.

Proxies are usually for finding unique or exotic items that can't normally be acquired, but the definition of an exotic item can change pretty quickly based on setting and circumstance. It could be finding a competitor for a job you're working or even putting out a hit on someone. Maybe you're looking for information, or for specialized medicine currently only in trial; either way, the MC will tell you if they can get it or not.

CREATING NEW TECH

In the previous sections relating to tags we have mainly talked about weapons and armor. This section will briefly recap and expand on those ideas.

Let's say we want to create a new piece of tech that intercepts communications, jams them, and deals feedback damage to them when it does so. That means I'll need three tags: the jamming tag, the intercepting tag, and then the one n harm tag so that it does damage. Every time you pick n harm, it means that for every time you choose that option, it will do 1 harm. I'm going to call it my "Eye in the Sky." When I write it out in my gear section, I'm going to write: Eye in the Sky (1 harm close jamming intercepting). If I were to go out and buy it, it'd probably cost me 3 Cred at a fair price because of the three tags it has. The reason why is because it has two tags and deals damage and it's a specialized piece of gear. If it were a piece of tech that only jammed or only intercepted, it would only be worth 1 Cred or 2 Cred.

Always keep in mind that you are not limited to the example tags. If whatever you want to make isn't covered by a tag, consult with the MC to make sure it makes sense in the fiction, then name it and put it into play.

CREATING/ CUSTOMIZING WEAPONS

When you're customizing weapons or making your own with specialized tech, apply the same principles as when you're creating tech.

First, choose what harm category it fits into:

1 HARM: Staff, chain, fists.

2 HARM: Handgun, rifle, crossbow, dagger, knives, smg, spear, boomerang, shaku, wakizashi.

3 HARM: Shotgun, submachine gun, assault rifle, sniper rifle, machine gun, scalpels, magnum, machete, mg, sword/katana, and axe.

4 HARM: Auto-cannon, flamethrower, or grenade launcher.

If the weapon fits into the 3 harm category, you must also assign it two negative tags. A negative tag can be anything that makes the weapon unwieldy, unpredictable, or difficult to use in certain situations. For example, tags like loud, messy, reload, and indiscreet are all negative tags.

If the weapon fits in to the 4 harm category, you must assign it two negative tags and it is only effective at close range by default.

Second, after you choose the harm category it fits into, choose the range category the weapon is effective at. If a weapon shoots at a range it is not effective at, it either won't work or will be much less effective. The categories are pretty broad, but also abstract by necessity. The possible range categories are:

INTIMATE: Used in close quarters, within arm's reach of you.

HAND: Effective within an easy radius of movement. 1–2 meters.

INTIMATE/HAND: Effective at either intimate or hand range.

CLOSE: Somewhere between 2–10 meters.

HAND/CLOSE: Effective at either hand or close range.

CLOSE/FAR: Both tags apply.

FAR: All the way from 10 meters to about a block away.

FURTHER: Effective from a block away, to a couple hundred meters away.

Third, give it one tag. If you want the weapon to have a tag, it needs to have a negative tag as well. If you want a crossbow with a thermal scope, for instance, it would also need to have a negative tag, like reload, so that it would need to be reloaded often. As a general rule, whenever a weapon has an advantageous tag, there should also be a negative one to balance it.

Once you've finished, you might have something like a thermal magnum (3 harm close reload loud burning). So, we know it does 3 harm, so it needs to have two negatives as well – reload, and loud. It'll only be effective at close range since I think it'd be cool if it did some kind of burning damage—maybe it shoots ammo that ignites when it hits the air.

MED-TECH

When you buy tech designed to heal yourself, name the tech and tell the table how it is used first. When you buy it, it will heal as much as the Cred you spend buying it. You choose whether it can heal in increments or if it can only be used once. For example, if you buy something with 3 Cred, it can either heal 3 harm with one use, or heal 1 harm a total of three times, as long as what you're using as med-tech would work that way in the fiction. Whatever makes sense for your setting and the described tech should be taken into consideration first.

If it's something that would require skill to administer, or if someone needs surgery or a skilled doctor in order to have something fixed, work with the MC to establish what has to happen in order for the medical technology to be effective; the MC might call for the risk move to be made, with the danger being improper use resulting in more harm done, less effective use of the equipment, or they might say that you can figure it out given your knowledge and expertise. That said, it's probably safe to say that there are always some injuries that will require something more than quick-fix med tech.

**It was the single forgiving
phrase in the syntax of weaponry
I had strapped about me.**

**The rest were unequivocal sentences
of death.**

Richard K. Morgan, *Altered Carbon*

HARM

When your protagonist takes harm, the MC will tell you what happened and how much harm you should mark down. There are boxes on every character sheet that can be checked off or shaded in to keep track of any harm incurred. They are spaces to mark one light wound, two moderate wounds, and two critical wounds. The different levels of harm represent different kinds of injuries and how badly a protagonist can be damaged. When you suffer harm and mark a wound box, make sure you also write down a short description of what's happened for future reference. You'll want to heal from those wounds at some point in the future, and how you go about doing that will depend both upon the type of injury, as well as the severity of the injury:

- A **light wound** isn't a big deal; you'll be fine given some time. It's some light cuts or bruising.
- A **moderate wound** is more of an issue; you aren't going to die, but it definitely gets in the way of doing things—broken bones, being shot in a non-fatal area, and so on.
- A **critical wound** is going to get worse before it gets better; you're in need of medical attention—taking a shot to a vital area, or being beaten to an inch of your life, and so on.

You mark harm starting from light, to moderate, to critical, working your way down until you eventually fill them all in. Once you have filled up all five boxes, and then take additional harm, it's over for your protagonist—it's probably going to be time to make a new character, depending on your MC's discretion and what's happened in the fiction. If it makes sense that they could survive, maybe they do. If it doesn't make sense, though, it's time to say goodbye.

RATINGS

Harm is used to describe and quantify all damage a protagonist takes. As an MC in particular, but also as a player, it's important that everyone at the table is consistent in how they describe harm and what level of harm they match it up with. Here are some general guidelines:

- **1 harm** is damage that isn't a huge deal. Bruises, getting punched, getting hit with a bat. Things that can be recovered from fairly quickly and don't generally hinder movement.
- **2 harm** is very noticeable. Tools and weapons like guns and knives meant to inflict harm or kill someone do 2 harm.
- **3 harm** is even worse. Something life-threatening like getting shot at close range with a shotgun or having a sword cut into an important artery or organ.
- **4 harm** usually means death. If you were an NPC, you most likely would be. Since you're a protagonist though, might be just on the cusp and going down the drain fast instead. Getting caught in an explosion, multiple vital organs damaged – without immediate medical care you aren't going to make it.

STUN HARM

Also known and commonly referenced as s harm, this harm still hurts, but is designed to knock a target out or impair actions in some way. Things like Tasers, neural damage, electrical or shocking damage, and sometimes technology designed to damage other hardware can all cause s harm.

As with all harm, the MC will describe what the damage type is if necessary or unclear in the fiction, or the player of the character dealing damage will say when they do so. You may trigger risk depending on the danger when suffering from s harm in order to function properly, or there may be other things you have to do in order to recover that will be determined by the fiction and your MC—like having to reboot your memory module, or all your battery power being siphoned away might require getting more juice. Whatever the case may be, if it is s harm, the harm will not be permanent. You do not usually need to mark it on your sheet. If it's a special circumstance though, the MC may have you keep track of it, depending on what's happening in the fiction.

HUMANITY HARM

A person suffers humanity harm when they are faced with a hard truth about themselves or their beliefs. They will either not face it, or the act of doing so will have a harmful impact on them.

- When an NPC suffers this, the MC adds them as a threat, if applicable, and then chooses any or all of the following:
 - They suffer a break and there are consequences—they become incoherent, unresponsive, or something else.
 - They aggressively pursue their immediate impulses—particularly to fight or flee. Make moves on their behalf as hard and as directly as you can.
 - They change their threat type.
- When a PC suffers the same harm or a hard truth about themselves or their beliefs, the person inflicting the harm chooses any or all of the following; they:
 - lose time. Minutes/hours/a day or two.
 - must answer any question posed to them.
 - take disadvantage forward (roll 3d6, take lowest 2 results on dice)

Creating non-player characters and setting up threats for the protagonists to interact with is all in the MC section, and threat types can be found on page 350.



HEALING FROM HARM

When a protagonist suffers 0 harm, it can cause momentary complications for them, but otherwise it's cosmetic damage that does not impede anything they do or need to be marked on their playbook for harm.

When you have some time to recover and rest up, wounds that are in the moderate boxes and the light box will get better with time or medicine. When you analyze a situation involving a wound, you can ask the MC, "Is this going to get worse before it gets better?" in order to get a timeline to assess the situation if the answer isn't immediately available. Depending on the nature of the wound, the MC will be able to talk to you and the rest of the players about how much time is needed, or what needs doing, before a wound can be marked off as being recovered from.

When you're healing via tech purchased by Cred, it heals you by the number associated with it. For example, when you go to a market and you go buy some medical tech, and you drop 2 Cred, it means that tech will heal 2 harm.

When marking off boxes and recovering, you always start with the worst boxes and make your way up to the lowest. If you no longer have harm marked in any critical boxes, it means you have stabilized and will not get worse over time due to injuries.

DETRIMENTS

When your protagonist takes damage, you can also ask the MC if you can negate the damage by taking a detriment instead. When you do this, you take -1 ongoing for a period of time of the MC's choosing that they will make clear to you. If you can't resolve your detriment before the time runs out, the amount of harm you can ever take is permanently reduced by 1; this means you have to cross out the last box to represent the fact that you can no longer take as much damage as you used to. You can only do this twice, once for each critical box on your character sheet. After that, moderate conditions are, essentially, critical ones and it becomes much easier to take serious harm.

The option of taking a detriment is usually only given by an MC when a mortal wound is taken and a protagonist is fighting to function properly despite their grievous injury. Sometimes it may not be possible; the MC will tell you when you ask. If it is, they will tell you what the detriment is, how long you'll take the -1 ongoing to all rolls for, and the timeline or situation you have to deal with before the detriment wound sets in and there are permanent consequences.

ARMOR

Some NPCs and PCs start with armor. When harm is inflicted in the fiction and it makes sense for the armor described to absorb or mitigate said harm, the armor's value reduces the harm inflicted.

Most armor has a value of 1, it is light and can be incorporated into clothing like vests, duster jackets, or whatever a character wants. 2 armor is serious stuff so cannot be hidden. This is the equivalent of riot gear, and other heavy-duty stuff that is serious about protection. Because of this, it will most likely attract attention when worn.

Some playbook moves grant armor as well, read them carefully if they do. There are usually specific circumstances that need to be taken into account before that kind of armor can be taken advantage of.

If you are going to suffer harm and the armor reduces that damage to 0 harm, the player marks no damage at all and is completely negated as the armor soaks all the damage. However, care should always be taken to have things like armor and harm which have mechanical effect on the fiction, be addressed and made to make sense in the fiction. The MC will inflict harm as needed to represent accurately what is going on the fiction whether weapons and armor factor into it or not. A long fall or getting buried under rubble or circumstances that may come into play will all come with their own sets of consequences, perhaps not taking armor into account.

Armor can be written down in two ways: n armor or $+n$ armor. When written as n armor, the "n" simply stands for "number" and depicts the numerical value of the armor. $+n$ armor means that a number is added to an existing piece of armor. Only armor stated like $+n$ armor can stack added to existing armor, whereas one type of n armor cannot be used or stacked with any other type of n armor.

Armor piercing, or AP, is a tag that is used by some weapons to bypass armor entirely. If a weapon says it does 2 harm AP, your armor does not help you and you take 2 harm regardless of your armor. The value of your armor has no bearing on the amount of harm inflicted in these cases.





CHAPTER THREE:
**THE FIRST
SESSION**



THE FIRST TIME YOU SIT DOWN TO PLAY, everyone who is not the MC is going to create a protagonist, then the MC is going to drop the protagonists in to a scenario in the game and start a conversation with everyone about the fiction. This is the world building stage, and almost everything is fair game—you'll all want to be on the same page in terms of what the settings look like, who the big players are, and what that means for the protagonists. When I say “almost everything is fair game” it's because there are a few assumptions about the setting that *The Veil* makes that need to carry over into your setting. We've already talked about all of these things, what form they take and how they look in your game can be changed to suit your group's purposes. They are:

THE VEIL: The basic moves, particularly the move “*Lift The Veil*” assumes that the protagonists are living in a world that is completely, and always, immersed in some kind of mixed or hybrid reality. This reality intermingles the real, physical world and the digital. This mixed reality means that characters in the setting can never be sure if what they're seeing is altered by *The Veil*, or if it's even real at all as it could exist purely in *The Veil* only. *The Veil* is also an information and database depository—it's like the internet of today and a great deal can be found there. *The Veil* is made possible because most characters in the setting, if not everyone in the fiction, have neurochips that are installed on their person. These chips are a person-machine interface and are always running by default.

DIGISCAPE: The game assumes that there are environments where a character in the setting can interact with a wholly artificial world and environment. When hacking into a computer, a character might enter into cyberspace; when needing to talk to another character privately, said characters might interface with one another so as to interact in a private digiscape rather than in the real world; when hacking into a person's mind, a character might explore their target's psyche using technology designed to do so. The digiscape can be something like *the Matrix*, or it can be a simulated psyche, or dream, or whatever else you decide.

CYBERNETICS: All of the playbooks, as well as some moves, assume that the world and the technology in it is advanced enough to support artificial, mechanical limb augmentation and replacement.

GIRI: The setting is assumed to have a system that places a great deal of value on obligation, honor, and face.

CRED: The setting is assumed to have a form of currency that works similar to the currency of today, though the systems that support the transfer or use of it may be more advanced or just different.

As you play your first game, everyone at the table, but the MC in particular, will get to know what you and your friends are looking to get out of the game, what interests you, and where to take it after that first game. Most of the time will be spent world building and introducing the protagonists to one another, but make sure you set aside enough time so that there can be some fun gameplay interspersed throughout. At this point, you're not worrying about telling a cohesive story aimed at being part of a larger campaign; your goal this session is simply to get to know the game world and the people that live there.

If you're the MC, you can skip to the section named Master of Ceremonies; if you're a player, the first thing you'll need to do is pick a playbook. A playbook is a character sheet with a set of moves and some specific information that will help define your protagonist.

Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?

The Matrix

INCLUSIVITY IN THE VEIL

The Veil is a nebulous, enriched world of the future. Years from now, who and what humans are may be very different. Depending upon how you play *The Veil*, you may not even have humans as we recognize them today. In a world where identity is as much made of whatever you want by living in a world blended with the cyberworld, what does it mean to be human? And what does human look like?

Identity and presentation of identity are long running themes in humanity's history. Today, that struggle is keenly felt by marginalized communities. Racism, sexism, ableism, queerphobia, transphobia, and size shaming are very true and real for many people, and are distinctive in our modern culture. Some people may find these themes interesting to explore, while others may not wish to engage the material.

The Veil offers a unique opportunity to do as much or as little as you wish with modern social issues that impact our identities. What does race and ethnicity mean in this future? What about gender and sexuality? What is normal? What is not? These are all questions that can be explored deeply or superficially in a world where identity is constructed by the one who owns the identity instead of by culture itself.

While the game does not offer the necessary tools to fully understand or dismantle the struggle of marginalized people or communities, it does try to exist with an intention of inclusivity, and allow space for all identities integral to the human experience to be explored in a safe way. These issues are heavy, and if the group wishes to engage with them in play, we recommend a conversation about what everyone is comfortable with addressing.

Although other games touch on this subject matter too, there is an inspiring section on race, gender and queerness in the game *Urban Shadows* that begins almost immediately in the book's preface. I strongly encourage anyone reading this to check it out. It is both a fantastic game and one of the only games in which I, personally, have seen these subjects made so predominant and explicit.

CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

The playbooks are archetypes you'll apply to the protagonists you want to play. They focus your portrayal into an interesting aspect you can dig into and explore in the fiction. You can choose from the following:

THE APPARATUS: Is a synthetic being struggling to find their place in the world and unravel the mystery of their own existence. They think and feel, but are different from people because they are purely and completely cybernetic and without a human mind—a completely new form of life.

THE ARCHITECT: Is more a part of the digital world than reality. They have lots of power within that realm but with that power comes a great deal of attention.

THE ATTACHED: Only feels at home with their own, unique object; they are never alone and must balance their own needs with that of their object. The object is something they have designed themselves and is unique to the setting.

THE CATABOLIST: Believes that humanity, and by extension they themselves, must integrate with technology as much as possible.

THE DYING: Has an incurable disease that is killing them. The upside is that the disease also gives them incredible abilities to separate them from the denizens of the future.

THE EMPATH: Does more than just feel; to them, emotions are a tangible force they can see, absorb, and manipulate.

THE EXECUTIVE: Is beholden to their corporation's board. They operate from within a system most protagonists are trying to free themselves from.

THE HONED: Keeps themselves at peak health and is 100% organic. They believe that technology is not only not required in order to be strong, but that it's holding humanity back.

THE HONORBOUND: Lives and breathes Giri. They believe the system needs balance and control, and that they play an integral role upholding it.

THE ONOMASTIC: Is the last of an order that was hunted to extinction because of the true knowledge they are said to possess. The Onomastic possess an artifact called a Cybertome, and are hunted relentlessly because of it.

THE SEEKER: Strength is their faith. Their search for the answers humanity has always searched for and their quest for enlightenment defines them.

THE WAYWARD: Is someone tied to another place altogether. They use the essence of this place to uplift others, commune with the natural world, and bridge the gap between the unknown.

Each playbook is unique. Only one playbook may be in play at any given time at the table. Decide what most appeals to you, then take the playbook you want and read it over. Please note that I have included examples where I thought necessary only for the purposes of clarification; the examples are not meant to shoehorn in a specific interpretation of the playbook or how they're meant to be played, that's left to you and your vision for your protagonist.

**The future is not a straight line.
It is filled with many crossroads.
There must be a future that we
can choose for ourselves.**

Akira



ELEMENTS OF A PLAYBOOK

Though each playbook is unique, each one is made up of similar elements. The first page introduces the name of the playbook, and there will be a number of ways you can flesh out your character there. Depending on the playbook, you'll have to read, then choose an option from a list that makes the most sense for your vision of the character; some playbooks will leave blanks in sentences so that you can write in your own words.



THE APPARATUS

NAME: _____

LOOK: _____

Circle one from each category:

- Femme, Masculine, Androgynous, Animalistic, Transgressing, Esoteric, Fluid, Mechanical.
- Bulky Wear, Improvised Wear, Scrounged Wear, Utility Wear, Discreet Wear, Or Innovative Wear.
- Weathered Face, Strong Face, Rugged Face, Narrow Face, Or Busted Face.
- Mechanical Eyes, Hard Eyes, Stank Eyes, Merciless Eyes, Dead Eyes, Or Calculating Eyes.
- Huge Body, Muscular Body, Tall Gangly Body, Wiry Body, Or a _____ Body.
- Asian Or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

JAM: _____

Everyone has a Jam (something you are good at and do to making a living and earn Creds). When you tell the MC what your jam is they'll tell you how much Cred you earn when you get downtime. Your Jam is used to establish your lifestyle, your income, and how you know certain other characters.

STATES

MAD	PEACEFUL	SAD	JOYFUL	SCARED	POWERFUL
□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□

Assign +2, +1, +1,0,0 and -1 to each state from their propensity to react with that emotion to their most foreign one.

At the start of play you only have 1 state unlocked. Others may be unlocked using the rise move.

BELIEFS

Create three Beliefs. If a Belief is tested this session, mark 1 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief gets you into trouble this session, mark 2 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief is erased and resolved or changed after being tested, mark 3 XP.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

IMPROVEMENT XP: □□□□

When you attempt something that benefits you and fail or when you gain XP from beliefs mark each box per 2XP you accrue:

+1 Mad □	+1 Sad □	+1 Scared □
+1 Joyful □	+1 Peaceful □	+1 Powerful □

Get a new playbook move □□

Erase a Girl owed □□□

Get a move from another playbook □□□

After your 5th improvement you may also pick from the following:

Take +1 to any state (Max +3) □□□□	Get another option from the "within" section □
Create and play a new protagonist □	Change to a new playbook □
Advance a basic move □□□□□□	

HOLD

HARM

□ Light ○○ Armor

□ Moderate

□ Critical

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There are also some common elements to a playbook that can be gone over and understood first before moving into the more in-depth explanation for each playbook that follows. While the layout of a page may change from playbook to playbook, these elements are each playbook throughout both pages. You can follow along with a playbook if you like as I detail the areas and how they are used. These common elements are:

- **A Space detailing the starting Giri questions.**

The Giri questions are used when beginning the first session to tie the protagonists to one another. They all have specific questions being asked out loud toward the other players. If another player answers in the affirmative for one of your questions, mark down Giri in correspondence to what the questions instructions say. When you are marking Giri, make sure you discuss amongst each other the specifics, the more detail the more fiction will be created when these questions are asked and answered. These questions are asked at the end of everyone making their protagonists as well as after the setting playbook has been completed.

- **A Space detailing the playbook's special move (simply referred to as your playbook "special").**

In the special section there is a specific move for every playbook. When protagonists share a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, these moves are triggered. In *The Veil*, intimacy is important and underlined with specific moves showcasing the intention that interpersonal play be touched upon. Something so important in the protagonists lives as these intense and intimate moments have serious implications, which then require these special moves. They are all different and are geared towards each specific playbook.

- **A box to mark hold.**

The hold box is used to keep track of the hold being generated through playbook moves and basic moves that generate it. Especially between sessions, this tends to be forgotten, so make sure you're marking it down as it happens.

- **A place to mark improvement and XP.**

At the point where you would mark your fifth XP, you instead erase it and take an improvement. There is an area sectioned off for improvements after you have already taken five, called "advanced" improvements. As you take them, mark the boxes next to them.

■ **A place to circle, or write in, elements of a protagonist's look.**

The look of a protagonist should be outlined into talking points describing what you think about them when picturing who they are—their gender, race, demeanor, their lifestyle, facial features, characteristics, etc. Each section is meant to provoke you into thought about the protagonist you want to portray. There is a set of examples meant only to be helpful that you can choose from, or if you have your own concept of what they should look like, feel free to write in that and use none or all of the examples provided.

■ **A place to mark down harm.**

The place to mark down harm is there to keep track of any harm a protagonist may sustain throughout the course of play. When the fiction calls for it, the MC will tell a player how much harm is inflicted, which is the same number of boxes that must be checked off. Harm is always marked from top to bottom. When healing from harm, harm boxes are always erased from bottom to top.

■ **A place to write in a protagonist's jam.**

The place to write in a protagonist's jam is there to detail how the protagonist makes a living at their day job, doing the things we don't show on screen or talk about while playing the game. Oftentimes, what they do is important and will come into play in the game, other times it's only there so that we have an understanding of the character and what their everyday life might look like. It's also how they make Cred and a useful tool to riff off of to tie the characters together in the fiction.

■ **A place to fill in state modifiers, and keep track of emotion spikes.**

The place to fill in state modifiers is in the center of the sheet. A player distributes a +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, and -1 among the available states. There are markers underneath each state to indicate when the protagonist experiences an emotional spike (i.e., when a move is a triggered move).

■ **A place to describe how you got your cybernetics**

If you decide to have cybernetics in *The Veil*, you'll need to tell the MC just how you were able to get them. Did you steal them from someone else, or perhaps get a loan from the local megacorp to bankroll them? What is your story?

■ **A place to write in a protagonist's beliefs.**

The belief section is especially important and will be touched on after filling out the playbook. Beliefs are how you grow as a character in the fiction, as well as how you will predominantly gain XP, which is how you get more special moves for your character, as well as lots of other rewards. See page 268 for more information on making beliefs.

- A box that describes what gear and equipment a protagonist starts out with.

The box that contains the description of what that particular protagonist starts out with in terms of gear and equipment is self-explanatory. The player chooses what piece of equipment they would like to start out with if given a range of options, and then maybe writes in some description as prompted for the elements they start with. This section also tells the character how much Cred they begin with.

- A place to fill in a protagonist's cybernetics, if any.

The place to fill in cybernetics is there for the player to detail any cybernetic enhancements they want their protagonist to start with, and how they got them. Depending on what the player chooses, they are able to detail that piece of cybernetics by assigning it a number of tags equal to the number in the brackets beside it. Finally, any piece of cybernetics must also be assigned a negative tag.

- A section that details a number of special moves a protagonist both starts out with, and may acquire through improvement.

The section that details the special moves a protagonist has can be found on the right-hand side. Beside each move there is a circle; if a circle is already marked in by default, it means that a protagonist begins play with that move, which is aptly referred to as a starting move. There are moves listed below it and those that have empty circles are acquired later on in play when a protagonist gains enough experience to grow and advance.

**You take risks; you get hurt.
And you put your head down
and plow forward anyway and
if you die, you die. **That's the
game. But don't tell me you're
not a hero.****

David Wong, *Futuristic Violence and Fancy Suits*



THE APPARATUS

THE APPARATUS IS SHROUDED IN QUESTIONS. It doesn't know how it came into the world and does not have a clear picture of humanity. As a newly awakened life form, it struggles to understand its own emotions. Possessing an artificial intelligence, it needs to acquire more information to find its place in the world and unravel the mystery of its existence—were they built to uplift, emulate or destroy humanity?

When you introduce this playbook, you're adding in a lot of interpersonal drama as the playbook looks at humanity in a critical way. The exploration of a new kind of life form and the reflection of humanity in something created by it usually streamlines the playbook into a lot of exploration centered on larger questions. This playbook was heavily influenced by *Ghost in the Shell*.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Apparatus playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ **The area titled "The Vessel."**

The Apparatus can look completely human or unlike any human. In this section, ask yourself what you would think would be most interesting and how your character might look. Internally, they're a sentient being, but that doesn't necessarily mean they have to look human.

SCOTT: I want to be something way different and get out of my comfort zone. I want to be like this humanoid robot that has multiple appendages or something...I think I'm going to go with a humanoid body, but with one extra mechanical arm hidden behind my back that folds out. So I guess I'll go with "only pieces of me may resemble humanity."

■ **The area titled "Underneath."**

Now that you have a shape in mind, what would you look like before putting on clothes and equipment and stuff? Does your silhouette look different than a person's? Choose what makes sense and seems interesting to you and the concept you have for your character.

SCOTT: I think when people see a humanoid body with a mechanical head, they are probably revolted in this setting? Probably something like today where there's a bit of trigger for the unknown. So I get the Judgement move on top of the other moves options then, right? Cool.

■ The area titled “Within.”

At its heart, what is your character? Are you a new form of life? A part of *The Veil*? A human mind migrated into this new form somehow?

SCOTT: I think it would be really cool if I was this escaped advanced prototype machine that gained sentience and is learning more about humanity. I think that would mean I'm a manmade new form of life. I'm searching for my origins and maker, it's unknown to me, and I'll get XP when I unravel that mystery, cool!

MC: Right, so I'll think about some ideas for that; that's something that might become clearer when we do your beginning of session move, too.

■ The area titled “The Birth.”

At the beginning of each session, you are going to roll 2d6 without adding a state. If you get a hit, the MC will ask you a question; answer it. If it's a miss, you ask the question and the MC answers it. Either way, each session you will uncover more of the mystery that surrounds your character. This move is used each session to unravel a bit more of the mystery that pervades the Apparatus. They start out with a lot of questions and this move is used to snowball the answer you receive.

SCOTT: Damn right, rolled a 9. So you choose a question then, eh?

MC: Alright, let me see here...let's go with, “Was I discarded or unwanted?”

SCOTT: I think that it makes sense for me to have been discarded; maybe I was found all broken and messed up. Maybe they tried to destroy and discard me but one of the other players found me. What do you think, guys? Anyone want to be the person that found me?

■ The area titled “Humanity Harm.”

The Apparatus is capable of inflicting humanity harm, which is talked about more in-depth on page 102. A target takes humanity harm when they face a hard truth about themselves or their beliefs.

APPARATUS MOVES

You get *The Abyss Stares Back* and *Rise* moves.

THE ABYSS STARES BACK

When you search the vast accumulated knowledge of *The Veil* or interact with something new in an attempt to understand humanity and what your place may be in it, roll. On a 10+, you generate 2 humanity. On a 7–9, you generate 1 humanity. Spend it 1 for 1 on the following:

- Choose an option from the *Rise* move.
- Ask any question from your special.
- Divulge a belief or truth about yourself or your target in order to inflict humanity harm.

Choosing an option from the *Rise* move is straightforward; reference the move on your sheet and choose one of the options listed. For example: a protagonist rises when they try to become something more than a mechanical construct or feels something within them and endeavors to learn more about humanity and unlock the potential that lies dormant within.

Asking any question from your special is also straightforward; you may choose any of the questions listed under your special in the playbook.

Inflicting humanity harm means confronting someone with a hard truth or a belief that alters their perceptions. It could also mean divulging a belief that affects them deeply. Maybe you tell someone that the human race is a parasitic disease based on what you've seen. Maybe you tell them you want to be better, and to learn from humanity despite its flaws. Of course, you must actually say something for this move to trigger, and what you say must make sense in the fiction. By its nature the Apparatus seeks to find the meaning in all things, including in those around them and within themselves. These truths and beliefs should affect the other players. Some other playbooks can do this as well, but the Apparatus does so by opening themselves to humanity, reflecting, and then this move triggers when those reflections are brought up in play.

When Scott first starts playing he decides that his protagonist just came into consciousness when play begins, after being broken and discarded.

SCOTT: So I wake up for the first time on earth, right? I think the first thing I do is feel this connection and its vast wealth of information at the forefront of my mind, so I dive in and try to learn about humanity and the society immediately near me.

MC: Cool, makes sense. That sounds like that would trigger the abyss stares back,” right? Roll that for me.

SCOTT: OK so my only emotion right now is Peaceful; I’m just trying to figure out what’s going on within me as I’m super confused. So I rolled an 8 and add +2 for my Peaceful state... that’s a total of 10!

MC: Nice. So you feel like you get a glimpse of what people are and do as you’re subjected to the vast wealth of information of The Veil before having to disengage from all the stimulus; there’s this montage of iconic shots flashing through your consciousness running the gamut from joy and family to war and death. What are you going to with that point of humanity you got?

SCOTT: I’m going to choose an option from rise!



RISE

When you draw on and consume your humanity to become something more than you once were, choose one of the following:

- Unlock a new emotion and assign a value to the state.
- You gain advantage (Roll 3d6 and take highest).
- Have the MC ask you a question from the Birth move.

The rise move implies that, as the Apparatus, you will be attempting to always learn more of humanity. When your character learns more, that understanding generates what we're distilling down into the mechanical term "humanity." That humanity becomes the fuel that enables them to rise, by having that urge to become and learn more. When they rise, in some ways, they are evolving, always changing no matter what option is chosen.

When you choose to unlock and assign a value to a state, your character is essentially capturing and interpreting what they believe is the essence of that state; afterward, they can find and access it within themselves as well, for better or worse.

When you use humanity to take +1 forward, don't forget to say what that looks like. Are they replaying a memory of when that humanity was generated? What is it about their humanity that emboldens, inspires, etc.? It is probably rooted in what generated the humanity within you in the first place—if you are finding it difficult to come up with something interesting, my advice is to start there.

The last option allows you to ask questions by expunging your humanity in order to find out more about who you are and what made you that way. Maybe you remember something, or something is revealed within the fiction that hints at an answer.

MC: OK, Scott. So what option are you choosing from it?

SCOTT: I'm going to unlock a new emotion and assign it a value I think... Scared makes the most sense. I'm probably seeing all these terrible things humanity has done, like all the wars, lack of empathy and all that. Let's see...so that's my +1 state. Sweet!

MC: Nice, so mark an emotion spike in your Peaceful state, for triggering the move and congrats! You're lost in your dream land though, all these images are cascading into your mind and that's when you feel a hand on your shoulder tugging at you. A man's standing there pulling on you to face him, and he looks angry, you're not sure why though. What do you do?

🔧 BUILT FOR BATTLE

When you decide your vessel was created as a weapon, choose a way in which you were built that is formidable and describe it. You are:

- Reinforced: Your outer shell is cold and thick; take +1 Armor.
- Caustic: You are deadly to the touch; deal 2 harm, armor-piercing when you come into contact with organic tissue.
- Violent: You cannot control yourself when your “fight” response activates; gain the Forceful and Messy tags.

This move is usually for players who particularly want to play an Apparatus that was designed to fight or kill, which has implications for how they might see the world and their purpose in it. You may work with your MC to work with other options as well, but they must have implications in the fiction that could complicate certain relationships.

SCOTT: Uh-oh, when he threatens me like that, I’m pretty sure it’d trigger something in me, just like it’d trigger a flight or fight reaction in a human. I have built for battle and I took the violent tag... I’m going to grab the guy and try to push him away from me so I don’t go ballistic on him.

MC: Ok, yeah, you go to push him but you’re unaware of your own strength, hey? You’re new, after all. I think you’re too forceful about it. The guy goes flying across the lobby and slams into a pillar, which cracks. You see splinters start to spider out and track their way up the pillar. The guy obviously weighs a ton—must have some cybernetics or something. He gets up and appears pretty dazed. Dave recognizes him for sure: it’s Trig. What do you do?

CARMEN: Dave knows It’s Trig? He’s all stunned and dazed? I make it look like I’m coming to the rescue and just take him out with my howitzer PPK.

FLOPS

When you disengage from your emotions in order to *Lift The Veil*, you may choose to roll and add a +1 for cold, hard logic. On a hit, do not mark an emotion spike. On a miss, the MC may have you add an emotion spike.

This is a move that gets triggered when the Apparatus tries to shut down or temporarily lock away its emotions and humanity in order to do something efficiently and without feeling. When they do so, the player may roll a +1 in lieu of any other state. On a hit, the fiction plays out as per the *Lift The Veil* move. On a miss, the MC makes a move and, depending on what's going on in the fiction, the MC may have an emotion spike added; it's a bit of a gamble—especially if you only have one state unlocked at the time with a lot of emotion spikes in it. If it doesn't make sense for an emotion to be added, then it shouldn't happen. They may ask the player what they think might happen on a miss, or the player might volunteer a scenario to help fill in what might follow in the fiction should this particular situation go awry if it doesn't make sense for the emotion to spike out.

MC: Dang, alright. Dave is hardcore. Well he can't defend himself so the gun howls as its namesake does and we see multiple plasma shots dig into him, a charge is released and he drops like the dead weight he is now. How's the Apparatus feeling?

SCOTT: I'm freaking out, Dave just killed an innocent man. I need to figure out who is he but I'm having so many conflicting emotions right now. I'm going to lock them down and slip into the calm coldness of logic; I'll deal with Dave later. Aw man, I got a 3, even with the +1, I still totally miss with a 4. I just can't lock out my new-found emotions I guess and maybe that scares me.

MC: Yeah, that sounds good – go ahead and mark that spike. Also, the analysis runs but no definitive match was found, it's like he doesn't exist at all! It's kind of weird, though. You get this strange sense that there were hits – maybe even more than one, but the system comes back with nothing. You get this bad feeling and your hand just suddenly locks up, you can't even control it. What do you do?

⚠️ JUDGMENT

When you witness humanity at its worst or it lets you down in a way that causes you to reevaluate everything you thought you knew about people, take +1 humanity.

The Apparatus is usually let down in some way when their belief or misconception in people is challenged by the other protagonists, characters, or situations in the setting. Maybe you witness a great deal of death in a conflict and it changes how you see people; maybe your friend betrays you or someone you felt was a paragon of virtue does something terrible. When such things happen to the Apparatus, their concept of humanity changes and grows.

SCOTT: Sorry guys, I don't think this guy is in any database I can access. It looks like just accessing the information is causing problems though. My hand's all locked up.

CARMEN: Well, we can't let him live. My character knows that if the Apparatus actually does track him down, it'll dig up my past and all kinds of stuff I don't want. I just can't risk it, so I walk up and shoot him in the head.

MC: Wow. Ok, well he's definitely dead now if he wasn't before, that's for sure and his face is beyond recognition. How does that make the Apparatus feel?

SCOTT: Well, I've got no background on Dave at all, and I kind of thought that everyone in the group was trying to be, essentially, "good guys." This is clearly not a good guy move, so it makes me start to question a lot of things. I'm going to show that over time though, for now, I'm just shocked. I'm going to frame some scenes and play it out a bit more.

INTERFACE

When you integrate with, or open your mind to, another intelligence that isn't human, you may name them as an NPC and establish their intelligence and disposition with the MC. Whenever you merge with another, both of you are affected in some way; the MC will tell you how at the appropriate time.

What constitutes an intelligence is up to the MC and the rest of the players, so take the time to clarify the fiction if necessary. The Apparatus might plug into a terminal and temporarily merge with a worker bot that has simple programming meant to just lift up and move things around, or connect with an android that is meant to have a series of Artificial General Intelligence processes that can simulate something close to human intelligence. The type, and amount, of information you could get from them in this manner would be subject to the MC portraying them like any NPC and so would be limited to what makes sense in the fiction.

SCOTT: Alright, so when we came in there was a computer system here for the base, right? I go to that terminal and touch my finger to it. I think maybe it looks like my finger changes into a plug-in and jacks into the terminal like a USB drive in a computer.

MC: Alright cool, so you want to use interface?

SCOTT: Right, so I was thinking I'm going to try and ask it some questions since I can treat it like a person. Cool?

MC: Sure, so maybe you have like these tendrils that drift out of your arm and latch on to the system, is that cool with you? As the communication opens up, a voice in your mind says, "Hello. My name is Claire, I live here..." It suddenly sounds...menacing, maybe? Which is strange from what we've so far seen from machines thus far—until now. "Why did you kill my father...who are you?" Her tone has an aggressive inflection as she's firing off questions, what do you want to do?

☒ TERMINAL

When you reflect upon humanity and come to the determination that it is beyond saving or redemption, you may lock out your emotions and put a +1 into all states but can no longer generate humanity.

SCOTT: Umm I don't know...I'm going to pause for a minute. The last time my fight or flight kicked in, things didn't go so well. Maybe I'll just say, "We didn't mean to kill him, it was an accident, who or what are you?"

MC: Right, so, you get her talking and instead of just telling you with words she dumps a ton of data into you. As you go through and read it you can piece together that the computer system is a lot less advanced than you but he was trying to create something similar to you. He took his own daughter's mind and tried to integrate it into a machine but in the process, her own body ended up dying. You see all these pictures of her slowly succumbing to death down there as her physical body was neglected once her consciousness was transferred into the new model, which you are now speaking with.

SCOTT: As a pretty new life form I think that freaks me out a lot...I think I'm going to activate terminal. Hopefully later I can see something that redeems humanity a bit, because this is a horrible, horrible thing and I don't want to feel whatever this is.

📊 APPARATUS SPECIAL

When the Apparatus shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll without adding a state. On a 10+, you may ask them 2 questions if you wish; they must answer truthfully. On a 7–9, you may ask them only 1.

- In what way do you believe we are similar?
- Have you ever ended someone's life; why?
- Do you feel you truly have free will?
- What purpose does humanity serve?
- Do you think I am worthy of humanity; why?
- What is your concept of good/bad?
- Where do you belong?

MC: Ok man, fair enough. It is pretty messed up! I think that her sharing all this stuff with you though is pretty intimate, don't you?

SCOTT: Definitely, It's probably the most intimate thing she could have done.

MC: Cool, so what if your special triggers, let's do that!

SCOTT: Ok, let me roll first... I got a 7 including my static +1 because I'm locked down after Terminal. I ask it, "Have you ever ended someone's life?"

MC: You hear her voice return in your mind, "I'm about to."

SCOTT: Why!

Until a man is twenty-five, he still thinks, every so often, that under the right circumstances he could be the baddest motherfucker in the world. If I moved to a martial-arts monastery in China and studied real hard for ten years. If my family was wiped out by Colombian drug dealers and I swore myself to revenge. If I got a fatal disease, had one year to live, and devoted it to wiping out street crime. If I just dropped out and devoted my life to being bad.”

Snow Crash



THE ARCHITECT

The Architect lives and breathes *The Veil*. You have a powerful cyberbrain that you can use to change aspects of digital environments at will.

Most predominantly, the Architect injects finer lens on specific aspects of *The Veil* and directly injects the completely digital world. The manifestation of your own subconscious into the digital as well as being able to manipulate the digital and the ramifications thereof, are predominate in this playbook. In short, mixes of *Inception* and *The Matrix* themes and tropes are strong in this playbook.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Architect playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

- The area titled “Subconscious.”

The Architect is at home and wields more power than any other protagonist within a digital space. When they enter said space, they frame the scene instead of the MC. What this means is when they enter they tell everyone else what their own perception is of that space and in that way they define *The Veil* more than anyone else. Their own perception of *The Veil* becomes their reality, at least so far as within the reasonable constraints of the fiction already. All other aspects of play continue as normal after the scene is introduced by the Architect.

While there, they also bring parts of themselves forward. Manifestations of their subconscious come in with you, when choosing the options of what is brought forward into this place with you, you’ll see multiple options on the sheet tell you to “name an NPC”; when an NPC is named, it means they become an important character in the fiction, such that they deserve a name and Motivation. For The Architect, that means that at some point, these characters you’re introducing will be making an appearance in your game and be portrayed by the MC.

JON: I think the most interesting option, to me, is for this protagonist to have a former friend. And maybe a jilted lover, probably still alive. Her name is Claire, I remember her as always having a lot of energy and wearing sun dresses. She has long blonde hair and blue eyes, and we probably parted ways when I started becoming obsessed with the digiscape. As for my former friend, I want that to be a surprise sometime later on so we can detail that more later.

MC: Sure, sounds good, I'll mark that down for when you're in the digiscape!

■ The area titled "Cyberbrain."

What an Architect's cyberbrain is and how it works is up to them in the fiction. It also does more than just letting you jump into a digital environment. No matter what you pick, you'll end up with an Architect that gets something neat but the implications of the choice will be noted by the MC as well, and will probably have implications for the setting. If it is sentient itself, then that could be something brought into the fiction – that's the stuff that builds scenarios, right there! If it's a placebo, then what does allow you to jump into digiscape? You don't have to deal with the implications right away, feel free to give it a couple games to get some cool ideas and then tie it into whatever is happening in the fiction. Remember to mark that you begin the game with your cyberbrain modifier at a +1.

JON: I want to be able to change my appearance whenever I want in the digiscape, like a chameleon. So I'll have this huge library of pictures in there for me to tailor my look to the situation.

ARCHITECT MOVES

You get the *Reconfigure* move and can choose one more.

RECONFIGURE

When you remake parts of the digital environment as you see fit, describe what you take from the digital world and what it becomes, then roll+cyberbrain. On a 10+, you do it and all 3. On a 7–9, you do it but you may only choose 1.

- You do not suffer feedback.
- The change is not noticed.
- Your subconscious stays repressed.

When an Architect remakes the digital environment, they must take something from it and change it into something else. Think of it like the law of conservation of mass, even in the digital space—you cannot simply destroy or produce something from nothing. What they use to create something new does not have to be similar in any way, there are other rules than having to take something from the space first. You might want to embellish what is done with any excess mass used as well, but it's up to you as assumptions can be made. For example, maybe you decide to change a car into a bicycle, and the rest of the car's mass dissipates as the bicycle is shaped from it. Or maybe you draw mass out of the car and it becomes some kind of a spinning ball, which you then channel outward to become a bicycle. Whatever you decide to do, make sure to make it evocative for everyone else at the table. Instead of telling the MC you change the color of the walls so that you blend in better, say that you slam your hand against the wall and a ripple shoots outward, changing the color of the wall as it moves along.

Each choice on the move ensures that something bad does not happen to your character. That is, if you can only choose one of the bad things to not happen to you, as per the 7–9 result, then the other two things do happen to you. It's up to the MC if the two things happen right away, or later, or if only one of the things happen. It's their job to have some interesting consequences happen in the fiction so they'll choose what works best at the time.

Also, even though you're adding the modifier from your cyberbrain, you still mark an emotion spike in whichever state your protagonist is experiencing at that moment.

MC: So, you're entering a digital environment with your team, right, so you get to set the scene since you're the Architect.

JON: Sure, yeah! Umm, I think we enter the digital space and it's a futuristic, hectic warzone with the sounds of combat and hi-tech weapons periodically breaking the silence. There's rubble all over the place and two soldiers off in the distance are walking away from us. The buildings are cracked and scarred from the pummeling they're taking and a piece falls off as we all look to these two lone soldiers. First reaction for John is to reach out and grab some of the rubble and turn it into an armored jacket to protect him from shots being fired. I think the rubble turns into like this digital code and gets transformed into the jacket, if it works anyway. Wow, barely. A 6 and my cyberbrain modifier for a 7. I think he's probably freaked out about being in a warzone, so I'll mark Scared for that emotion spike. I'm going to choose to...make sure no one notices the change. We just got here, so last thing I need to be is on the run.

MC: As you're reconfiguring, I think instead of feedback, there's a piece of malicious code waiting there! You don't catch it in time as you transform the code and you unwittingly absorb it! You take 1 harm and it obviously is unaffected by the protection of the jacket, but you do get to keep the armored jacket.

CONSTRUCT

When you host a digital lobby, roll+cyberbrain. By default, the effect will last only as long as you maintain it, will only be able to house two minds, will have an unsecure, open connection protocol, and will appear basic and without detail. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1:

- It will persist (for a while) without you actively maintaining it.
- It is highly detailed and expansive.
- It has no cap on its population.
- Its connection is secure from intruders.

When you have a digital lobby, you're able to communicate with someone or something in a space designed by you. The first time you use it, you and the MC should decide what the details are of this place. You have to maintain it, which means you can't be doing other things and using your lobby at the same time. You also have a limited population; what that means is it is only capable of containing two minds within it at once. An open connection means that it could be intercepted by people wanting to eavesdrop, that someone could try to jump into the space, maybe even lay some malicious code to try and get a fix on a real-world location or set up a booby trap.

Depending on the roll, an Architect can remove some of these default restrictions. For example, when you choose for the lobby to persist without you actively maintaining it, it means that you are able to host the lobby, and do other things at the same time.

Highly detailed interactions would be seeing them visually; by default, it would not be detailed, which could mean just disembodied voices talking to one another, or just a white space with two chairs and a TV. Detail can mean anything you want it to—a lush environment, a recreation of a crime scene from memory, whatever you need it to.

Removing the cap on population means being able to hold more than two minds in the lobby with you, up to however many you want. The MC may step in if things begin to not make sense for the fiction or you do something that might trigger an additional move, though. Say, if you wanted to transfer the consciousness of an entire building that was about to be bombed or something, in the heat of the moment. That said, if that does make sense for your fiction—maybe it happens. It's up to you and the other players to decide what jives with the game setting you've created together.

Securing the connection means being able to be sure that no one else could be tapping in or otherwise doing stuff you wouldn't want them to do to or with your lobby.

MC: When you guys call out and approach the two soldiers in the distance, they stop and turn around. The smaller one is rail thin and looks like he can barely grow facial hair. His blonde hair is capped by a helmet that is way too big for him and his blue eyes look like they haven't seen much action. In contrast, the other man is well built and tall, with salt and pepper hair. His green eyes and sharp features are unusual and are the first thing you notice. What do you want to do?

JON: Something about the description sounds really familiar, have we ever met or seen him before? I'm going to construct a digital lobby so Jamie and I can talk to each other without anyone catching on.

MC: So, this is the first time we've seen you do this, right? What does that look like?

JON: Oh, right. Well I think maybe it looks like a massive library, you know? And whenever he sees something familiar he pops into his head and browses all these books, which are the accumulated knowledge over his lifetime which he's committed to memory. Each book is a person or place, something like that. And I think when we are there, we're sitting comfortably on couches and chairs. I got a total of 7, so I pick that it persists for a while without maintaining it because I don't want it to be obvious we're talking in front of that guy. I'm fine with dropping the details down so it's just us in chairs or something.

MC: Ok cool, go ahead and talk then, he won't know anything's amiss; I assume you'll just be talking to one another normally, but also talking on this "level" to mask it.

JAMIE: That's a cool idea! So, I pop into this space and at first it's probably a bit jarring. Then after getting orientated for a few seconds, I hear your question in there and I nod and I'm like, "Yeah, this is Winston, at least, I'm pretty sure based on the description, anyway. He's just much younger I think, but he's the same man who hired us to do the job we're doing right now."

MC: Don't forget to mark a spike there, too.

LADY IN RED:

When you change your appearance within the constraints of the digital, roll+cyberbrain. On a 10+, it's flawless. On a 7–9, some part of your subconscious manifests.

An Architect can change how they appear in digital space in radical ways, and there are no constraints here. However, on a 7–9, an Architect also brings in a part of themselves and it warps the digital space. It could mean one of the things that you marked on your sheet under subconscious, or the MC might ask you to come up with something else that might happen. Work with them to come up with something interesting!

MC: As you approach the two soldiers the sound of artillery can be heard off in the distance. They wait there, gripping their weapons, unsure of what to expect from this interruption...

JON: I fall in step behind everyone else and I want to change my appearance to match theirs.

MC: Sounds like lady in red to me, roll it up.

JON: Let's see, a 5 and a 3. And +1 for the cyberbrain. I think he's still pretty anxious, so I'll mark Scared again, too. I think what I want to be in is military garb, the same as Winston and the other soldier only at a higher rank so I might have a chance to take charge of the situation. That's a 9.

MC: So close! Alright, well it's a little early to be bringing in the big guns, but it would be cool to have something happen that unnerves you and shows everyone that the digital world responded. You said before that you actually were in the army before you were discharged, so maybe something from a time you were really Scared happens?

JON: Hmm...sure, yeah. Let's say there was this time that a grenade got thrown over a hill and bounced right off my head. I froze when it did, to my embarrassment. One of the other guys dove on it and died when it blew up. Always felt so guilty that it wasn't me.

MC: Perfect! So let's say a grenade gets lobbed over the hill and it bounces off your head. You panic for a second and you realize what happened. This time, though, when you turn to look at where the grenade landed there's nothing there. Still, it feels like a warning, if nothing else. No one else saw the grenade either, let's say.

☒ THERE IS NO SPOON

When you manipulate the environment in order to mitigate a danger, roll. On a hit you may reduce any harm that would normally occur by 1, so long as it is fictionally appropriate.

Anytime the environment is manipulated to mitigate harm, this could come into effect as long as the MC thinks it's appropriate. If you're changing things in order to reduce harm it should apply, if you're unable to describe how you would reduce harm with a manipulation, it does not trigger.

MC: So that's a miss for you then, Jamie? Hmm...ok, you see a spotlight swiveling around the war zone trying to spot people and it centers on your group there. As it sees you all, you also see a light reflection from something in a window, like from a scope or something maybe, who knows? What do you do?

JON: Can I turn off that spotlight so the guy has a crappy shot and can't see me!? Annnnd, I got a 5, and I was feeling so confident with Powerful too, though probably not for long now.

MC: Nice, well the spotlight goes out. It's suddenly really quiet, but then you hear the crack of rifle. What do you do?

JON: Oh no! Uh, well I'm going to try and harden Switch's vest in case she gets hit.

MC: Alright, you're going to have be super quick considering you already heard the sound. Go ahead and roll there is no spoon.

JON: Ok, yeah. Perfect! I got a 10!

MC: Do you mind if I just narrate out something, Switch? I think it'd be cool, but I we could also probably just roll risk for the bullet if you want to.

JAMIE: No, that's cool, I want to see what you have planned.

MC: Nice, it was lucky. Alright so Jamie, you're just suddenly on the ground. You don't know what happened until you look down, but your impossible-to-stop-a-bullet camo gear seems to have stopped a high-caliber bullet...

THE KICK

When you try to forcefully eject someone or something from a digital environment, roll+cyberbrain. On a 10+, you do it and may choose two. On a 7–9, you do it and may choose one.

- You take no Harm in the doing.
- *The Veil* does not change or respond as a result.
- Your subconscious stays repressed.

As this move implies, there isn't a safe method of leaving the digital environment aside from the methods you come up with when first creating the setting together. You and the other players will talk about this, among other things, in depth on your first session together. There is more information about the first session on page 271.

This is another move where a lot of bad things could happen, and success only mitigates the damage done. You have to choose between taking harm, parts of your subconscious manifesting, or *The Veil* changing or responding to what happened in a way detailed by the MC. Either way, even on a 10+, something is going to happen and not all of it will be good.

At the start of their first session, the players decided that there's a set time in the real world and once that time is up, that ejects them naturally from the digital world. That's how much time they have for this mission.

JON: Out of game, I think something is strange with what's happening with this job. Mr. Winston, our client, looks much younger and we've no idea why. To top it off, we're in a war zone. I'm not sure what's going on but there is a sniper on us and we need to do something! So, I think what I'm going to do, is pull Switch aside and ask if it might be a good idea to have her watch our back in the real world. Something fishy is going on here.

JAMIE: Switch hesitates at first but agrees.

JON: Ok, I'm going to give you the kick to knock you back into meat space. I roll and get an 8. Taking into account the +1 for the cyberbrain, that's a total of 9. I think as the camera pans around to see me concentrate on doing this, you see me looking worried and I'll mark a Scared emotion spike. I think what the Kick is, is me creating a gateway out behind this door here. So she can just walk through it and she'll be back in the real world. I'm going to choose not to take harm...

MC: Well as soon as she begins to cross the threshold of the gateway, the whole place starts shaking like an earthquake ripping through the area. As the ground shakes, your attention shifts to behind you and see someone walk out across the way, apparently unaffected. What does John do?

JON: Aw crap, I'm going to leave the door and run out to tackle them to the ground before the sniper can fire!

MC: Alright, you go to close the door, and there is still that tangible darkness that Switch walked into to jump out, she hasn't said she's walked through, though. The environment is acting funny noticing she's leaving though, whether it's the fact that you're in Winston's mind or the digital realm fighting against you, you're unsure. But as the earthquake ripples time gets all messed up, you're turning to run but you're also at the door. So now one of you is running after this person, the other is at the door—what do you guys do?

**The Internet is the first thing
that humanity has built
that humanity doesn't understand,
the largest experiment in anarchy
that we have ever had.**

Eric Schmidt (via dystopiantimes)

🎲 UPGRADES

Take an additional option from the Cyberbrain section.

When you have enough XP for an advancement, taking this option will unlock an additional cyberbrain selection for the playbook, building on the framework of what you already know about your cyberbrain.

🎲 ARCHITECT SPECIAL

When the Architect shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll without adding a state. On a hit, all is well. On a miss, they are added to your subconscious as a named NPC. The MC will ask you questions about your perception of them; answer truthfully.

JON: Huh, I think...the one by the door turns and puts their hand on Switch. "Hey, listen. I didn't want to tell the others, but, I really chose you to leave because I couldn't live with myself if something happened out there and you got hurt. Don't think less of me, OK?"

MC: Well, that could be an intimate moment, or Giri, possibly? We haven't seen John be emotional at all yet, have we?

JON: I think my special, yeah. What does Switch think? Cool if I roll that, then?

JAMIE: Sure, it's definitely intimate moment, for Switch too. She says, "There's nothing out there that could hurt you unless you brought it in there with us, right?" She isn't the best with reassurance but she is touched and tries to, at least.

JON: Aw crap. I rolled my special and got a 4...

MC: Ok, well everything seems fine for now, and Switch steps through the door and lands back in meat space. But for now, what does John truly think of Switch? I want to get some notes down so I don't forget about this for later...





THE ATTACHED

The future is a lonely place, for some. You, however, possess a one-of-a-kind object, or perhaps, it possesses you. However your relationship is defined in play, one thing is for certain: you are not alone as the denizens of the future may well be.

The object of the Attached introduces a perception of how people perceive objects that are important to them. There's some elements of the ebony blade, something used as a weapon but with a will of its own in the playbook. The implication with the object is that you relate more to objects than people, too. The exploration of that as a primary focus, which in turn, introduces questions about technology, sentience and identity into the setting.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Attached playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled "The Object."

The object is probably going to be the most interesting thing about your playbook and protagonist, so be sure to think carefully about it and how it defines your character. When you're choosing this, you're defining its origins. It'll become ingrained in the fiction and be something to be spotlighted and springboard off of on your first session, so pick the most interesting option to you, or make your own compelling origin story.

BOB: I think it'd be neat if I had a little buddy named Gizmo going on here. I think it makes sense if I created the little guy myself, too.

■ The area titled "The Revision."

Now that we know a little about the object, we need to know how the object changed you. For whatever reason you find compelling or interesting in the fiction, you, the Attached, need your object. You're weaker when you're away from it. But, it also gives you power. Something you couldn't have done otherwise. When you choose this option, make sure it fits for your overall concept of what you want it to be. You could let your choices define your object, or you could have a neat idea of what it already is and fit it to that.

BOB: I think for Gizmo, I've built him so I don't want to lose the little guy. I think I'm going to pick ping so that no matter where he is I can get to him.

■ The area titled “Define.”

This section is here to assign tags to your object that will define what its primary functions are. Is it a weapon? Does it gather information? A mix of both? There are tons of tags on the reference sheets provided, or you could make your own and consult with the MC to make something not already there. All tags listed on the reference sheet are just examples and meant to be helpful; by no means should you feel bound to the examples.

BOB: So, Gizmo isn't a rebel rouser, that's for sure. I think he has armor though, so I'll select n armor to give him 1 armor. Then I'll give him multi-spectrum, amplification, intercepting, and multi-task, so he can do a ton of different things. He's going to be able to gather lots of information, have some protection, and do a few things at once. I think he's going to be a pretty helpful little fella.

■ The area where you can draw your object.

This may seem silly at first, but if you haven't really thought about what it could look like, and even if you have, it's always cool to visualize something so important to the character.

■ The area titled “Lest we be parted.”

When your object is unable to exert its influence on you, at the MC's discretion, you are parted from your object and take on some negative tags that have specific effects on you until you recover it. There are lots of different relationships that a protagonist could have with their object, but, for example, if you're playing a protagonist being manipulated and warped by the object, you are free from the object's control, but then are also weaker, too.

BOB: I think if I lost Gizmo, I would most likely be afraid! So I'm going to choose that option. Parted won't affect me too much because I think we're friends, but I guess things can change as stuff happens in play.

ATTACHED MOVES

You get the *Thy Will Be Done* move and can choose one more.

Hunger for the Attached is a mechanic to simulate the will of your object. Whatever it needs or wants, it tries to achieve through hunger. The more hunger it has, the more will it has over you. Its hunger could be something like wanting to stay safe, or it could be the elimination of its foes. It all depends on the setting and what you've discussed with the MC, who is a fan of you, the player. Don't be afraid to discuss what parts of the object you want to define right away and what parts you both want to play to find out.

It can also be argued that DNA is nothing more than a program designed to preserve itself. Life has become more complex in the overwhelming sea of information. And life, when organized into species, relies upon genes to be its memory system. So man is an individual only because of his own undefinable memory. But memory cannot be defined, yet it defines mankind.

Ghost in the Shell

📊 THY WILL BE DONE

At the beginning of the session give your object +1 hunger, then roll and add your object's hunger. On a 10+, the MC holds 3. On a 7-9, the MC holds 1. Throughout the session, the MC can spend their hold 1 for 1 to:

- Name something; your object must have it. When you give in to your object, mark experience and -1 hunger from your object.
- Have it object to a course of action or propose one of its own; Should you obey, mark experience and -1 hunger from your object.

If the MC has any hold left at the end of the session, give your object +1 hunger, to a maximum hunger of +4. If your object has a hunger of +4, take -1 ongoing to all dice results until you find a way to satiate your object's hunger. You may proposition the MC for a way to fix the issue, or ask the MC to propose something. If the MC is neglected to use hold in a session, find appropriate moments in the fiction that suggest a good time to spend hold and remind the MC that they can do so.

The hunger of an object is simply what it wants. It could be scared and doesn't want to be in firefights, or it could be a sentient sword that craves the blood of its enemies. Whatever it is, it has an agenda and its hunger is the way in which it expresses to you what it needs or wants.

When the MC names something it could mean a lot of things. Maybe it just wants something near it, it wants the blood of an enemy or it wants to escape, and so on. Whatever it wants, if you satisfy the object's hunger, the hunger decreases by 1 and you also get XP. Alternatively, the object may disagree or disapprove of a certain course of action, or it may propose a course of action that it wants you to take; if you do, you get to mark XP and decrease its hunger by 1.

At the beginning of the session, Bob rolls a total of 7 so the MC gets 1 hold to spend whenever they choose during the session.

Bob is tasked with covering his teammates as they make their way through a crowded market. His object, Gizmo, makes this a bit easier since it can scan everyone there for threats.

MC: Bob, Gizmo spots two men with advanced weapons concealed moving with purpose towards you guys.

BOB: Shit! "Guys, there are two men coming at us here, better get down!" And he engages them by drawing out his own concealed weapon and fires on them.

MC: OK, so just know that Gizmo wants you to take off right now and leave everybody, he's pretty freaked out. What do you want to do?

IT SPEAKS

When you seek direction from your object give it +1 hunger, then roll and see what it directs you to do; the MC will tell you what it says. On a 10+, take +1 forward and mark experience if you do as your object wishes. On a 7-9, take a +1 forward if you do what it wants; if you do not, there will be consequences.

This move is a great way to progress the story when you can't really think of a next step on your journey or mission. It's also just a fun way to progress the relationship with your object. Whenever you need, or are simply interested in, advice from your object, you may invoke this move. The only downside is that there is the expectation that you will follow through—when you do, you are rewarded and when you don't there are possible consequences that the MC might bring up in play. The object may react in any number of ways; perhaps it decides not to offer advice or direction when called upon next time. Perhaps it sets its own plan in motion regardless. Whatever it happens, you can be certain the fiction will progress and you'll learn more about your object. MC: You manage to take out the two men, but you see some sparks and look over to see that Gizmo was hit in the exchange! He's folded in on himself in the dirt and doesn't appear to be functioning so well, though he's still on.

BOB: Gizmo! Sorry buddy, what should we do? It's getting crazy out here!

MC: Sounds like you're asking for direction, right? Want to roll it speaks for me?

BOB: Damn, that's a miss. I think...I'm pretty Scared for Gizmo, so I'll put a spike in that state. I'm guessing he's even more anxious to get out of here now, but he might want revenge or something...

MC: Ok well, he tells you that he wants to get out of here, sputtering pathetically. At the same time, you hear a couple guards running by overhead, probably to get overhead positions on the rest of the team. If Gizmo has any hunger, I'll spend it to give you a cookie to take off with Gizmo. What do you do?

☒ MERGE

When your object merges seamlessly with you in a predetermined configuration, roll. On a 10+, there are no complications. On a 7–9, you succeed but with a complication and must give your object +1 hunger. On a miss, mark +1 hunger, and the MC may also choose an option from *Thy Will Be Done* for free.

When this move is chosen and unlocked, you need to pitch to the MC what your merged configuration will be. It can be whatever you like, as long as it is within reason and makes sense for the fiction and with what your object is; if your object is a floating ball the size of basketball, you probably couldn't merge with it to become a giant robot. The object might turn into a tool of some kind, or becomes a microscopic system that runs through your body, or becomes a metallic gundam-style suit that protects you. Make sure that, whatever you choose, it makes sense for the setting that you and the other players come up with—run it by the MC, for sure, but the other players too, just to make sure that your media touchstones are not clashing.

BOB: Alright, I finally got Gizmo patched up a bit, but I'm worried about him. I don't want him to catch any more strays, so I think I'm going to merge with him for a bit here. Make sure he's safe until I can fix him up better.

MC: Great, ok. Well maybe roll first and then tell me what it looks like. I suppose on a miss the merge might end up complicated.

BOB: Gizmo's round ball-like body contorts into a long metallic form that slides comfortably onto my arm. I think I feel better when it happens, like I'm able to take care of him properly, so I'll roll Peaceful. That's a 7, total.

MC: Alright, you're going to mark a +1 to Gizmo's hunger, because as soon as he slides on you can feel this strange compulsion to move north for some reason. What do you want to do?

NO DICE

For NPCs: Attempting to remove your object by any means is all but impossible for them unless you are at their mercy; **PCs** are always at a -2 to do so.

For any reason, if any character tries to remove your object from your person, or around you, you may narrate in what form the resistance occurs and the aggressor will have a very difficult time doing so. Unless there is no way you can resist, **NPCs** cannot take your object away from you and **PCs** are at a -2 regardless of circumstance.

MC: So you're in what looks like a testing facility. You're immersed in this strange, metallic liquid. Tubes are running all over the place of varying diameter. You've got some kind of blindfold on as you can't see, but you are getting a lot of sensory data from Gizmo, who you are still merged with. You hear someone fairly close to say they need to try another diamond bit.

BOB: Oh, well they'll never be able to get Gizmo off, we're merged and I've got no dice. Good luck with that, asshole.

MC: The man turns to you and says, "I guess we'll just have to try to cut the whole arm off."

BOB: Wait, uh, Gizmo won't let that happen, right?

MC: Guess we'll find out?

☰ PING

Wherever you are, when you call your object to you, if able, it will come to you. Either way, you know exactly where it is.

This move is used to either find out where your object is, or to have it come to you. It implies a connection that can reach past any barriers in the setting. What that looks like is, again, up to you and the fiction. It could be a psychic connection, some kind of special technology, or whatever you envision. How you call your object will also be affected by the type of connection you have with it. It might mean popping a special code into a terminal, or it might mean whispering the object's name. There are circumstances in the fiction that might prevent your object from getting to you, but even if it can't, you will still be able to ascertain its location.

BOB: I think I'll send Gizmo down one path and I'll go the other way so we can cover more of the building.

MC: The labyrinth is pretty intricate and it's pretty dark, but after some time you think you manage to reach the center. When you get there, though, Gizmo isn't there.

BOB: I whisper Gizmo's name and instantly feel that connection in my interface we have, since I know that he's at least attempting to return to me. I'm feeling optimistic, so I'm going to mark an emotion spike in Powerful here for that move. On that note, I'm going to take the talisman out and look for an engraving that matches the description we were given.

☒ MAKE IT SO

Whenever your object has **-1** hunger or below, add an additional tag for its use. So long as it is at **-1** or below, you have the benefit of this tag. Should its hunger go above **-1**, the benefit is lost. Write the additional tag here _____.

When your object is satiated, you gain the benefit of an additional static tag to be described in the move when you take it. Whenever it is at **-1**, or below, you may use this tag freely in addition to the ones it already has. If it is above **-1**, the use of the tag is lost until such time that it returns to **-1** or below.

BOB: It probably makes sense for Gizmo, especially with all that happens that when he's particularly happy, he gains something like a durable tag, so he can be manhandled a bit more. He would be alright going through the more grueling things that I ask of him than he otherwise would be.

**And, for an instant,
she stared directly into those
soft blue eyes and knew, with
an instinctive mammalian certainty,
that the exceedingly rich were
no longer even remotely human.**

William Gibson, Count Zero

📺 ATTACHED SPECIAL

When the Attached shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll+ your object's hunger. On a 10+, they take -1 forward and you take -1 ongoing until the object believes it was no big deal. On a 7-9, it speaks triggers. On a miss, give your object -1hunger.

MC: So Deacon and you are up there shooting the shit, and you tell him all about building Gizmo. He gets this familiar look in his eye, like he's a little Sad. He looks up and takes another last swig of that godawful moonshine you guys made, polishing it off. He looks at you and says, "The only thing we've got left after Ray being killed is each other." He looks you straight in the eyes. What do you do?

BOB: I mean, Ray just died, Gizmo's great and no one understands our relationship. I've been keeping Deacon at arm's length but I think at this point that façade just crumbles. I don't want to have a scene with it or anything but I'll make a move. Assuming he still feels the same way, we can cut to our place or his place.

MC: Sure, dude. No problem. Before we do that though, let's activate your special. Deacon doesn't have one because he's an NPC.

BOB: Oh right. Ok well I'm feeling appreciated I think, so I'll mark a spike in Powerful here. I got an 11.

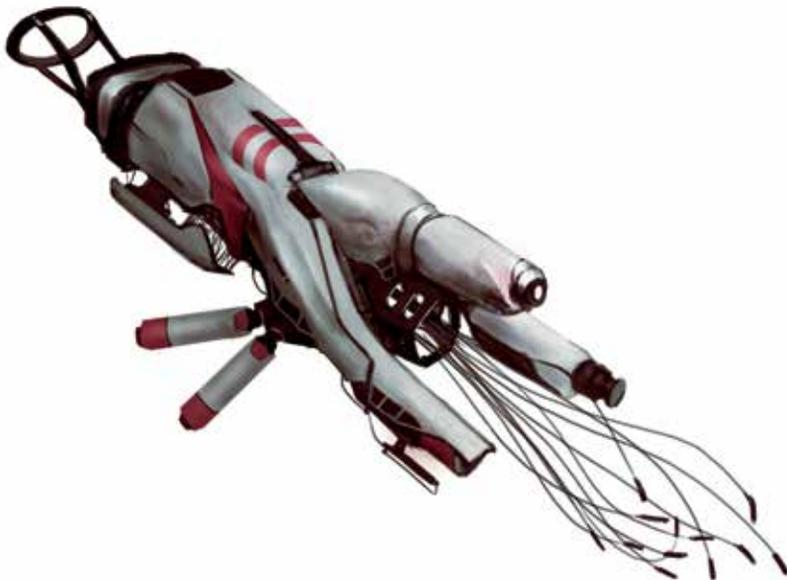
MC: So, you take -1 ongoing and -1 forward until Gizmo believes it's no big deal. Time for an awkward conversation...



THE CATABOLIST

The Catabolist is obsessed with integrating cybernetic systems into their own body but rejects all conventional cybernetic processes. Only through their own means are they able to take tech, modify it and make use of it. They revere technology, whether to rise mankind up or rip them down to make way for the new age. They are also highly intelligent and have created an omni-tool that helps them to salvage and modify tech to further their own ends.

Most likely the introduction of the playbook will inject some moral questions. How far will you go to get the technology you need so badly for your ideology? A new kind of tech, alternative to the standard cybernetics or standard technologies could become a big deal in the setting, too. This playbook as well as the Attached brings with it the implication that you understand objects more than people in some ways, especially with specific moves available to you.



There are a few areas on the first page of the Catabolist playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled “Ideology.”

We know the Catabolist wants to appropriate technology because their body rejects cybernetics by conventional methods, so what is it that pushed them to develop the omni-tool and figure out a way to do this? Technology is inherently important to you, there are multiple selections to help flesh out why that is—there is also a place to write down your own.

LOGAN: Well, for Victor, I think it makes sense that he finds others ignorant. He’s super smart, he’s made this omni-tool, he’s already surmounted his body rejecting cybernetics. I doubt there’s much else he can’t put his mind to and not succeed! I think, I’ll go with “Humans are ignorant by design. I will save them; when I am perfect, they’ll see.”

■ The area titled “The Omni-Tool.”

The omni-tool is a unique, customized tool you’ve made. You need it to integrate tech, but, depending on your selection, it may also have other utilities. Whatever you envision your tool to be, choose a selection that helps build that idea within the fiction.

LOGAN: Well, to be honest I’m a huge fan of a particular game in which there is an omni-tool, so I want it to look like that. Sort of a holographic display with the physical unit latched to my arm. So that’s what I think he’s got, and the display is black with white typography. Ohhhh yeah.



THE CATABOLIST

NAME:

LOOK:

Circle one from each category:

- Female, Masculine, Androgynous, Animalistic, Transgressive, Ectopic, Fluid.
- Discreet wear, vintage wear, cyber wear, hi-tech wear, custom wear, structural wear, or bulky wear.
- Scared face, smooth face, pale face, bony face, plump moist face, or sweet face.
- Distant eyes, moony eyes, mysterious eyes, frank eyes, compelling eyes, or liquid eyes.
- Slim body, full-bodied body, heavy-set body, lithe body, or _____ body.
- Asian or south Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, indigenous, Middle Eastern _____

JAM:

Everyone has a Jam (something you are good at and do to making a living and earn Credits). When you tell the MC what your jam is they'll tell you how much Cred you earn when you get downtime. Your jam is used to establish your lifestyle, your income, and how you know certain other characters.

STATES

MAD	PEACEFUL	SAD	JOYFUL	SCARED	POWERFUL
□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□

Assign +2, +1, -1, 0, 0 and -1 to each state from their propensity to react with that emotion to their most bang one.

BELIEFS

Create three Beliefs. If a Belief is tested this session, mark 1 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief gets you into trouble this session, mark 2 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief is erased and resolved or changed after being tested, mark 3 XP.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

THE CATABOLIST is obsessed with integrating cybernetic systems into your own body but rejects all conventional cybernetic processes. Only through your own means are you able to take tech, modify it and make use of it. You reverse technology, whether to rise mankind up or rip them down to make way for the new age. You are also highly intelligent and have created an Omni-tool that helps you to salvage and modify tech to further your own ends.

HOLD

HARM

- Light
- Moderate
- Critical

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IMPROVEMENT

XP: □□□□

When you attempt something that benefits you and fail or when you gain XP from beliefs mark each box per 1XP you accrue.

- +1 Mad
- +1 Sad
- +1 Joyful
- +1 Scared
- +1 Powerful

Get a new playbook move □□□

Erase a Gm need □□□

Get a move from another playbook □□□

After your 5th improvement you may also pick from the following:

- Take +1 to any state (Max +3) □□□□□
- Get +1 modifier to your Omni-tool □□□
- Create and play a new protagonist
- Change to a new playbook
- Advance a basic move □□□□□□□□

THE IDEOLOGY

Once, you may have been like them, one among many. Then, something happened to you and you changed. You changed into something unlike anyone out there, and you became this person because you believe (choose 2):

- Humanity is a disease; only through the integration of cybernetics might we live.
- Humans are ignored by design. I will save them when I am perfect, they'll see.
- Fear has no belief shouldn't exist but the alternative is worse.
- I was saved by a machine when it questioned my existence. I saw the way.
- I witnessed the wrath of machines; I must become one in order to defeat them.

THE OMNI-TOOL

You know you must become something more and so found or invented just the tool for your purposes. Whenever a move calls for you to roll 'Omni-tool', add +1 to the roll unless otherwise stated. Your Omni-tool is unique because (choose 2):

- It is a part of other communication systems. Give the communication tag.
- It is a powerful tool used for analysis. It gains the search in the gear move. It's detachable. When you use it to help scrounge, it gains the remote tag and helps you search. Your Omni-tool takes +1 forward when used in this way.
- It facilitates your observations of other things. Whenever you use things speak, you may ask an additional question, even on a 6.
- Its primary function is to integrate cybernetic systems into your person. You get one additional tag for the cybernetic. If successful when using it for junkware.

GIRI QUESTIONS

After you introduce your character, you may use the following bullet points to develop Giri relationships with other players if you so choose, or develop relationships of your own.

- If you've convinced someone else of your ideology and they believe it is to their benefit, you have 1 Giri on them.
- If someone else helped you develop your Omni-tool with or for you, they have 1 Giri on you.
- If you have repaired someone's cybernetics when they didn't have the means to do so themselves, you have 1 Giri on them.

GEAR

You get fashion suitable to your look including your option a piece worth 1 armor (You details, both pieces of homemade gear, 1 weapon and 3 tools.

- Sleeve transmitter (close jamming)
- Receiptly drug (+1 forward when you use a Catabolist move)

- Weapons:
- Heavy revolver (2 harm close reload suit)
 - Ancient pistol (2 harm close reload load valuable)
 - Particle scalpel (3 harm intimate)
 - Hidden knives (2 harm hand infirite)

CYBERNETICS

As a Catabolist, your body rejects all cybernetics aside from those you modify and integrate yourself. When you do, write them here along with any tags, both negative and normal. You cannot make use of any other cybernetics save for the ones you yourself procure in your own way.

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NEGATIVE TAGS

Choose one tag for every piece of cybernetics you begin with:

- | | | |
|----------|-------------|---------|
| Damaging | Susceptible | Scared |
| Unstable | Facility | Adaptor |
- (make your own)

MOVES

You get the **Junkware** and **Scrounge** moves.

SCROUNGE: When you first go somewhere new and search for something useful to you, tell the MC what you're looking for. If things like that could be around, roll 'Omni-tool. On a 10+, you get some gear. On a 7-9, you get some junk. On a 7-9, it's barely adequate, take -1 forward on Junkware.

JUNKWARE: When you use your Omni-tool to convert junkware into cybernetics you then incorporate into yourself, roll 'Omni-tool. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- You create the cybernetic implant with one tag.
- It does not create a negative tag.
- It does not harm you.

THINGS SPEAK: When you handle or examine an object of particular interest to you, roll. On a 10+, ask 3. On a 7-9, ask 2. On a miss, it will ask a question of you and you will answer.

- Who handled this before me?
- Who made this or what has been done near this?
- What strong emotions recently have been near this?
- What words have been said recently near this?
- What's wrong with this and how might I fix it?
- Who do you belong to?
- For what purpose were you created?
- Are you sentient?
- What do you wish I'd do?

JARGON: When you use terminology related to cybernetic or mechanical systems, take +1 forward to the Probe move.

WRENCH IN THE GEARS: When you analyze someone with mechanical or cybernetic systems, you may ask, "How is _____ vulnerable to me?" for free.

ASSIMILATION: When you incorporate someone or something else's cybernetics into your own person, roll. On a 10+, you are able to integrate an entire cybernetic system into you. On a 7-9, you get scrounge usable for your junkware moves.

THE CATABOLIST SPECIAL: When the Catabolist shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, the Things speak move triggers immediately as though you had rolled 10+.

NOTES

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THE CATABOLIST MOVES

You get the *Junkware* and *Scrounge* moves.

▣ SCROUNGE

When you first go somewhere new and search for useful tech you can use to convert into cybernetics, tell the MC what you're looking for. If tech like that could be around, roll+omni-tool. On a 10+, you get some primo junkware, take +1 forward for the Junkware move. On 7–9, it's barely adequate for your purposes, take -1 forward for the next Junkware move.

Within reasonable constraints of the fiction, when you enter some place new, you can ask the MC if you can search for something useful to you. What you consider useful should be specified so that when the MC replies with what's happening, they're riffing off of you and everyone always needs to be on the same page as to what's happening in the fiction.

Victor and his group are in the underbelly of some old ruins in which there are lots of broken or disabled ancient technology that was previously in control of the structure. As they approach some massive double doors long overgrown with various forms of vegetation, they realize they'll never be able to get this open. There are no grooves or anything to indicate how it may be opened.

LOGAN: Victor whips out his omni-tool to scan for viable scrounge materials; since this is a dead end, hopefully he can find soooooomething to justify this trek. He's frustrated right now, so I'll mark that spike in Mad, too. Nice! I got a 10 total, it's the primo stuff for Victor today!

MC: Aw man, yeah you spot some great stuff right by the entry way, these old ruins have some cool tech, when you go check it out, what does it look like?

LOGAN: It's probably this really old clumsy looking version of tech that's like banned or not used anymore because it's not safe or we have better upgraded versions of the same stuff. Back when everything was matte black and made to look a lot less organic than it is now.

🔧 JUNKWARE

When you utilize your omni-tool to take your junkware and modify it into cybernetics you then incorporate into yourself, roll+omni-tool. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1:

- You do so and add one tag to describe it.
- It does not require a negative tag.
- It does not harm you.

How you go about incorporating these scrounged materials, which have become your junkware, into your person is completely up to you. Remember that within the fiction, to do it, you do it. You need to describe what you do for this to happen. Make sure you make it evocative so the whole table gets a clear idea of what you have in your head when you do this and as with some other moves, you're choosing what does not happen as a result of this move—so, whatever you do not choose could happen to you, depending on what the MC decides for your fiction.

LOGAN: Victor wants to use this stuff right away to help him find an entry into the door. I'm going to try and integrate it into myself. Looks like with the omni-tool giving me a +1, I end up with a 9, so that means I can only choose one, right—uh-oh! I'm going to choose to create a cybernetic implant, at least then I got it. I think the emotion around the scene is going to be Powerful. It sucks that there's going to be some feedback or something, but this is his wheelhouse after all—so I think he's feeling confident.

MC: You take this old tech into yourself and it seems cool, the systems come online for it and what not—but its old and messes up some of your new stuff too! You take 1 harm and the negative tag for it; it probably makes sense that it's unreliable. But it's up to you.

LOGAN: Alright, well I think since it is all old, it's just some rough stuff to integrate, the process damages my surrounding tissue or something and I grimace in pain! Victor grits his teeth though and presses on. I'm going to choose the intercepting tag, so he can try and figure out what's up with this door. Can I walk up to it and scan it and see what's up with it?

MC: Of course! Victor steps up and scans it and I think ordinarily all the code would be lost to you, but the new tech you've got intercepts all the data so that your omni-tool can make use of it! What do you do?

LOGAN: Ha-ha, I like that it's such a simple thing...ancient ruins—of course there's no power.

📖 THINGS SPEAK

When you handle or examine an object of particular interest to you, roll. On a 10+, ask 3. On a 7–9, ask 2. On a miss, it will ask a question of you and you will answer.

- Who handled this before me?
- Who made this or what has been done near this?
- What strong emotions recently have been near this?
- What words have been said recently near this?
- What's wrong with this and how might I fix it?
- Who do you belong to?
- For what purpose were you created?
- Are you sentient?
- What do you wish I'd do?

Your intellect can discern things from objects in the same manner as mentalists, and people who have applied their minds to reading people, can tell very specific things about others. Handling and examining an object on a hit allows you to ask questions of about this object but there's still flavor to put in. Whatever dialogue you establish with the MC with these questions and answers, remember that the fiction surrounding how you discern these things are your prerogative, too. Have as much fun with the flavor as you like.

**A sense of wrongness,
of fraught unease,
as if long nails scraped
the surface of
the moon, raising
the hackles of the soul.**

China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*

- MC:** So as you continue to traverse the ruins in hopes of finding the power source, you see that there are scattered terminals and technologies in disrepair all around, but one such terminal looks moderately serviceable. It's got heavy-duty cabling coming to it, too.
- LOGAN:** Nice, OK, I'm going to go up to it and scan it, wirelessly switching it on. I'd like to interface with it and ask it something if possible.
- MC:** Oh yeah, it buzzes to life. Barely. Hmm, sounds like you're doing things speak, eh? Let's see that roll.
- LOGAN:** Nice so I got an 8 when I added my Peaceful state—since I'm thoughtful I think that fits. So, I run a diagnostic on this thing to try and figure out what's going on with that door (What's wrong with this and how might I fix it?), and check for a manufacture date or log of some kind detailing who made this thing (Who do you belong to?).
- MC:** Your omni-tool runs a scan and sends a small charge down the line that runs down into the basement, it looks like it's not getting any power at the end of the line. The code is super old but it says it's got the fingerprints of the Insignis Corporation all over it, back when it first started getting established maybe. When you look around, you can see an unusual bit of cable, different than the rest. It appears to be running down towards the basement where your omni-tool sent the test charge. If you follow it down, you come upon a man-made, iron-like substance, huuuuge door. There's a sign in an ancient and long dead language, hanging there, covered in dust. It automatically pushes itself forward and you see that there's a large glowing blue orb weakly pulsating. What do you do?
- LOGAN:** Pretty sure this is the power source, guys. Let's try to jump-start it; I use my omni-tool to send the largest electrical charge it can muster into this thing.

JARGON

When you use terminology related to cybernetic or mechanical systems, take +1 forward to the Probe move.

Since you're the smart guy in terms of technologies, mechanical systems and specifically cybernetics, when you reference things related to these fields you take a +1 forward to your rolls. Of course, these things don't need to be accurate. You and I probably don't know about these things; all that matters is that, in the fiction you're describing, your protagonist is doing so. Sprinkle as much flavor as you like to it and if you feel like you're doing it but it's not being noticed, make sure you're making your intent known with the MC that you're attempting to use jargon.

MC: When the Orb is shocked with electricity, it buzzes to life and addresses you all through a soft synthetic voice being emitted from speakers housed within the walls of the room. It sounds like a young male child and says, "Intruders, will summon security presently."

LOGAN: I pipe up right away! "You're not functioning properly and we are here only to help you, please trust us or you'll never get fixed! When your processor was damaged over time and rebooted the possibility that you may not know your objectives still is very real. You should allow me to repair you." And I want to try and figure something out about it with probe, if I can?

MC: Sure, take +1 forward to probe if you want – you could also be swaying it, what do you think?

LOGAN: Well, I'd rather be probing it...if that's cool. Aww, you can see expectation and excitement on my face as I communicate with it, but I got a miss with a 4. I'll mark the emotion spike in Joyful, though.

MC: Before you can continue talking with it, the voice keeps repeating, "Error, Error," over and over before it suddenly silences and everything goes dark, except for the pulsating orb in the darkness.

⚙️ WRENCH IN THE GEARS

When you Analyze someone or something with mechanical or cybernetic systems, you may ask, “How is ____ vulnerable to me?” for free.

Following the same path as jargon, it stands to reason that when you take the time to really dig into these types of systems, you know what you’re doing and can end up figuring out more information than other people when they do the same things. Although, if you miss, depending on what the MC decides, you may not be able to discern much—on a hit you perceive more than most!

LOGAN: Hmm, I am not super sure what to do... I wait, for now and listen intently, cranking up my cyber ears amplification.

MC: You hear a faint mechanical noise and a progress bar suddenly appears on the glowing blue orb. What do you do?

LOGAN: I think I’ll try and disable it now, that’s never good. Could be like a self-destruct sequence or something, for all I know.

MC: Cool, sounds like you’re analyzing it, let’s see that roll, and you can ask something is vulnerable to you, right, since you have wrench in the gears, unless you don’t get a hit anyways, but I believe in you!

**Everything is change.
It would be good for you
to remember it. Clinging to the
past, worrying about
the future...It’s all suffering.**

Paolo Bacigalupi, The Windup Girl

📖 ASSIMILATION

When you attempt to take someone or something else's existing cybernetic systems and modify it in order to assimilate it into your own body, roll+omni-tool. On a 10+, you are able to incorporate the cybernetics into yourself and gain its tag(s). On a 7–9, it was not completely successful but works for now. Eventually your body will reject it, the MC will tell you when.

Although similar to scrounge, the important distinction is that this cybernetic system, part, device, etc., is part of another's systems—be it a sentient life form with something grafted to their skin or a complete piece of technology you're removing from something else, like an android or a robot of some kind. You're taking something that is currently working from something or someone else, and using it for your own purposes. It's a small but important distinction in the fiction because it says something about your protagonist far more than scanning for scrounge and using it does.

MC: Sick, so you barely managed to disable this thing by having your omni-tool cut off power to it, which turned on the rest of the lights—what do you do now?

LOGAN: So that happened. Victor definitely wants to try and incorporate the orb or its systems into himself though; it has an interface for sure right? I want it!

MC: Sounds like you're trying to assimilate it! Cool, roll that!

📖 THE CATABOLIST SPECIAL

When the Catabolist shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, the Things speak move triggers immediately as though you had rolled a 10+.

LOGAN: So we are retroactively activating our special moves on each other at the beginning of this first session, right? I think it makes the most sense that Teal and I would have been intimate as we grew up together. Not necessarily that we were physically intimate, but in all that time, I'm sure we would have shared some form of it, what do you think Jack?

JACK: I think so, I feel like Teal is the type of person to get attached to people the longer they're around and we decided we've known each other for ages—so that totally makes sense. I'll see what mine is too and we can activate each of ours.





THE DYING

The Dying is suffering from a non-communicable, debilitating disease that is slowly destroying them. They may or may not be aware of their ultimate demise, but what they are aware of is the symptoms. Although their condition also grants them boons, they will succumb to it. There is no cure but there may be hope, grace, or whatever you may wish to find, at the end of your tale.

At its heart the Dying injects urgency into the game. Maybe not the first couple sessions, but whatever you hope to accomplish is on a timeframe, regardless of your choices for how fast the disease progresses. This injects elements of mortality into a cyberpunk backdrop, which usually has people living even longer due to technological advances. The uncanny is brought forward in the form of the gifts you get from being the Dying. How does your physiology change to accommodate these changes, is it something unexplained or explained with technology? Whether you choose to introduce more of a fantastical element of advancement of technology, it will change the setting by having either introduced with the playbook.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Dying playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled "The Gift."

The gift is something that the disease of the Dying has granted you. Though you will eventually die, you also can do incredible feats! You may be immune to death itself until your disease takes you, or maybe it facilitates your integration with cybernetics so much so that you don't take negative tags for them. A powerful tool to get what you want out of life—while it lasts.

AMY: I think that, for me, the most interesting thing would be trying to unravel the mystery of how I got this disease. I'm going to pick 'unnatural movement'. I think 'unnaturally' in this case, is that I'm really fast. Maybe that's the first stage in the disease since later it looks like there's a few ways I can get more in play.

■ The area titled "Symptoms."

At first you had this new power and didn't realize it came with a cost. Maybe you're aware it's going to kill you eventually, maybe you aren't. Either way, you've got symptoms that will manifest periodically and whenever you use a gift it can trigger your symptoms. You'll know if it

does or not when you do make use of a gift because the MC will ask you to roll one of your moves, called Trigger to see if a symptom manifests or not. Depending on how you use your gift and to what extent you do, a roll may or may not be required.

AMY: Being replaced or incorporated into something digital sounds really cool. Maybe I'm bleeding off into the digiscape but people don't even notice. Maybe, it's happening, but only I'm aware of it for now—until it gets much, much worse.

■ The area titled "Open at the Close."

Open at the close is a calling card from your protagonist to the other protagonists. Your death as the Dying will always have meaning because you will leave behind a clue as to the origin of your illness, who was behind it, or both. It doesn't matter how you meet your end, just describe to everyone what it is you leave behind for them and work with the MC to incorporate it into the fiction.

AMY: Obviously circumstances are going to change as to what this will be, but I think there is a safety deposit box in some bank and info linked to what I find out during the campaign so far or something. It's linked to my vitals, so when I bite the dust it automatically sends the info to the other characters.

■ The area titled "Prognosis."

When developing your prognosis, you work with the MC and see how long your campaign may be; the Dying is especially good for people that want to jump into a campaign for only a few sessions or for short campaigns. You can speed up or slow down how fast your protagonist will succumb to death with the options listed on the playbook, or choose your own. Maybe it's more fun to have specific circumstances progress your disease when the MC says so, or, maybe it's something you've already got an idea about how to handle. If you are unsure, you may just want to roll at the start of every game session so it's simply random.

AMY: I can't play for very long since I start a different schedule at work in 3 weeks. So I'm liking the idea of rolling at both the beginning and end of game sessions. That way the disease will probably progress pretty quickly and I can see how that'll progress in play.

DYING MOVES

You get the *Trigger* move and can choose one more.

REACH OUT

At the beginning of each session, roll+symptoms. On a 10+, you may ask 2 questions of the MC about one NPC, or ask a PC these questions instead. On a 7–9, you may only ask one question.

For every question asked, the MC will ask you one in return. If you ask a PC a question, for every question they answer they gain +1 hold, which they may spend to ask you to do something. If you do, you both mark XP.

- Do you know anything about my disease?
- What do you want to accomplish before death takes you?
- What do you fear more than anything?
- For what do you crave forgiveness for and from whom?

Everyone will react differently to the Dying and how you plan to spend your limited time is up to you. To help you find out what you want to do, this move helps you ask NPC's and PC's alike specific questions and have them divulge info to you that you wish to know. Maybe you're unraveling a mystery in regards to your sickness. Maybe you're just trying to get the most out of your time left. Whatever it is, this move is a good facilitator in the fiction to get to the bottom of some things as well as have some interesting questions answered that the Dying may inherently wish to know.

AMY: Ok, so I rolled an 8 for this after adding the +1 from my symptoms. I'd like to ask our contact, "Do you know anything about this mysterious disease?" I make sure to say it like that since I don't want him to know that I have it too, even if he suspects.

MC: Yeah, so he knows something. He comes up to you and he looks all ashamed and downcast. He tells you about how a year or two back he was smuggling this shipment for the Tammagotchi Corporation and the run went bad. Some of the grav containers were damaged and fell. When they did, the cargo fell out. Or what they thought was cargo. A few people spilled out and they looked like they had the same symptoms as you, only they were dead. If they're trying to smuggle dead bodies out it must be pretty bad. Anyways, he says he thought you should know and then he walks off. So what do you think of him now?

AMY: Damn...heavy stuff. Well, I wish he'd told me sooner but it must be tough to tell someone that kind of thing. I think we're square in my book.

MC: Fair enough! Alright guys, so the contact leaves but as he does he sends you the package's contents via your wireless interfaces.

☒ OFF YOUR CHEST

When you tell someone important (your call) about your disease for the first time, you may mark 1 Giri on them.

In *The Veil*, Giri is exchanged when a debt or obligation becomes apparent between two people. Telling someone a secret or an important truth is definitely a part of Giri, so when you tell someone about it, you get 1 Giri on them. As always, this needs to make sense for the fiction, assuming this is a heavy thing to bear, and you're revealing something substantial about yourself. If it doesn't seem relevant to your protagonist, it probably doesn't make sense for it to be chosen as an advancement option.

AMY: Oh, he's leaving? I want to use my unnatural movement to move really fast. So I whip out in front of him and ask him if he knows how long they'd lasted before they died. He's seen my unnatural movement now so that was my way of telling him I have the disease, too; I really want to know more information so I'm hoping he opens up more now. I think he's important to me since we've been working together for ages. There's a strong relationship there for sure, to me at least.

**You can't crush ideas
by suppressing them.
You can only crush them
by ignoring them. By refusing
to think, refusing to change.**

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

☒ TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE

You have a close relationship with death and are able to sense when someone is sick or dying. Tell the MC just how you are able to tell and the MC will let you know whenever it comes into play.

Being the Dying, you have an intimate relationship with death as you approach your inevitable demise. When you take this move, describe to everyone how you are able to tell when someone is sick or dying, this is your thing—In whatever way you think you can discern something like this, roll with that. Some part of your relationship with death should come into play with the description of how you're able to distinguish these things, though. As always – if you think of something more interesting for your fiction, run with that instead.

MC: He puts his hand on your shoulder and he says he really doesn't know. By the time he took that job there was no way to know. All he saw was their corpses and by then it was too late. He lets those words linger and then turns down a side street, making his way away from you all. When he does, you see the faint whisper of smoke wafting from him, black as death. When you get back to the others and you guys open it up, there's tons and tons of data streaming across your screens. It'll take a while to figure out what it all is and what it means.

AMY: Wait, black as death? Like how I can see if people are sick or dying...ahh that sucks. I wonder if I should tell him...

MC: It's up to you, you know him best so what do you think?

AMY: I think no; I doubt he'd want that hanging over his head. Oh! I think I have a move that could come into play here with the data though!

⚠️ TRIGGER

After a gift from your disease manifests itself, roll+symptoms. On a 10+, the MC chooses 1 and your symptom(s) manifest themselves as well.

The pain hits, take 1 harm.

Choose 2 from the 7–9 list below.

On a 7–9, the MC may choose 1:

- Everything fades to black as you pass out.
- You lose control over _____.
- One of your symptoms manifests itself in a big way.
- You lose track of _____.

Your disease gives you incredible gifts that you can manifest. However, doing so triggers your symptoms. Sometimes those symptoms will cause something to happen to you after you use a gift. Sometimes not, it depends on your roll. Unlike most rolls, on this one you're hoping for a miss rather than a hit!

MC: Sure, first though, you just used your unnatural movement right—so go ahead and roll trigger for me and we'll see if your disease manifests. You want to roll low for this one...

AMY: Well nice, I got a 5. Best time for a miss!

**He is an electric ghost
painted in the colours of
a dead moment.**

Joseph MacKinnon, Cypulchre

❏ PATTERN RECOGNITION

When you compare data or are subjected to massive amounts of information, you may ask one question from Analyze immediately, without rolling.

What you may consider to be massive amounts of information and what others may, will probably vary. Remember to consider what will propel the fiction forward when a move should trigger or not and if stakes are involved. Depending on your setting, who knows what a lot of information looks like and is interpreted as, but if it would be something interesting to have happen, do it and work with the rest of the people invested in the story to see how this looks in the fiction.

MC: Congrats! So you don't have a symptom come out to play, yet! What move did you want to use?

AMY: I have pattern recognition! So, since there's tons of data I'm seeing here, maybe that triggers? I think my disease kicks in here, with all this data, and forces my neuro pathways to open or kick into hyper drive. As I scan through it all, I start cross-referencing everything in my mind until I find a commonality. I want to know where this originated, so I was thinking "What's my enemy's true position?" might work here. I think she's thoughtful and in a trance-like state as she's scanning all this stuff in her head, so I'll mark a spike in Peaceful.

MC: Sure, you find within all of this crazy amounts of data, there is a signature left by a hacker. They actually marked their coordinates within the information as a sort of cocky statement believing nobody could figure that out, you know? Your trigger doesn't cause anything to happen to you, but as you look at those coordinates, you can see the cursor blinking and then everything starts disappearing as it appears to be erased, and quickly! What do you do?

AMY: Oh man, this hacker's in our system! I try and regain control by opening up a terminal and cutting off access!

MC: Ok, sounds like you're at risk here, so let's roll that. The danger is that you won't be able to do it in time and all that information is going to be gone!

AMY: Alright, I think her current state is pretty anxious and she's freaking out a bit. Her Scared is +1, which gives me an 8. I'll mark the emotion spike for that, it's just the first one though, so she's doing alright, she's got this.

MC: Ok, so let's see, you can either just completely turn it off and hope they didn't erase everything, or continue to try and boot them out, but they'll get some information about you and this place you wouldn't want them to have. What do you think?

AMY: Alright, I turn it off. Then, let's see the damage here, I plug the retro cord for power back on and boot it up to check it out.

MC: Sounds like you're analyzing it; let's roll that!

AMY: Nice, ok, well I'm still pretty anxious I think, so I'll mark the Scared emotion spike here...I got an 11! Hmm well...I'm feeling skittish, so I'm going to ask, "What should I be on the lookout for?" first. She's really digging into this code, trying to figure out what's up with all this!

MC: Cool, so you saw the code and know that you should be on the lookout for when it tries to reconnect to someone, since it's going to try and update the hacker.

AMY: Makes sense. I think that I want to find out where he is with a back trace when it does that via the "What is my enemy's true position?" option. Then, I want to use that info to try and figure out how to boot him out of the system by asking how they're vulnerable to me.

MC: Yeah, get in the zone and back trace them, only thing is though, it's coming from inside here, where you are now. I think with that information, maybe the vulnerability is that they're on your own turf so you could activate your security systems and point them right at them. They're slick and think they're bypassed but if you fix that little problem, that'll go a long way in helping you out here.

THE GRACE

The disease that is destroying you graces you with an additional benefit before the end. Pick an additional option from The Gift section.

When choosing another gift option, make sure you introduce it into the story too. It's always fun when you get a new advancement but if it's suddenly just there, it probably won't make much sense without explanation. It doesn't have to be something super detailed, just enough to suspend your disbelief and have the tone of the game stay on point for what makes the game fun to all of you.

AMY: Looks like a good opportunity to check out my new gift from the grace move. My organic tissue regrows these days, and I may just need it if this all goes sideways! I'm going to activate our defense systems, which is like a rail gun or turret thing, right? Soon as that's done, I zoom over there as fast as I can.

MC: Oh man, so you activate those systems and they start to just give'er to the door for sure. You're super-fast though. You go into something like bullet time as you see the turrets tracking his movement, pumping out shells into your guy's furniture just a half second short of where they're running. Must have had on some sort of camouflage too, because as you're running, you see only feet and a head running along. You see a pink Mohawk, unwavering even while running and maybe pale skin. I think that's about all you can make out from your vantage point. And as you're running you feel the trigger coming on for your disease. I think it only happens after you finish using your gift though. So, when you stop running and using your speed, who knows! What do you do?

🎲 THE DYING SPECIAL

When the Dying shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, they generate 1 hold. Whenever your disease would trigger, you may instead spend this hold to keep the symptoms at bay by recalling the moment of intimacy.

In this case, the player works with the MC to determine what an intimate moment is to them, and one another. A character opening up about something deeply troubling or a burden they've yet to disclose could be a big deal for them and not for another. But if a player thinks their special should trigger then the table should pay attention to why they feel it should, and clarify the fiction if need be. If you do feel like a particularly intimate moment has taken place, bring it up and ask the MC and other players if they think so, too. If they do, the special occurs and the recollection of that moment in the future can help the Dying to suppress a trigger from happening in the future.

AMY: I need to stop to get her at some point... I do have that hold from when Jaxx and I were intimate. Maybe what happens is that I'm running by the living area, right, with the furniture getting shredded when that moment with Jaxx flashes into my mind and I think about us. I'll use my hold then I'd draw strength from that in order to suppress Trigger.

MC: So what about this couch being shredded, or the living room or whatever, that makes you think of Jaxx, though?

AMY: Oh man, well we hated each other in the beginning but I was the first one to break down that barrier with him that he has and we stayed up all night talking on the sofa, which you know, led from one thing to another, on this now-shredded couch. Which is when we activated our specials. It seems like the idea of that moment being torn apart would definitely provoke a pretty powerful reaction. I'm determined to make sure I grab this jerk, so much that I suppress the trigger from happening. Does that make sense?



THE EMPATH

The Empath is in tune with the people around them and their emotions. They interact with emotions as tangible, charged energy fields that can be manipulated and appropriated for their own purposes.

Whether this ability is uncanny or futuristic, or explained at all is up to you, but as with all playbooks it brings assumptions about the setting. Are these magical abilities or are their explanation needed at all? Are they using technology or biology if it needs to be explained, both? Regardless of the explanation, the Empath also will most likely focus on interpersonal play due to its nature, as well as dealing with emotional burdens and their toll on an individual—should you wish to touch on the subject matter.

**Truth and information
are not the same thing!
And neither are reality
and state of existence!**

Pat Cadigan, *Mindplayers*

There are a few areas on the first page of the Empath playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ **The area titled “The Burden.”**

Imagine being able to take in everyone’s emotions. How would that affect you as a person? Would you be taking in more joy or more sorrow? Would you end up closing yourself off more to people, or opening up to them? There are choices here to help you choose something that makes sense for you, but there is also a spot for your own, too. This section is just to get you thinking from the perspective of your protagonist in terms of how gathering in other’s emotions would change them.

ELLE: I feel like Cassi’s burden is that she wants to help save everyone! She can’t, but she feels everyone’s pain and just wants to help out. She’s against bloodshed, always.

■ **The area titled “The Flow.”**

The Flow is the interface for the Empath’s abilities. What it looks like, feels like and how it interacts with the Empath is entirely up to you, though. Whatever it is, when you begin you can select one of these options, which allows you to explore a different aspect of your Flow as well. Some of these options give you additional moves, as always, I urge you to pick the option that will be the most interesting character concept for you and not just selecting options because of the specific advantage of a move.

ELLE: For Cassi, the most interesting option I think is the charged object move. She can maybe help people feel what she feels by infusing emotions into something. They can sense her connection to it and, though it could inflict humanity harm on them, they would learn more of her and her burden, so I’m going to take that one.

THE EMPATH



THE EMPATH is in tune with the people around you and your emotions. You interact with emotions as tangible, charged energy fields that can be manipulated and appropriated for your own purposes.

HUMANITY

HOLD

HARM

- Light Armor
- Moderate
- Critical

NAME:

LOOK:

- Circle one from each category.
- Female, Masculine, Androgynous, Animalistic, Transgendering, Eastern, Fluid
- Mixed-media wear, display wear, vintage wear, symmetrical wear, is-tech wear, timeless wear, or trendy wear
- Striking face, sweet face, strange face, cute face, or beautiful face
- Daring eyes, starting eyes, mysterious eyes, glittering eyes, compelling eyes, or squinty eyes
- Wispy body, statuesque body, stocky body, wiry body, or _____ body
- Asian or south Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern _____

JAM:

Everyone has a Jam (something you are good at and do to making a living and earn Credits). When you tell the MC what your Jam is they'll tell you how much Credit you earn when you get downtime. Your Jam is used to establish your lifestyle, your income, and how you know certain other characters.

STATES

MAD	PEACEFUL	SAD	JOYFUL	SCARED	POWERFUL
<input type="checkbox"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>					

Assign +2 to +1, -1, 0, 0 and -1 to each state from their propensity to react with that emotion to their most foreign one.

BELIEFS

Create three Beliefs. If a Belief is tested this session, mark 1 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief gets you into trouble this session, mark 2 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief is erased and resolved or changed after being tested, mark 3 XP.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

IMPROVEMENT

XP:

When you attempt something that benefits you and/or fail or when you gain XP from beliefs, mark each box per 1XP you accrue:

- +1 Mad +1 Sad +1 Scared
- +1 Joyful +1 Peaceful +1 Powerful
- Get a new playbook move:
- Erase a Girl owed
- Get a move from another playbook
- After your 5th improvement you may also pick from the following:
 - Take +1 to any state (Max +3)
 - Create and play a new protagonist
 - Advance a basic move
 - Get another option from the "Flow" section
 - Change to a new playbook

THE BURDEN

Ever since you could remember you've had to give up a piece of yourself to others. When they hurt, so do you. You share the burden of being on everyone's emotional roller coaster ride. Sharing the triumph and the tragedies of humanity puts a great weight on your shoulders. Knowing that, for what do you strive? (choose 1):

- To help others when I can, to the betterment of humanity.
- To get it all done and help it burn. It's on the way down anyway.
- To look out for number one; people always leave.
- The Flow is my curse; I would be rid of it if whenever possible.
- Retribution someone wronged me and if I find them I'll:

THE FLOW

The Flow is the energy you get when you absorb emotion spikes as well as the interface for your abilities. When you charge objects, recreate past events and interact with emotions, it's all through the Flow. (What does it do for you? choose 1):

- When I touch objects sometimes I can use the flow to charge it. You get the Charged object move.
- I am never lost; when I open myself to the Flow I can see emotions. You get the Search feelings move.
- It saves me, when I Absorb, I get +1 Flow.
- It allows me as long as you wear nothing else you have 1 armor. If you have armor, use that instead.
- I use it for my own malicious purposes. You inflict 2 harm whenever someone gives you permission to touch their naked skin and you do so with the intent to harm them.

GIRL QUESTIONS

After you introduce your character, you may use the following bullet points to develop Girl relationships with other players. If you so choose, or develop relationships of your own.

- If someone caught you manipulating someone else's emotions unbeknownst to them and didn't tell anyone else, they have 1 Girl on you.
- If you used the Flow to comfort someone through a difficult life event, you have 1 Girl them.
- If you've used the Flow to take advice or comfort in one another in a time of need for you both, you have 1 Girl on each other.

GEAR

You start with fashion suitable to your look, 3 cred and 1 from each weapon type:

- Primary weapons:
 - Sawed off plasma rifle (3 harm far reload messy)
 - Poison topped fuchetta magnum (2 harm close area reload loud) Plasma six-shooter (2 harm close reload loud)
 - Purficle blade (3 harm hand messy)
- Secondary weapon:
 - Derna-linked neuronium pain disruptor (5 harm hand reload disrupting)
 - Thermal mini blades (2 harm hand messy burning hidden)

CYBERNETICS

You may begin with whichever cybernetics you so choose. For each piece of cybernetics you choose, assign the appropriate number of tags by referencing below:

- Eye (3 tags) _____
- Ear (3 tags) _____
- Arm (1 tag) _____
- Leg (1 tag) _____
- Intelligence (2 tags) _____
- Control (1 tag) _____
- (Make your own) _____

NEGATIVE TAGS

Choose one tag for every piece of cybernetics you begin with:

Damaging	Susceptible	Scared
Unreliable	Twitchy	Addicted

(make your own)

MOVES

You get the Absorb move and choose one more.

- ABSORB:** You begin with 0 Flow. When you intentionally draw on the emotions around you, name someone present. If it's a PC, choose an emotion and absorb at their spikes. If it's an NPC, the MC will tell you what you can absorb from them when you roll. On a 7-9, you get an impression, or bits and pieces of what happened. On a miss, choose 1 move, but absorb 1 harm at:
 - You get +1 Flow.
 - They aren't aware of what you are doing.
 - You don't spike out that emotion yourself.
 - You completely clear out or fill up all their emotion spikes.

- SLING:** When you tap into and expel the Flow within you, roll Flow. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.
 - Spike out an emotion of your choosing in all those present.
 - Exclude someone from your sling.
 - Add suspicion or notice.
 - Inflict 1 harm (see, close, AP) to anyone around you.

- EASE:** When you use the Probe move, you may ask the following questions as well:
 - What do you wish you could tell someone?
 - If I asked you to _____ how would you feel?
 - What do you feel the most responsible for?
 - Who makes you feel the most _____?
 - What is your strongest memory and what feeling is it tied to?

- SEARCH FEELINGS:** When you read the emotional residue of an area to reconstruct past events, roll. On 10+ the MC will give you accurate, emotional detail tied to events that happened here. On a 7-9, you get an impression, or bits and pieces of what happened. On a miss, in addition to what the MC says, you spike out the emotion of whatever emotion is most prevalent here or spike 1 harm AP.

- CHARGE OBJECT:** When you channel the energy you have from your Flow and use it to charge an object, roll and add +1 for each Flow you expend. On a hit, when an NPC touches your object, you can choose 1 tag from the following list to have happen:
 - They suffer humanity harm.
 - You may ask them how _____ relates to _____.

- You learn what emotion they are feeling right now, and any thoughts or memories that one led to those feelings.
- For PCs, when it touches their skin choose 1:
 - They suffer humanity harm.
 - You may hold 1; spend that hold to assist or interfere with them despite any and all barriers that would normally prevent it, including distance.

- HOOKED ON A FEELING:** When you suppress or manipulate an emotion in yourself or someone else that you can't leave, remove 1 emotion spike from your target and mark 2 spikes in the new one.

THE EMPATH SPECIAL: When the Empath shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you gain +1 Flow and you may ask from any one question from the Ease move, regardless of whether you have the move yet or not.

EMPATH MOVES

You get the *Absorb* move and choose one more.

■ ABSORB

You begin with 0 Flow. When you intentionally draw on the emotions around you, name someone present; if it's a PC, choose an emotion and absorb all their spikes. If it's an NPC, the MC will tell you what you can absorb from them when you roll. On a 10+, choose 3. On a 7-9, choose 2. On a miss, choose 1 anyway, but also take 1 harm AP.

- You get +1 Flow.
- They aren't aware of what you are doing.
- You don't spike out that emotion yourself.
- You completely clear out or fill up all their emotion spikes.

Empaths are the only playbook in the game that can draw in emotions and use those spikes to convert them into Flow, which is used for your own purposes. You can also add spikes to other protagonists. What that looks like and feels like for you in the fiction is up to you, the player. When you choose someone present, the idea is that you are able to sense their emotions and choose to take that into you. When it's a PC, ask them what their emotion spikes are, if anything. If it's an NPC, ask the MC and they will tell you.

MC: Alright, Cassi. You're in the middle of a pretty tense situation. Your group members are pointing their weapons at three security officers in this corp building you all just snuck into. Doesn't seem like anyone is backing down and the situation is just growing way more tense by the second. What do you do?

ELLE: Man this is a bit more than tense isn't it...? I think Cassi wants to calm everyone down a bit. She's going to try and absorb. Rook is looking pretty tense and she's basically the leader. I want her calm, I'm going to choose her and drain Scared from her. In this situation I think Cassi is feeling Powerful because this is her thing! When we see her on the camera she's looking strained you know? But also confident, and it shows. So, the result is an 11, so that confidence is well placed! So, I'm going to generate +1 Flow, which means I have 3 now. I don't lose track of what I'm doing and I don't spike out what I'm absorbing.

MC: Cool, so Rook, you feel the tension drain from you. When Cassi did this before, the only one who could see what was happening was her, but we always see the concentration on her when she does it, so, you can tell that's probably what's going on. You've got another Flow, but now one of the Guards steps forward and shouts at you to put your hands on the floor and looks pretty twitchy, what do you do?

🎲 SLING

When you tap into and expel the Flow within you, roll+Flow. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- Spike out an emotion of your choosing in all those present.
- Exclude someone from your sling.
- Avoid suspicion or notice.
- Inflict 1 harm (area, close, AP) to anyone around you.

When you get Flow, you store it up. How that looks and works is up to you, and you can do lots of things with Flow. One of the options is to sling them. Although it appears mostly offensive, remember that spiking out an emotion can include positive emotions as well as negative ones and you can exclude people from the sling, too.

ELLE: OK, I got the juice, right? So now, I wanna sling, I've got 3 Flow but I'll use 1, so I'll add +1 to my roll. I get a 4 and 5 for a total of 9 and adding +1, boom! 10! So Cassi concentrates and emits this imperceptible field of energy and it probably looks green to her, because it's Peaceful. I want to spike out all the Peaceful in here and I want to avoid suspicion or notice so maybe she does it as subtly as she can, which takes more effort than normal?

MC: So the twitchy guy, he calms down a bit. You see his chest is rising and falling naturally instead of the rapid breathing before. He still has his gun out but you can see the fight drain from him. He looks pretty unsure now, what do you do?

EASE

When you use the Probe move, you may also ask the following questions:

- What do you wish you could tell someone?
- If I asked you to _____, how would you feel?
- What do you feel the most responsible for?
- Who makes you feel the most _____?
- What is your strongest memory and what emotion is it tied to?

Most of the time, people are restricted to the normal options listed in the probe move. With this move though, you gain 5 additional options to ask. As the Empath, you can gain additional insights based on the fictional positioning of your playbook. You discern more with other people and read them more acutely.

ELLE: She steps up to the guards and addresses the main dude who seems like he's in charge. Before I talk to him I want to size him up and see what's going on with him and make sure he's pliable. If he's unsure, he may still be a threat... so I think I'm probing him, right? I'm feeling cautious, so I'll mark the emotion spike in Mad, since that's skeptical and I think it fits. With an 8, I get one question...hmmm. If I asked him to lay down his weapons, how would he feel?

MC: He would feel relieved, he's especially not partial to violence right now! He knows what he should do rationally right, but it doesn't reconcile with what he's feeling right now.

ELLE: So in that case, I'll say, "Please lay down your weapons, there's no need for anyone to get hurt or even die here, just take it easy guys!" And I'll like make a motion for everyone to lower their weapons.

🔍 SEARCH FEELINGS

When you read the emotional residue of an area to reconstruct past events, roll. On 10+, the MC will give you accurate, emotional detail tied to events that happened here. On a 7–9, you get an impression, or bits and pieces of what happened. On a miss, in addition to what the MC says, you spike out the emotion of whatever emotion is most prevalent here or take 1 harm AP.

The Empath can read emotions left behind like footprints. They can attempt to figure out what took place here and then extrapolate from what they can see with the reconstruction in order to get a clearer picture as to what happened. Depending on your roll, the MC will give a varying amount of information based on what they're working with. On a 10+, it should feel like you have a pretty good idea of what took place. On a 7–9 though, it could be disjointed, out of sync, confusing or vague but you do get information enough to form an impression. After that, it's up to you.

MC: Cool, so a bit later after that stand off we are now in the upper floor offices of the building you guys just infiltrated. Rook does have a picture of the man you're all searching for but not a name.

ELLE: So I want to like CSI this thing. I think I, like, emit this field similar to before but everything sticks around. And I want to try and figure out what's happened. Maybe I can interact with these things hanging around the area by touching objects around me and investigating the rest of the surroundings, or something?

MC: Sounds like the search feelings move. So when we see her doing this, how does she feel? What are we seeing on the camera?

ELLE: She's feeling Powerful because she's feeling important which nets me an 8. And I think it looks like a similar field to the one that was emitted before except it's like a sonar that keeps pulsing out actually! It keeps going out over and over and then I like go around and touch stuff and try and figure out what's up.

MC: Cool, sure. Well, there's residual emotions all over this office, one of which is in the main chair behind the desk. You see a tall gangly looking man in a suit talking with a colleague about an appointment and being back in like an hour or so, you're not sure how long ago it was but he's definitely coming back into this office at some point today based on the conversation, he then says something but it cuts out for you as his mouth is forming the words.

🔲 CHARGE OBJECT

When you channel the energy you have from your Flow and use it to charge an object, roll and add +1 for each Flow you expend. On a hit, when an NPC touches your object, you can choose 1 thing from the following list to have happen:

- They suffer humanity harm.
- You may ask them how _____ relates to _____?
- You learn what emotion they are feeling right now, and any thoughts or memories that are tied to those feelings.

For PCs, when it touches their skin choose 1:

- They suffer humanity harm.
- You may hold 1; spend that hold to assist or interfere with them despite any and all barriers that would normally prevent it, including distance.

On a 7–9, for either PC or NPC, they also get an impression you leave behind on the object. The MC will let you know what kind, and to what extent the impression you left behind is.

As an alternative to other moves, the Empath can consume Flow to charge an object with that emotion. NPCs are easier to read so you have a couple more options with them. You can divine a relationship between something they are aware of when they touch the object, inflict humanity harm, or feel the strongest emotion they feel and for whom. For PC's, you can inflict humanity harm or you can assist or interfere with them from anywhere. Maybe when they touch it, this emotion is like a ticking time bomb and you've got the trigger. What do you do?

ELLE: I touch the man's chair and try to charge it so when he returns and sits on it, bam! Hm, I get a 4 and a 2 and I have 2 Flow still. So, with that +2 I get an 8. So where I was going with that is inflicting humanity harm on the guy with the memory. I infuse the memory of when I was a child in the orphanage into the chair.

MC: What about that would cause humanity harm?

ELLE: Well maybe it's a memory of when people would come visit and decide if they wanted us and they'd only ever pick one of us, right? So the idea is that sometimes there are moments where everyone feels despair, so I want that memory to be charged with that feeling of hopeless despair that will hopefully have him question his identity and cause the humanity harm.

📊 HOOKED ON A FEELIN'

When you suppress or manipulate an emotion in yourself or someone else that you can see, remove 1 emotion spike from your target and mark 2 spikes in the new one.

There's always a price! Suppressing an emotion is powerful but when it's moved it generates more of that new emotion. It's helpful if you're about to spike out or someone else is about to, especially during a particular time of need but emotions always need to be dealt with at some point, especially when you can't absorb your own emotions.

MC: For sure! OK, and did you mark an emotion spike, since it's a move still?

ELLE: Well for Cassi, this would be pretty emotional so I think she feels hurt, which is under Mad. I also think though, that she's going to suppress this emotion visibly in this scene. She stifles herself so she can get through it and go on with a tough girl façade going on here. So I'll mark two in Peaceful instead of the one in Mad, since I'm using hooked on a feelin'.

📊 THE EMPATH SPECIAL

When the Empath shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you gain +1 Flow and you may ask them any one question from the Ease move, regardless of whether you have the move yet or not.

As the Empath, asking someone those questions is a big deal. You could be playing a protagonist who is not attached to people and wanting to distance themselves from people, or the opposite—where you are trying to form close, personal attachments. The questions from the Ease move are trying to allow for any which way you'd like to play the Empath.

THE EXECUTIVE

Though a part of a larger established entity, the Executive answers directly to their peers and, ultimately, their own agenda. But within that framework you work within the system to realize your own goals. Balancing the line of keeping others happy while using the resources at hand, you do what you do best: game the system.

Most predominantly, the Executive injects a cyberpunk trope of the megacorporation or some evolution of what we know of as big business today. The trope is slightly subverted in that you answer to this megacorporation, along with everyone else. With the introduction of this playbook in the setting, you'll also have a stronger emphasis on Cred, naturally shifting focus onto the reliance of said Cred and, possibly, consumerism.

**Who is to say that robbing
a people of its language
is less violent than war?**

Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

There are a few areas on the first page of the Executive playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ **The area titled "The Board."**

Whatever establishment you decide the megacorp to be, you answer to these individuals, ultimately. What intentions they have for this entity you serve will shape what kind of contracts you will be doing in your game, so pick ones you think would be the most interesting. That way, no matter what you're tasked with, you're still having a fun time portraying your protagonist.

REX: I think the board at Solaris Tech Inc., or STI, are pretty big dirt bags. They want to get ahead no matter the cost so I'm going to choose, "Anytime, anything is lucrative, no matter the affiliations, they take it." Let's see...I think I like the image of these guys shrouded in mystery like the ever-mysterious smoking man. Which brings me to a solid +1 capital.

■ **The area titled "Contracts."**

When you're not balancing your work given to you by the board, you can also do paying contracts and reap the benefits of those contracts when they're fulfilled. Well, assuming they do get finished, that is.

■ **The area titled "Power."**

This section is purely to get you thinking about how you obtained this power. Did you claw your way up from lower status, was it always going to be this way, or did something else entirely happen? There's a space for your own view on how you got here, too.

REX: I think Rex totally rose up from a lowborn status or position of some kind. I think he maybe conned his way up and he's a rising star, looking to run the show one day.

■ **The area titled "Mandatory Contracts."**

These contracts are not like paying contracts. These are specific things the board tasks you to do. Though they don't have to be separate contracts at all, they could be, depending on what the MC thinks is appropriate. They are accompanied by a timeline, as well as the resources up front to get them done. Though you cannot see to these tasks yourself, the consequences of not fulfilling them can be dire.



📊 QUARTERLIES

At the beginning of the session, or whenever you have completed your mandatory contracts from the board, roll+capital. On a 10+, the board assigns 3 mandatory contracts, all of your choosing. On a 7–9, the board assigns 2 mandatory contracts, 1 of your choosing.

And on a miss, the board assigns 3 contracts that the MC will choose. The board then gives you funds for every contract up front and expects that it be done in the amount of time described by the MC.

Each new session, you'll need to roll to see what mandatory contracts come into play. The only time the MC may have you not roll it is if the last ones are still in play and the time period hasn't lapsed. In general, each contract will encompass only one session—but that choice is up to you and the MC. When you do get assigned contracts, they could be assigned as separated objectives, or interpreted as one job with multiple aspects being managed. Through advancement, this will get easier as you can take specific options to advance your capital.

REX: Alright, let's get this party started, nice, Edison is already lucky! Landed a 12, including the +1 from capital. Let's go with... protection detail, misdirecting someone annnd maintaining appearances.

MC: OK, you get called upstairs big guy. You probably hate going to the board hey? They're on the top floor and they always meet in this creepy meeting room with lighting that obscures their faces, ya know?

REX: Oh yeah, I know, and every time I go they want something from me.

MC: And today is no different my friend! You go in and the main guy in the center, the one who always talks tell you they "need" your help, this time it's about protecting the CEO of the corporation. He's been receiving threats and they need you to ensure his protection (Protection detail). There's someone out to kill him for sure, the threat is now verified (Misdirecting someone). We can't be seen to lose face here. It must be done perfectly (Maintaining appearances).

Sometimes Mandatory contracts are all separated, it depends on the MC, but the MC of this game decides with a 10+, the extra bonus for Rex is going to be having all the contracts built into one specific goal, and doing it all well.

❏ MONEY TALKS

When you give someone 1 Cred, you can choose to select an option from Lean On under the Giri moves as well.

Everyone else does not have this option with Cred, they can use Cred in an effort to try and convince someone, but they don't have the options from a Giri move at their disposal. In this way the Executive wields more power than other playbooks—just in an often overlooked way.

REX: Alright, cool. I think my first reaction is to hit up a contact I've had a while, in a more nefarious section of town.

MC: Alright, so this is your contact, tell me what this place is, paint me a picture here.

REX: Yeah, so this place is a damn dive, dude. It's one of those places where it's an Italian pizzeria type thing. An obvious front for my man Ivan. I walk in like I own the place; if this were a movie, my theme song would be some kind of rap where I think I'm pretty cool. Anyways, I myself know it's pretty run down if it wasn't for augmented reality—but with it, it looks pretty damn nice and prestigious. The place is always packed because it maintains that homey, family restaurant type of feel. I signal Ivan by ordering my usual, some pretentious thing like escargot that no one ever orders. It's out of place and strange to have on the menu, used to get the attention of my main man.

MC: Sure, so there's people around you in booths, eating various foods. There's the pictures of all the awards they've won, probably, and everything appears clean but isn't really. Before long, as you expected, Ivan comes with your food and greets you, what does he look like?

REX: He's a big burly Russian-looking dude with a goatee and black hair. He's built like a brick house but always seem in good spirits, around me anyhow.

MC: "MY FRIEND! How are you? As you can see I'm busy tonight but always happy to see you, of course, of course. What can I do for you?"

REX: I start eating and make with the pleasantries as well, then I get down to business. "Ivan, I need to find good help these days, perhaps you know what I mean? My corporation is...uncomfortable recently. They would feel better with an upgraded interior, all the decor with auto mold, it's just...so in these days, you know? I would be pleased if you could arrange something like that...as would they." And I slide over 2 Cred to him. I want him to fight for me and I'm purposing 1 Cred each per Giri ask. So I want 2 people to fight for me. I'm feeling anxious I think, and mark a spike in my Scared emotion. Even though I'm presenting a formidable appearance, I really don't know how this is going to go.

MC: "Hmmm oh yeah, I think I know what you mean, my friend. Yes, yes," he nods to you and tells you he must be going but he will send what you need to your suite, as usual. When you get back to your offices you find two men who look like secret service agent type fellas. They are waiting for their orders. What do you do?

Understanding an idea meant entangling it so thoroughly with all the other symbols in your mind that it changed the way you thought about everything.

Greg Egan, *Diaspora*

PRESTIGE

Whenever you meet someone important (your call), roll+capital. On a hit, they've heard of you and you say what they've heard. On a 10+, you take +1 forward to dealing with them as well. On a miss, they've heard of you but the MC decides what they may have heard.

As with all other moves, this needs to work within the confines of the already established fiction. You are the one to decide if they are important but everything still needs to make sense. Work with the MC and your other players if you think someone should be considered important and the move should trigger.

MC: OK, so actually, maybe you're about to open your mouth and tell them what you need when they nod at you to the side. There's a woman in a dress sitting on some of your plush office furniture with a bored expression on her face. She's super gussied up, like she's going to a ball or something, jewelry, dress, and high heels—all of it. Dressed to impress. What do you do?

REX: Right, OK, well I'm assuming I have no idea who she is but I feel like with the attention to her appearance and the fact that she's in my office without an appointment warrants that she must be important. I want to be just as impressive. I want my prestige to follow me. Nice, I rolled an 8 and I feel Powerful so I'll mark that. OK, so I think she's heard of me from my previous work. I'm a humanitarian but I also don't take any shit, maybe she heard about my job with Takei way back when?

MC: Sure, so she stands up and reaches out her hand as if you were about to do the same even though it doesn't seem like you were and sneers a bit. "So this is the man who pulled off the Takei job.....I thought you'd be taller." Her voice transitions from a rougher dialect when the sneer's done, what's left is a more affluent dialect. You can't place an accent but she doesn't talk like everyone else around here, that's for sure. She continues on and says that she needs something from you, and hands you a fancy consultants card that's got some nice physical paper as well as some augmentation attached to it. Maybe you two can help one another?

📊 HARVEY TIME

When you have time, solitude, and offer someone Cred in the pursuit of completing any contract you don't intend to pursue yourself, roll+Cred spent. On a 10+, choose 3. On a 7-9, choose 2.

- They complete the contract.
- The board does not hear you have been pursuing your own self interests.
- You get paid in full for completion of your contract.
- The contract isn't a setup or an ambush.

When you want to procure someone to do these contracts, they need to be able to do these things for you as well. If they are a hit man and you want them to do some nefarious Cred laundering instead, chances are they won't be able to help you with fulfilling that. There is also a real risk when doing this, as if they do not succeed and it's a mandatory contract – there could be some pretty steep consequences that may be hard to dig yourself out of. If the board hears about your side plots, especially if the contract is not mandatory but a side endeavor, who knows what they'd do. You get paid up front for mandatory contracts, but these people may not be so civilized, the MC can have this play out in the fiction multiple ways. Balancing between all these options, including not having the contract a setup or ambush, is all part of the precarious balancing act you need to do as the Executive. If you were to choose to spend your time doing this, anyways.

REX: That's what I'm thinking...ok, well I kiss her hand as she clearly intends and smiles and go past her to my bar. I pour the best single malt whiskey I have in a glass with one of those fancy huge ice ball things and give it to her along with 2 Cred and ask those two gentlemen to give us some privacy for a second.

MC: I feel like you want to have time and solitude with her, is that right?

REX: Better believe it, I'm going to try and do my move. BAM, an 11 with 2 Cred being dropped, and I'm feeling... Sad, maybe? I am a good guy at heart, so I probably feel bad I'm manipulating her but I gotta hurry this along so I can make sure my mandatory contract goes off without a hitch here. So I hand her the glass, slide her some Cred, and discuss the details of what I need from her. I choose that they complete the contract and the board does not hear you have been pursuing your own self-interests. And I want this part of it to be misdirection; I have the security detail already. I want to choose that the contract is completed and the board does not hear about what I've been up to and obviously I don't want it to be an ambush of any kind. So, I might get fleeced a bit for this job – looks like.

MC: She buys it; She definitely wants to be in your good books—it seems like.

TPS REPORTS

When you do not complete a contract by the deadline given by the board, roll+capital. On a 10+, the board is displeased but you describe the circumstances and they allow you clemency. On a 7–9, the MC crosses out one of the agendas of the board for next game of their choosing. On miss, you cross out one agenda on top of whatever the MC tells you.

This is when the hammer drops. Whatever timeline you've been given by your board, it's now lapsed. It's time to pay the piper and see what consequences may be levied on you for your failures. You may be able to talk your way out of the situation or have a nice track record, but ultimately the board will decide based on capital, so if you've failed already and you're low on capital, things could go yet more poorly for you. But who knows, if you never gamble, will you move up?

MC: So we're at the end of the session. The muscle you hired did, in fact protect the CEO. The misdirection happened. But, they did not save face. People ended up spotting that the security detail wasn't from his corporation and assumed they must be weak if they needed outside help. Uh-oh!

REX: Right, let's see how this plays out. With an 8, that means you cross something out on the board, right? One of their agendas for next game? Hm, so we will see what my capital is like next game, when you decide.

EXECUTIVE SPECIAL

When the Executive shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll without adding a state. On a 10+, both. On a 7–9, choose only one.

- The board does not take notice of them as possible leverage over you.
- They don't mark +1 Giri to Lean On you with.

MC: So I think when you get back to your place, your partner Yuri, is waiting for you there. She's in her evening gown again, just like last time. She's on your bed staring out the window, there's no augmentation on right now. You can tell she's sad. What do you do?

REX: Oh, shoot. I probably forgot we were supposed to do something again...crap. I'll approach her and place a hand on her shoulder, being as reassuring as I can be, I tell her I'm sorry and we can still go, do—whatever it was we were going to do?

MC: She looks up at you and there's tears running down her face. She asks you what the point of all this is, if you're not even present in their lives. You didn't always used to be this way; you come from the same place she does. She had a holo picture of you two when you first got together and she throws it against the wall. You can tell she's had enough, you can tell she knows something isn't right—she's known for a while and she's going to leave if you don't do something about it. She hesitates for a second on her way out, what do you do?

REX: Oh, man. This is totally not worth it. Yeah, I spill the beans. I think Rex breaks down and just tells her everything. They probably have a fight about it even, maybe it's like in a show where it's fading from black in and out over time with the different parts of the argument painted on their faces, you know?

MC: Totally, well I think that definitely triggers your special. Do you want to do that now?

REX: : Yeah for sure...I think he's in a loving place for sure—so that's Peaceful. Oh, shoot. That's a 6, though!

MC: Hm, interesting. I think what happens then, is you guys have your fight montage moment as you describe but then the camera twists and it zooms in on a painting in the room and then its frame. Then a tiny speck on the frame—which then turns into the perspective of a camera as the audience sees that someone's watching this and probably hearing everything, too.



THE HONED

You're the same decaying matter as everybody else. The difference between you and them? You've taken it and honed it into the precision instrument you now wield to achieve your will. You are not a part of the system; you are free and you strive—for what, is up to you now.

The playbook in itself subverts some tropes of cyberpunk, in that they have shirked the technological completely in preference of their human potential. The Honed also will impact the setting in that their humanity is gained by physical resolutions in the fiction. They're saving people, doing impossible feats, and undertaking difficult tasks. Although there are a lot of deeper issues that could be brought to bear, especially with man vs machine coming into play. Most of the time, its introduction will be for the type of player that wants to do a lot of conflict being resolved physically.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Honed playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

- The area titled "The Real McCoy."

As the Honed, it's important you know that you are removed from *The Veil*. You are not in mixed reality like everyone else is all the time. You see the world for what it truly is, instead of what's been shown and broadcasted to you through everyone's neurochips. You're apart from the system, and you do not have cybernetics. Instead you're the pinnacle of humanity, able to achieve amazing physical feats despite not having those augmentations. This section is just for making you aware of this in order to give you some idea of what the Honed will be like in comparison to the others, who are always connected to *The Veil*. Which means they can use the *Lift The Veil* basic move to get information, whereas you as the Honed would use a device in order to do so instead. There are both benefits and drawbacks to not being connected that should be weighed and brought up in fiction.

■ The area titled “Martial Arts.”

The Honed has unique martial arts that only they can do. By default, it's 2 harm, hand, and loud. When you are within arm's reach to hit them, and strike, it will be loud. Which means it will be noticeable to those around you and draw attention, and it will cause 2 harm. You get two different arts which are modified by the two selections. You could have an art for when you're facing multiple targets and want to have more armor. Alternatively, you could have one purely offensive, used for brutal takedowns to end fights in a quick and decisive manor. The options are varied so as to try and accommodate you in whatever style of martial arts you envision yourself having. Ultimately, it's up to you as to what you think your protagonist would be well-versed in and what you think you would be the most interesting and fun thing to have in the fiction.

SARAH: I think it'd be cool if Stella here could get a blade and incorporate that into her fighting. I think I'll go with 3 harm hand AP for the first art. It'll increase the 2 harm to 3 harm when I get the blade, it'll be more effective making it armor piercing. So it'll be really, really deadly. For the other one, without a blade. I'm going to assume I will be fighting multiple people, so it'll be 2 harm close loud and defensive which means it'll incorporate some kind of chained weapon; I'm picturing one with some thermal energy running down it or something, except for when I touch it, of course. Then it's still loud and does 2 harm, but I can hit them from further away. And, I've got 2 armor since I'm being defensive.

■ The area titled “Freedom.”

Saving people increases your humanity, which you then use to do an amazing feat of physical aptitude or inflict humanity harm on others. Depending on the tone of your game, what constitutes an amazing physical feat could vary. From running so fast you can run across water or maybe even dodging bullets, to something more conventional—such as lifting something extremely heavy for your size. Either way, you'll need to have humanity to consume in order to do these specific feats. One way to get humanity is by naming people and saving them when they are in danger. What constitutes danger should be clear between you and the MC. When this situation occurs, you can name up to 3 people and, should you save them all you generate 2 humanity. When you try to save anyone but fail, you get 1 humanity. Why you get this humanity from doing specific tasks like this is up to you, and what you do with the ability to do these feats is also your prerogative. Keep in mind that what you do with it is as defining for your protagonist as why they do it.

HONED MOVES

You get the *Potential* move and can choose one more.

▣ POTENTIAL

At the beginning of session, roll 2d6 without adding a state. On a 10+, you generate 2 humanity. On a 7–9, you generate 1. When you draw upon your humanity and consume it, you may spend it 1 for 1 to:

- Inflict humanity harm by telling or showing someone how capable you are despite shirking all technology has to offer.
- Perform an extraordinary feat of physical aptitude (The MC has final discretion).
- Take +1 forward when protecting someone from danger.

The Honed generates humanity within them at the beginning of each session. You don't have cybernetics or an implant, all you can rely upon is yourself. With each new session you generate more humanity within you. Along with this increase in humanity, there should be a reflection of this in the fiction, too. Have fun with it and use it as a chance to flesh out your protagonist a bit more. What generating humanity looks like and, in turn, how you are able to do whatever amazing feats you come up with during play will have a big impact on how you and the other players visualize what's happening in the fiction when you do what you do. While you may not be the only protagonist making use of humanity, each character should be using it in a way that is unique to them.

MC: It's a new day, let's see what your humanity is like this time for Stella.

SARAH: Not bad, a 7. Could be worse! 1 humanity marked down. I think I figured out what humanity for her is like, too. I think it's her essence or chi. Her soul or spirit or something unknowable is what fills her up with this energy and doing good in the world, being confident at what she does and doing impossible tasks for the betterment of people literally fuels her.

📊 GLORY

Whenever you complete any of the feats below, you generate 1 humanity for each task:

- Defeat a worthy foe.
- Extract a VIP (your call) and see them to safety.
- Obtain an item of special importance.
- Go to and return from an infamously dangerous location.
- Liberate something of importance.

Set free someone, or something, wrongfully imprisoned.

Glory could be taken by other classes in order to generate humanity but is the most suited towards the Honed interests. By rising above others and doing difficult to impossible tasks, you are rewarded with humanity.

MC: Sounds cool to me! So let's see, last time, you had taken Orion to their employer, so that's sweet. Did you remember to take humanity for that as well? I think when you grabbed him from those goons and took them out and there was that crazy chase and fire fight—it definitely counted as extracting a VIP.

SARAH: Oh, no, thanks for reminding me! Yeah those people were pretty hardcore about getting him, he must have been important!

There's a point, around the age of twenty, when you have to choose whether to be like everybody else the rest of your life, or to **make a virtue of your peculiarities.**

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

PARKOUR

When you use the environment to facilitate your movements through the world, roll. On 10+, choose 3. On a 7–9, choose 2.

- Escape an enemy and avoid all harm.
- Leave no trail or trace.
- Navigate to an advantageous spot.
- Change, reorganize, or manipulate the environment to their detriment.

Parkour is fairly widely known these days with some popular games and movies touching on it. Parkour is using your body to transform obstacles in your path into objects that actually increase your movement, all in order to get from point A to point B as fast and as efficiently as possible.

When you're triggering Parkour, there's a few options to select from after you roll. When you escape an enemy and harm, it's exactly as it sounds, you're gone and you're not harmed in the process.

If someone is tracking you and chasing after you, they also then don't see where you've gone. When you're running you knock over things, make noise or in general just leave an impression on the environment as to where you may have gone; with this option you're making sure not to leave that impression.

When you navigate to an advantageous spot, anytime it goes from you being on equal terms to you pulling ahead in some way, you're getting an advantageous spot out of it. Maybe the bad guys are chasing you and you take them to a place with a lot of traffic, making it becomes more difficult for them to get through. Maybe you jump from one building to another and it's going to take them longer to get there.

When you engage with the environment in order to deter them, this is when you would be considered to manipulate the environment. You're doing things like chucking stuff in their way, obscuring their vision with what's around you, and things of that nature.

MC: So last time we saw Stella, she was being chased down a narrow alleyway and hit a dead end, eh? We faded out on that last time. Well, yeah so she's running and as she careens around a corner she comes to said dead end. One side of the alley is a really tall wall with the street and the others appear to be rows of houses. What do you do?

SARAH: With these dudes chasing after me I obviously want to get away from them, but I want to do it with style! I want to kick off one side of the wall and then the other side, in order to reach the tall side where the street is, all the while running towards the dead end. The goal is to land on the other side and keep my feet, then take off as fast as I can!

MC: This sounds like some parkour going on then, roll that up.

SARAH: OK, well I got a 10 when I add my Powerful state. So I'll mark that emotion spike annnnd yeah. So, I just like run up the side of a building and back flip over the wall before the dudes run around the corner and I'm just gone man. I'm gone. I choose escape an enemy and avoid all harm, leave no trail or trace... and for my advantageous spot, maybe since I'm on the other side it's way harder for them to run all the way back or climb it and stuff? I mean, if they even see me?

MC: Alright, you're out of there! But remember, you were chased out of the building where there's some kind of fire too, right?

SARAH: Right! Having lost those guys, I bolt that way and double back and try to burst through the doors!

MC: You totally crash through the doors and right away, you can tell this place is going up quick. It looks like a scene from *Backdraft*. The fire is consuming this place and you hear shouts that you think are female, coming from upstairs. They get closer to the banister above and when they do, you see two young girls shouting at you over the roar of the inferno now. It's going up so quick you can barely hear them! What do you do?

SARAH: I SAVE them; I'm going to save them from this danger! I name them Ginger and Spice, they will be saved! I jump up to grab the banister and pull myself up!

- MC:** Sounds, like you're taking a risk, let's roll that! There's heat and flames are licking at you when you're jumping up and trying to pull yourself up here. The smoke isn't making things great for you either. The danger is alllll of these things.
- SARAH:** Damn, OK. I got a 5 only, I'm feeling Powerful too, but this inferno is something, I'm sure. We see Stella's face resolute as the flames roar around her. I think this whole time though I've just been looking so cocky. Could be she's a little too cocky.
- MC:** For sure. So here's the thing you're pulling yourself up right? And you can, you're the Honed—but then the girls lean on the banister and one of them tumbles over. You can either continue pulling yourself up or grab onto her with one hand and try and hold the banister or something too, if you want.
- SARAH:** Shoot, yeah I grab her and pull us both up. The camera's probably looking down at us from above and there's all these flames all around and I'm just straining hard as I grab her with the flames almost touching her feet before they stop just short.
- MC:** You bet! Well you get up there and realize the other girl isn't shouting anymore and as you look around, you realize it's because the floor caved in where she was standing. There's a hole there and all you can see is fire when you look down. What do you do?
- SARAH:** NOOOO. Shit. OK, I pull the girl into my arms and hold her protectively, then I look for a good, safe way out!
- MC:** Sounds like you're analyzing, let's see that roll. Also, we can consider the girl saved by you now, so you generate 1 humanity.
- SARAH:** OK, nice. I want to get the heck out of here, I'm looking around for entry and exit points as fast as I can! It's really important and I'm protecting someone so I want to spend a humanity to take the +1 forward since I'm protecting someone from danger from my Potential move. I think for a moment Stella's confidence wavers but then realizes she's the best at what she does, and that's what consumes the humanity. So, I'll roll analyze here and, nice, I got a 10. I've got 3 options to choose from and I'll add a Powerful emotion spike again.

☒ WITH GREAT POWER

Select one state; whenever you would mark your fifth spike in that emotion, you may choose to ignore it instead.

Whenever you choose this option for advancement, you'll want to describe in the fiction what's happening with this in the fiction, too. Why is this emotion handled well above all else? You still feel this emotion and can experience it more and more intensely, it just doesn't spike out, unlike others.

MC: So you actually mark down 2 spikes, one for using the potential move, one for analyze right? Lucky you don't suffer from debilitations from that state!

SARAH: I'll say, yeah it would have been spiked out right now! Stella is probably always feeling Powerful, it may not always be the predominate emotion she feels but in general, she's confident because of her abilities and training.

**I lived long enough to see
the cure for death; to see
the rise of the Bitchun Society,
to learn ten languages;
to compose three symphonies;
to realize my boyhood dream...
to see the death of
the workplace and of work.**

Down and Out in the Magical Kingdom

MUSASHI

Whenever you Neutralize, no matter your emotional state, roll at +1. If your emotional state is +2, use that instead.

The Honed is at home in tough, demanding physical confrontations. When there's a conflict that requires harm be exchanged, regardless of your emotional state you will still be getting a positive modifier. However it happens, remember to do it, you do it—so you'd need to also provide what this looks like in the fiction. You still do have an emotional state that comes into play, so it still plays a part in the scene.

MC: So you picked what's your best escape route right? OK, well you make your way through the flames, cradling this girl—to the bedroom and there's a window there. But there's one of those dudes who was chasing you climbing through it right now, he hasn't seen you as he's got his back turned to you as he's propping himself up to lower himself in there. What do you want to do?

SARA: I tell the girl to close her eyes and I aim to take this guy out with my vibro sword. I take it off my belt and it goes from that cool half crescent-shaped hilt thing, to an unfurled wicked-looking blade that hums since it's a vibro blade. I move to take this fool out. And I'm Mad I think now, since I just lost that other innocent and he's come back. I think I could have totally saved them both if he hadn't intervened, too. So yeah, that's pretty bad for me with -1 for Mad, but I have musashi, so I substitute that for a +1 when I roll Neutralize, right? So I think in battle, she's just super calm no matter what. She only allows herself to feel the full weight of her emotions afterwards—even if they're the primary thing driving her action to fight someone.

MC: Sure, normally, yep I'd have you roll—I don't see how you could miss this, though. Since he's not paying attention at all I think it makes more sense to just tell me how you dispatch this fella.

REPRISAL

When you take harm in combat, name the character you hold most responsible, while they remain present and hostile, you get +1 hold on a hit whenever you try to Neutralize them.

We've all seen those action movies where someone injures the main protagonist, doesn't kill them, and regrets it later. When you're the Honed, you're that person, when someone hurts you, whether it's some ninjas attacking you with some hi-tech blades being controlled by someone else, or the main act you're up against—you name who you hold responsible and get an additional hold against them on a hit. When you do name who you think is responsible, make sure it makes sense within the fiction. If someone's hacking you up and you're attempting to get more hold on someone random, which has nothing to do with what's happened, the MC isn't going to be able to help you out with supporting your move.

SARA: Sure, so I think I just run him through and he collapses and falls back on the outside of the building, without him being able to have come in.

MC: Yeah he just plummets, suddenly though – the girl in your arms screams. You feel something impact you from behind and you stagger forward. There's a small throwing dagger in your leg and you take 2 harm, unless you've got some armor covering that leg?

SARA: On my leg? No, I don't think so, to be honest. Just my torso most likely, so I'll mark that. So yeah, my sword unfurls again, and I just look pissed. The camera rotates around me and I've got flames all around me, but I'm the scary one here. I point my sword at him and I name him Gear. My lips curl up and I mouth that he's next, and then I start walking towards him.

MC: I think that is a reprisal, which definitely gives you another hold, if you get a hit, that is! Roll that neutralize and let's see what happens.

📖 HONED SPECIAL

When the Honed shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you generate 1 hold with that person. Either of you can spend it to have the Honed appear in a dangerous situation with or without explanation as to how they got there.

As with all specials, both parties will determine if the moment is considered intimate. What is intimate to some is not to others, so be fair with one another when someone is making a case for their special. When this happens for the Honed, the hold is somewhat more unique than usual hold, in that either party can spend it. When either of them feel it's a dangerous situation, they may spend it and have you appear. There can be an explanation or not, a little mystery and suspension of disbelief never hurt anybody!

MC: Alright, June – you're in a tight spot here. You've been shot, they're trailing you on your grav bike, it is not looking so hot for you, eh. What do you want to do?

ERIK: I think that I'm going to use my hold to have Stella appear, and hopefully save me. Maybe my cybernetics ping her when my heartrate is crazy and I'm losing vitals and what not?

MC: Sure, so where do you think you are Stella? What makes sense for you?

**Time is a great teacher,
but eventually kills
all of its students.**

Synchronicity





THE HONORBOUND

“To serve ones’ superiors with self-sacrificing dedication”—the primary drive for the Honorbound is their dedication to enforcing others to hold up their Giri. In *The Veil* this form of honor is ingrained into the society in which you play and you are the keeper of it.

To no one’s surprise the Honorbound injects a much more focused lens on Giri. What the future looks like in that retrospect, in terms of how people treat each other in relation to honor is up to you, but the Honorbound gets to define the parameters of Giri pretty much in its entirety. They clarify a lot of what might otherwise remain nebulous and also bring both interpersonal play because there’s that lens looking at how people treat honor, as well as what enforcement will look like in the setting. The relationship between that enforcement and perhaps, another form of authority is also something to be considered when introducing this playbook into the mix.

**The destiny of intelligent
tool-using life was to be
a stepping-stone in
the evolution of
corporate instruments.**

Charles Stross, *Accelerando*

There are a few areas on the first page of the Honorbound playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled “Giri.”

The Honorbound is rooted in Giri, the concept of which is to owe someone else, not with money, but with obligation. You feel like you should make things right or there’s a mutual understanding that you owe them and should repay that debt. This is detailed more in depth in Giri section of the book. Know that as the Honorbound, you’re defining Giri completely, other than the standard Giri moves.

You operate out of an institution or organization that people come to when people don’t adhere to their Giri and want recompense. Your selections to describe this place, who you know there, what it looks like and some allies within it—who have come there over time—are not as important as the options which define Giri in your setting. Most important is the part of choosing 3–5 circumstances that incur Giri. By choosing these they become a part of your setting permanently, as well as the punishment for not adhering to the Giri that is then owed. For example, if you select that employing someone incurs Giri, everyone in society now knows that employment comes with it a debt of some kind, too. If the employer wants something from them, collecting on said debt, and they cannot or will not, what is the punishment for that? These are some of the decisions you will be making and, as the enforcer for this, you will also be the one sent out to directly deal with these types of situations in order to rectify the problem. You personally will be carrying out the chosen punishment. Make sure you’re picking options you find compelling and want to see in the fiction. Also, be absolutely positive these punishments are things you want to be doing and visualizing within in the fiction.

VIVI: My institution is unique because it is the only reliable place for people wanting to resolve Giri. There’s probably others, but we are the best, of course!

For how it looks, I think... it’d be neat if it was like this weird natural place. Since tech is usually the most comforting thing to people in cyberpunk not nature. Maybe all this natural environment being incorporated into the institution is meant to unnerve people and show that we mean business and have them off balance while in our place. Which I think will be at the top of a huge skyscraper. A little slice of Eden, maybe. So my options for that is going to be:

Real vegetation, animals, a spring with a fresh water, a grove of trees and tended gardens.

It's very natural looking and waterfall probably pours off the side and is caught by something wrapping around the building to keep cycling it over and over or something.

MC: Cool! I like the idea of people being like put off by this place that sounds like it'd be considered really nice in present time because it's not all tech and gadgetry. What we think of nature now is now something people don't get and maybe even dislike, neat.

VIVI: I think so too. And I see that I know three people there too. I'm going to mark down:

Fracture, my hacker. Path is, of course, my guide, and then Shiver is my coms specialist I think.

I also decided my character's name is going to be Wendy. She is definitely way more into doing some action-packed stuff. So for Giri, I'm going to choose the following:

When a mutual agreement is broken the punishment is going to be restitution.

If they save your life and you don't uphold their Giri, you're executed. You owe them your life, it's a steep debt I think—come on.

When someone visits an injustice upon society, they are exiled, so they are no longer a part of society!

The other two, I'll save for when we are playing, if and when it's needed.

MC: Sweet, sounds like you're set!

■ The area titled “Your Giri.”

There is a reason you are doing this with your life. This section is to try and define more of that for your protagonist. Remember you are the hand of this institution or organization, so how is it you came to be in this position and why? Did the owner take you in and train you to do this? Do you feel society just needs this, or maybe you just feel your own honor should be how things are, regardless of outside perspectives? There is a spot there for you to make up whatever you’d like that would fit best aside from these examples, too.

vivi: I think Wendy just does it for the kicks, you know. Her Giri is her life. She believes there is honor in doing what you are good at, so at a young age she approached the institution to get trained and do this. She thinks no one else can do it as good as her so she’s honorbound to do this because no one else could do it as well as her, rather than allow someone else to do it poorly, she does it.

■ The area titled “Trade Weapons.”

From the list of weapons, choose 1 trade weapon. It will usually be a more powerful weapon and how you will approach the use of force when performing your enforcement tasks. Are you up close and personal, or are you taking shots from far away with a mag sniper rifle from safety?

■ The area titled “Backup Weapons.”

When all else fails, you have your trusty backup weapon. You have options to get up close and personal again or just shoot the place up! Make sure your choices backup what your punishments for enforcing Giri are and how you will go about the enforcement.

**My father once told me,
‘We don’t choose the things
we believe in; they choose us.’**

Minority Report

HONORBOUND MOVES

You get the *Honor* and *Bound* moves and can choose one more.

🎲 HONOR

When you feel reluctant to enforce or penalize someone who has not honored their *Giri* and try to levy a more lenient sentence, roll. On a 10+, you may choose one of these options. On a 7–9, choose one, but there will be harsh consequences for your reluctance.

- You may make an exception for them and commute the penalty to someone else, as long as you have a good reason.
- You choose to accept *Giri*, *Cred*, or change the penalty altogether.

Sometimes when you're sent to do something, you'll end up in a position where you've gathered the facts and evidence, or whatever else may be required of you, and you feel or think they don't deserve that particular punishment or, perhaps a penalty altogether. Maybe you know them, maybe you don't—in either case your honor will dictate what needs to be done. Your sense of duty or obligation can cause conflict within yourself when your emotions or knowledge questions what must be done. When you feel this conflict, you roll to see what must be done, leaving it to the dice instead.

MC: So at the end of last session we saw Wendy retrieve an object for Q, which was claimed as restitution for breaking a substantial mutual arrangement between Q and the Coram family. You managed to squeak out a whopping 13, if I recall—right?

VIVI: Right! The dude was begging me not to take it but admitted he broke his *Giri* and thought that it wouldn't be such a steep price. But Q needed that object, so I still chose for him to face the full penalty and took it. Now, it's sometime later—I think Wendy has this ritualistic thing where she goes and eats at this same noodle cart wayyy across the city each time she's finished a task. She used to eat there as a kid so she goes there between jobs to remember that time.

MC: Nice flavor, I like it! Well, let's say you are there already there. Looks like you're not bound so you're just hanging out at the noodle cart, hey?

⚔️ BOUND

Whenever you begin a session without a task involving the enforcement of *Giri* that's been broken, choose one from the following and the MC will work this task into the fiction as appropriate:

- Infiltration or assassination
- Retrieve or deliver
- Lobby or sabotage
- Safeguard or endanger

When you play as the Honorbound you are literally bound. Why you are considered bound is flavor and open to interpretation in your setting and fiction. But whomever you work for, they will be having you complete tasks for them, hitting the streets (or wherever), to enforce the penalties you've defined previously. Whenever someone doesn't uphold their *Giri*, you're the enforcer sent to rectify the situation. You are the one who gets to choose which kind of a task you want to play in the fiction, but remember that whatever the penalty is you've made, that's what you've also bound yourself to enforce as well.

VIVI: Yeah, not yet. I think for this one Wendy wants to see a bit more action and work off some steam. Let's go with infiltration.

MC: So Wendy, you're eating your noodles at a street vendor and the rain's pouring down. In the reflection you can see the neon Japanese signs flashing brightly. You use your heads up display and see that there's a new message from the lady who usually gives you your assignments. Who is she, what does she look like?

VIVI: She looks like Trinity in *The Matrix* movie, and her name is Lacey, that's not her real name but that's what everyone thinks her name is.

MC: Cool, so there's a message from her and she's saying in the recorded holo video that someone skipped out with the Yakuza, some business arrangement gone south, should be pretty standard. Gaijin not keeping his word ain't nothing new. Only problem is, he's burned out his neurochip or something, he's off the grid. She taps her head and then smiles and the message ends. Right after that, all the info on this guy starts cycling. Bud Garrett. Wanted by the Yakuza, not holding up his end of an arrangement.

VIVI: Cool, I send her back this like snapshot of just me grinning and a thumbs up. I was bored anyways. So this binds me to the task, ya? Nice, I have that when a mutual agreement is broken the punishment is restitution, makes sense.

📊 THE ART OF THE PURSUIT

When you assimilate all the information you have available on a target, roll. On a 10+, generate 2 hold. On a 7–9, generate 1. Spend your hold 1 for 1 when actively on the hunt for them in order to:

- Discern their position or a weakness in their life to exploit in order to do so.
- Discern what security they may have or what kind of a threat they'd be to you.
- Discern their greatest weakness and strength.
- Discern what makes them feel safe or secure, and what makes them feel afraid.

It usually follows that people who aren't honorable aren't going to want to be found or are part of a criminal element that may not be easy to find in the first place. Or, maybe they are easy to find and just will be hard to enforce because they are well-trained, protected, or otherwise more capable than your average civilian. When you consume more information about your target, you get more insight than the average person, too. This is your jam—you're good at it. Time to put those skills to use and penetrate your target's defenses with your perception and experience.

MC: As you're reviewing the data you also notice he's a booster for the Haney clan and also took jobs for Taeg when he got burned. You remember them right?

VIVI: Oh, this should be interesting then. Ok, well I finish my noodles, the camera pans up and I have on my typical gear with a translucent plastic coat for the rain. I push the noodles away so they know I'm done with them and then start going over the data right there at the stall and want to get into this dude's head. She's definitely Joyful, she's excited, daring, stimulated so I'll mark that and with the state I get a 12! Busted it! So, I want to discern their position or a weakness in their life to exploit annnnd discern what security they may have or what weapons they carry.

MC: Yeah, so you're checking out all this information and you read between the lines, these chumps wouldn't have thought to look probably but he's got money being syphoned out of various accounts in small amounts to one single address. It belongs to a Marla Singer, his main squeeze maybe. Everywhere else seems pretty evident that people would check... this though, this could be something. From his file, he's only ever been busted before with discreet weapons; pistols, knives, things he can conceal on himself, that type of thing.

📦 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

You carry an object on your person designed to elicit a specific emotional response. When you implement this object in whichever way it was intended, roll. On a 10+, it spikes out the emotion as intended. On a 7-9, you may only choose to impress, dismay, or frighten your target.

Enforcers in the future, linked into mixed reality especially, could have any number of things on their person to elicit a specific emotion from people. Maybe they're terrifying and wear some sort of kabuki mask, maybe they keep souvenirs, or maybe they just have something that's marked with the symbol for their organization. Whether its purposes are for calming people down or spiking fear in the people they come to enforce, the object could be near anything and made to elicit whatever you wish.

VIVI: Sweet, I head to buddy's place, flipping my translucent hood up as I walk out of the noodle place and flag down a gravi-taxi. I give the address to the automated service bot and try to catch a quick nap as we head out.

MC: When you get there you notice that it's a fancy place. It's on a cliff on the outskirts of town. It's a mansion that's towering in various stages off the cliff face with higher portions connected with floating stairs and a pool that's grav lifted. It's off to the back and the side and high enough that the owners wanted everybody to know they had it, it sticks out and has a waterfall that goes off the side of the cliff. There's a front gate that's not too high up.

VIVI: I tell the taxi to go past and I get out a bit after, when I'm sure no one can see me, I try to find a position above to scope out the guard patrol and whatnot.

- MC:** Sure yeah, it's dark now after the ride in the taxi, or about to be. The sun is setting off the backdrop of the mansion. When you watch you see three guards patrolling the outskirts somewhat lazily, their silhouette highlighted against the sun. It doesn't seem like they see much action or anything, they aren't operating like clockwork—that's for sure.
- VIVI:** Cool, so when I see that I want to take off my raincoat and turn on my camo-tech outfit and put up the hood and run up to the fence and hop over it. Wherever seems like they would leave the biggest hole in the patrols, for the longest time, is where I want to go over.
- MC:** Totally, the guards are pretty lazy, and you're effectively invisible to all normal eyes. So, let's say you're in there sneaking about, narrowly having missed the guards, and you hear a voice coming from a bedroom. It's a man's voice probably, judging by the timbre. But you'd have to get closer to know more.
- VIVI:** Yeah, I go in, quiet as a mouse and as I do I slide off my hood a bit and put on my kabuki style mask with the symbol for judgement on it. It's got little accents around the eyes and stuff. It's designed to be all scary like I was saying before.
- MC:** So you're invisible aside from a floating mask going into this room? Sounds good, so you see the man at a side profile when you enter, it's definitely the guy. He's wearing a dress shirt that's tan and some dark type of slacks. He's got some fancy expensive sunglasses on top of his head and has some jewelry on. The room is pretty minimalistic, it's all white with a towering dark bed frame and everything else seems integrated into the walls. There's a rug covering most of the room that looks expensive. He's just talking out loud so he's probably on the "phone" through neurochip or something. What do you do?
- VIVI:** I walk straight up to him with the mask and put my fingers on my distortion blade hilt. I don't want a fight though, so I'm hoping the mask will do its job and scare or cow him, I don't care which.
- MC:** So you walk right up to him and his eyes widen as he turns and sees the mask hovering there, roll it up!

VIVI: OK, well I'm definitely still Joyful. So, I get an 8. So, I'd love to have him dismayed!

MC: Yeah, he lets out a little yelp and starts looking around and puts up his hands. He starts sweating and he says that he knows why you're here. "But please, I didn't break anything! They're lying!" What do you do?

ABSOLUTION

When you become intimate with a target in order to better know them, roll. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7–9, hold 1. during the scene, spend your hold 1 for 1 to ask them questions:

- What was your lowest moment?
- For what do you crave forgiveness, and from whom?
- What pain do you hide away from others?
- In what ways is your mind or soul vulnerable?

Sometimes you may not know the truth of the matter at hand, or, perhaps you just want to get to know them better before the final judgment. In any case, when you become intimate with a target, you glean more information from them than would be possible before. It could be invaluable when you're trying to figure out the correct punishment, should you want to change it. It could also just be an interesting way to gain leverage over people and learn more about the people in the fiction than would normally arise in play.

VIVI: Either way you're coming with me, Bud. Hmm, I study him and cock my head...do you think I could do absolution on him? I'd like to get more information.

MC: Sure, yeah I'd say this qualifies. The sun is just below the horizon and as you point your blade at him it feels like you're passing judgement. There's an intimacy there, I'd say.

VIVI: I'm feeling skeptical for sure, which is in my Mad state, so I'll mark that spike. And I get an 8, so I'm going to ask him what his secret pains are while I snake the blade a bit closer to his throat.

MC: "OK! I did it. But I didn't realize that they wanted to help smuggle drugs. That was never part of the bargain... that stuff killed my sister. I just wanted some quick cash!" Also, out of game—remember, how I said his neurochip is off the grid? You hear a noise of a door creaking open behind you, maybe he wasn't talking to himself after all? What do you do?

🎲 SKILLED

When you are outnumbered and Neutralize, you generate an additional +1 hold on a hit.

You're probably used to being attacked at all sides and are trained for that eventuality. When you're outnumbered and need to shift the odds in your favor, use an improvement to choose the skilled move to level the playing field if you think you'll be the type to run and gun instead of sneaking about.

VIVI: I pull out my blade on instinct and charge at them, telling them to give up or I'm coming for them! Wendy is definitely feeling critical of herself internally here, having missed the other person. So I'm going to roll Mad and mark that emotion spike.

MC: Sure, makes sense! Also, remember, you're outnumbered here so you already have 1 hold, since you're skilled, if you can get a hit in this situation, so let's see if you can muster some more. When you turn with your blade you see a herald HGK particle displacer pointed right at you, let's see that roll!

🎲 HONORBOUND SPECIAL

When the Honorbound shares a moment of intimacy with someone other than a target, be it physical or emotional, you later learn what Giri they owe other people and may ask them any one question from Absolution immediately, regardless if you have taken the move already or not.

As with any special, a moment of intimacy needs to be clarified between the parties involved, as it's very subjective and what one person thinks might be intimate for their protagonist might not be for another. Whenever that moment does happen with the Honorbound, you ask the other player, or the MC—if they have any Giri owing and they'll tell you. As always, make sure you're explaining obtaining this knowledge in the fiction as well. On top of that, asking a question from your absolution move is also very powerful—especially if you're interested in being an interpersonal character in your story. Each question is geared towards a type of knowledge that meshes well when an organic shared moment of intimacy occurs.





THE ONOMASTIC

You are the last of your kind. Your order was once an integral part of *The Veil* and the world; now, though, that time has passed. Hunted and destroyed by the Iconoclasts, you are now the last of your order. The last with the power of true names and charged with the protection of the last Cybertome.

A sense of mystery and the uncanny naturally comes with Onomastic and their abilities, as well as the mystery surrounding the Cybertome and the eradication of their Order. Their gifts could be something resembling magical, or it could be explained by other means. However it is explained, there are options for the sanctuary that also sprinkles additional breadcrumbs as to said mystery, as well as how the order and sanctuary fit into this future. In no small way, the Iconoclasts also bring with them the idea that maybe there is more than just humans and technology to explore, and perhaps, be afraid of. Finally, interpersonal play will have more of a focus as well, since it is a must for Onomastic because they need major life components from others, in order to have power over them.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Onomastic playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

- The area titled “Your Sanctuary.”

The Onomastic is part of a dead order that was hunted down and all but eradicated by the Iconoclasts. As far as you know, you’re the last of your order and have access to the last safehold. This is a place where they can’t get at you and is where you now make your home. Choosing each option defines the sanctuary in broad strokes and leaves you to fill in the rest with your imagination.

GRANT: So let’s see. I think it’d be neat if Hugh’s sanctuary has entry into everybody’s residences. Maybe that’s partly why the Iconoclasts found them so threatening, they have tech that allows them entry into places that are sealed, after all. I like the idea of it having a way into an alien place, too. With the ghosts of my order haunting the place all the time. I picture it as a cool ancient ruin that’s now in disrepair, as I’m the last one there. It’s dirty and grimy and haunted—but, it’s also my home.

■ The area titled “The Iconoclasts”

The Iconoclasts are what hunted your order to extinction. Although you may know what they look like, you may not. This section is for defining some particular points about them, chiefly how they appear and sound; whether or not you know this about them already, though, is up to you.

GRANT: I think it makes sense that Hugh’s seen these things before but never fought one. He’s seen one kill his master though, as he shouted at him to run in his final moments before he ran, he saw them and then bolted and that’s how he survived. They were beings of shadow that have strange things attached to them, he can’t quite remember what exactly, but I imagine it something like in a Christmas Carol. They carry with them the weight of their bad decisions or something, manifested into a physical thing; I’ll leave that to you. They are always dragging it around or having it slumped over them as they slink through the shadows.

■ The area titled “Cybertome.”

You’re unable to open it for now, and your protagonist doesn’t know what it is. After your fifth improvement, you can choose to open this Cybertome. Each option will have implications for where the fiction will take your protagonist later on. You do not choose now but when you open it. That way you have an idea of what you think would be interesting according to what’s happening and what you’ve already figured out about your past order. Note that there is also a spot to write in what else it could be, other than the examples, so you are not constrained by them. Work with the MC to come up with something that makes sense for the both of you, if you choose that option.

■ The area titled “Components”

Onomastics have a kind of power over others unlike any other playbook. It could be considered supernatural, or it could be a form of technology that your order engineered. The supernatural and what could be considered “magic” can also be labeled as such simply because we do not understand it yet. However you decide to explain it in the fiction, the more you know of someone, specifically major life moments, the more power you have over them. You have the power to manipulate the person in various ways. The building blocks of these major life moments are called components. When you use your power, you assemble these components in order to exert your control.

ONOMASTIC MOVES

You get the *True Name* move and can choose one more.

☒ TRUE NAME

When you can see someone you wish to manipulate with the mysterious power of your dead order, speak their true name and roll+components (you must have at least 1 component in order to do so). On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7–9, hold 1. If they are willing you may spend your hold 1 for 1 without issue; if unwilling, you must have them in your sights. The components when used are consumed, forever losing their power against the individual.

- Inflict or ignore 1 harm (AP).
- Have them lose track of what they were doing.
- Have them take -1 or +1 forward right now.
- Assist or interfere with them without regard for distance or barriers.
- Communicate with them without regard for distance or barriers.

When you use components, you're actually assembling the major life events you know of them and formulating their true name. Then when you speak it, your unique power from your order comes into the fiction as you manipulate your target. When they are willing to be manipulated by you, there is no problem, but when you are trying to inflict harm onto someone who is unwilling to be manipulated, you must be able to keep them in your sights when you spend your hold. If line of sight is broken, your hold cannot be applied.

MC: So, Incoming fire poured into your safe house and Fizz was hit by an errant thermal bolt and is knocked back and is currently unconscious. What do you do Hugh?

GRANT: Hugh is going to rush up to Fizz and finds him unconscious right?

MC: Yeah, you see a wound and it's all charred from the thermal bolt and he's out cold, laying on his side where he fell.

GRANT: Fizz revealed enough information about himself last time that Hugh knows some components. So as we stand now looking at my components, it looks like I'd get a +2. So I think what Hugh is going to do is true name him and try and help him out here. I think ordinarily it's a Peaceful thing but with the incoming fire happening, I think he's Scared, I'll mark that spike. So his voice probably quivers a bit with fear as he uses his power. Rolled and got a 4 and 5 and adds his modifier for Scared at a -1. So 10 despite the -1, nice. I'm going to spend 1 hold right now to have him ignore 1 harm. I know he's not healed, but maybe he can still function now at least.



📖 GAZE INTO THE ABYSS

When you Analyze, you may ask 1 of these questions in addition to the others.

- Who here is most afraid?
- Who here is keeping secrets from me?
- How close are the Iconoclasts?
- Who here would do what I ask, if anyone?

As the Onomastic, you have one concern that sets you apart from the other players; chiefly, how close are the Iconoclasts? They killed your order and they're always going to be hunting you and trying to wrest that Cybertome from your hands. Aside from that, you have some additional questions that could help you get away from them or learn a secret about others. You've been on the run or trained by the order to look for other information when analyzing situations.

MC: It's a good thought but he took way too much damage for that to wake him up I think. You see color return to his cheeks, though.

GRANT: OK, well that's something. I look around and want to find some place to get us out of here or figure out where a safer place would be in here; we're under attack and I need more info.

MC: Sure, so you're analyzing, roll that up, and what emotion are we seeing displayed here? The camera tightens up on you while your eyes are darting around trying to figure stuff out.

GRANT: Anger! The Iconoclasts hunt him already, now this, too. He's had enough!! So let's see, that's a 9 and I'll mark the spike...annnd I want to know 'How close are the Iconoclasts?', first and foremost.

MC: They're closing in man; Those headaches you get when they get close are sneaking up at you. It's getting louder and louder in your mind.

GRANT: Alright, well, crap. Ok. What's my best escape route?

MC: The way they're coming in man, there's no other exits at your guy's place is there? As you're scanning the situation, this dude in white flowing robes and a mag pistol comes careening around the corner, he hesitates at first and then he levels his gun at you, what do you do?

☒ ARMOR OF FAITH

So long as you possess your Cybertome, you have the benefit of 1 armor. When this armor is the deciding factor in preventing harm, instead describe inexplicable circumstances that cause the harm not to befall you.

The Cybertome is mysterious. What it actually is, or does, is up to you based a selection you'll make when you choose to unlock it (after your fifth improvement). The armor it provides is nebulous; maybe it's protecting you through some form of fate, or you just get lucky when you have it with you. Maybe it's something else entirely; the difference between normal armor and the armor it provides is very different. Instead of normal armor that absorbs damage, instead the MC will describe circumstances that will have it never hit you at all.

GRANT: Wow, OK, well I'm going to dive out of the way, hopefully!
Aw, crap, I got a 5 for risk as I imagine I'm pretty anxious...so I'll mark that Scared spike, too.

MC: Well, lucky for you, you have armor on from your old uniform you're wearing and you've got your Cybertome on you, right? So you go to leap out of the way and a stray bullet just plugs the dude in the head right when you think he is going to shoot you. There's the moment when you flinch because he's going to shoot and then doesn't...and then he just falls over.

**There is nothing in this
world of value... nothing
worth risking our lives for...
except perhaps...
what little we can create
for ourselves. Without you,
Alita, my life has no value.**

Battle Angel Alita

SLAYER

When you confront the unnatural, perverted, or twisted, roll. On a hit, tell the MC what its weakness is. On a 10+, the MC will tell you good detail as to what weaknesses you perceive. On a 7–9, you are given possibility, but not certainty.

There could be a multitude of things classified as unnatural, perverted, or twisted. One of which will for sure be the Iconoclasts. Whether you run from them or not, you may be the only one to also figure out how to hurt or kill them. You could continue to run, or you could fight. Either way gaining more information about your pursuers and other undesirables can only be a good thing, right?

GRANT: Wow that was lucky! Ok, so I'm going to look for an escape route. I'm straight up freaking out by now though, I think. More baddies are probably on the way. So with another Scared roll and emotion spike I'll roll—aw, I got a 9.

MC: Oh, man. Well it's obvious right? You can take off sure, but buddy boy there is what you'll have to leave, what do you do?

GRANT: Crap... no... I'll stay; I guess... I don't know...

MC: Oh man, the splitting headache you always seem to have suddenly just intensifies in your mind like crazy. A shadow comes out of the man who just fell in front of you, it looks like it's attached or tethered to the corpse for now. It's tugging at it, screeching and clawing and writhing towards you as it's tied to the dead person. What do you do?

GRANT: I'm going to try and figure out how I can drive it back from us!

MC: Sounds like you're being a slayer?

GRANT: Yeah, I'm going to try and see what's up with these Iconoclasts. Aw, man. The dice hate me to today or something though. When I add my Scared state yet again, I only get a 6. 1 more and I could have maybe found out! UGH, I throw myself over my companion, protecting him. Maybe my armor will protect us?!

MC: Hm. So I feel like, you saving this dudes life possibly and sacrificing yourself, could be an intimate moment, what does that do for you?

☰ ASYLUM

When you speak the true name of your sanctuary and roll. On a hit, you withdraw into your sanctuary with or without clear explanation as to how you got there and... On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1.

- you can still watch and hear what is happening while you are there.
- you can re-emerge in a different place altogether.
- you are healed of all harm (choose twice).
- you can bring someone in and out with you.

When you first make your protagonist you'll define your sanctuary. When you use asylum, you'll be able to retreat to it—so long as you're reasonably able. In your game, magic could be a thing or it could just simply be super advanced technology that allows for you to transfer yourself to your sanctuary. Ordinarily you could re-emerge in the place where you left, unless you were to choose the option where you could emerge someplace else entirely.

GRANT: Oh, man. It triggers asylum immediately at a 10+ and they come with me!

MC: Nice, nice, so you're back in the Sanctuary, right? Tell me again what that looks like and what options you're picking from the move.

☰ ONOMASTIC SPECIAL

When the Onomastic shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, Asylum is triggered immediately and they come with you, regardless of circumstances. Asylum is treated as though you rolled a 10+.

When you have an intimate moment the asylum move triggers, which means you're back in your sanctuary with whomever you shared that intimate moment with. It's important to take note that it's the only way you have to choose to have someone come with you as well as to heal yourself, as that option usually takes up all your choices. Also, that could be something bad having someone else in your sanctuary with you. By its very nature it's probably a place you don't bring people to.



THE SEEKER

The power of the Seeker comes from their faith. Faith can be many things to them, but through it they gain enlightenment. They use their enlightenment in order to have the meaningful questions in their lives answered, they are ceaselessly dedicated in their lives to the cycle of their faith.

While *The Veil* already has some setting assumptions geared towards the drive of getting more information, this playbook injects the possibility of people looking for knowledge inward, too. Even in the future people need knowledge and, in turn, insight. This playbook directly infuses that concept into the setting and campaign naturally because the Seeker is primarily searching for these internal answers. When they do, we find out what those answers look like in a futuristic setting, as well as how someone of faith may choose to look like as well. Does faith look radically different or is it something we identify with now, which has been preserved over generations? The Seeker is an opportunity to put a lens on the give and take between someone's belief systems, as well as how often these real life philosophical questions come up and are answered organically in play, simply because you are looking out for them in play.

If you believe that your thoughts originate inside your brain, do you also believe that television shows are made inside your television set?

Transmetropolitan

There are a few areas on the first page of the Seeker playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled “The Faith.”

The faith section is where you’ll define what your faith is. Is it pragmatic, violent, etc.? Work down the sheet selecting the options. Keeping in mind that these options will determine a major portion of your character. If you do not act within the confines of the faith you’re selecting now, it can hinder you in the future. Choose how you want your protagonist to act and what they want to adhere to. When you roll your communion move at the start of each session, the result dictates if you get surplus, want or both.

Further down the options, you’ll define what you get for your surplus and want, as well as how much enlightenment you have. Enlightenment is the resource you use in the communion move, so the more enlightenment you have, the more likely you will get surplus and not want. Surplus is something positive for you whereas want is something that is demanded by your faith that is the negative aspect to adhering to it. Each choice will let you define what you get for your surplus and what you get for you want. So no matter what choice you make, make sure it’s something interesting to you for both choices.

By default; Your faith begins with:

1 ENLIGHTENMENT: This is used as a unique currency for this playbook. You gain enlightenment, which you spend at the beginning of the session to commune with your faith, which in turns grants you your surplus and want.

SURPLUS: 1 ANSWER: You can cash in 1 answer to ask a question. When you ask a question, from the section marked questions, you’re telling the MC what you’re seeking in this session of play. Basically, what you’d like to see in the fiction and what you’re hoping to drive your character towards and get out of play. You’re cashing in your answer at the start of the play, but it remains in effect until you spend another answer to change it to something else. You’re seeking your answer throughout the entirety of the session, not right away as soon as you spend it

WANT: PENANCE: When and if your want comes up in the game, the MC will work to incorporate this into the fiction. If you need to do penance, the MC and you will have a discussion about what that will look like and if it should be on screen or not. Either way, it should be something that affects your protagonist and would not blow over. It doesn’t need to be the main focus of the session, but it should definitely be a thing that is now introduced and has a real impact on the fiction and characterizes you.

■ The area with the boxes meant to track all of these things.

Underneath the faith section, there is a box where you can describe your faith based on your selections. This way you can describe it, right down your want, surplus, enlightenment, and the Cred you get from your faith, if applicable.

JAKE: I'm going to be a Seeker named Hugo. He's like a monk, who upholds the weak. I think the options that make the most sense are going to be that he's peaceful, pragmatic, and the faith is all about mortality. I'm going to choose:

When you meditate, you do so fervently.
+1 enlightenment

Your meditation is deep and spiritual, surplus:
+1 answer, replace want: penance with want:
disconnected

Your meditations require strict fasting. Replace want:
penance with want: hunger

And Hugo's faith must be spread zealously, want
+preach.

So, in the boxes on the character sheet, under each category, Jake wrote:

Description: My faith is one of peaceful pragmatism that centers on mortality.

Surplus: 1 answer, 1 Cred

Want: disconnected, hunger, and preach.

Cred: nothing yet, he doesn't begin with any. When he does the beginning of session roll, if he does well, he will generate some with his surplus roll and put it here.

Enlightenment: 2 enlightenment

When Jake does well on his roll, he gets 1 Cred and can seek an answer. Answers tell the MC what you want to be looking for within the fiction of the game, which will then drive the fiction in that direction. If he does poorly on the roll and generates want, he chooses between disconnected, hunger, and preach. Then, the MC would show in the fiction what that would look like. Maybe something causes him to lose connection with his faith questioning it, or an obstacle is placed in the way of his pursuit of it disconnecting him from it. Maybe his faith demands that he fasts during this period of the session, how would that affect him within the game, the exploration of it could bring in some interesting facets and characterization in themselves?

■ The area titled “The Tenets.”

Tenets are there as a reminder. When you do not act in accordance to your previous selections when characterizing your faith, you take -1 ongoing until you rectify the situation. Your faith empowers you to seek the answers to important questions and can grant many different boons in the form of your surplus, as well as demand things from you in return, in the form of wants. The price of all this is adhering to your faith. Make your faith line up with the character concept you have for your protagonist, if you select things you don't find interesting—invariably uninteresting things will be happening in the fiction, from your perspective. Select things you think would be neat whether they are bad for your protagonist or not in order to keep you coming back for more. If they are not violent but your faith demands it, you will be taking -1 ongoing until you are violent. If it's about corrupting individuals and you act altruistically, you will also take -1 ongoing. When your faith is in line with how your protagonist would act, you will have a good balance and, perhaps even more interesting—implications that you like, were you to go against your faith.

Before Jake begins, he needs to flesh out his faith a bit more. He writes this in the tenets spot to solidify what his faith expects.

I must be peaceful.

I must be pragmatic.

And my faiths main focus is on morality.

Whenever I am not one of these things, I take -1 ongoing until I rectify it.

■ The area titled “The Questions”

As the Seeker, you'll want your questions answered, which is done throughout the session. When you select one, you're telling the MC you want to see more of this, or at least to the degree of it being interesting to explore it in the fiction. For instance, maybe you just rolled communion and your want is hunger or penance. In order to fulfill this more easily, you could ask the question ‘what or who, if anything should I renounce?’ During the session, the MC will do their best to integrate both the fact that your want is penance or hunger as well as your answer. You know your faith best, so the MC should have a conversation about what you think your wants would look like based on your faith. Maybe it's like lent, and you need to give up something important, or, maybe you need to give up most of your food in order to experience your faith more fervently. However you and the MC choose to work it into the fiction, make it compelling to you so that you have fun and enjoy looking at each of these aspects of your protagonist and faith.



THE SEEKER

NAME:

LOOK:

Circle one from each category:

- Female, Masculine, Androgynous, Animalistic, Transgressing, Ectopic, Fluid.
- Display wear, fetish wear, jurta wear, rich wear, or embroidered wear.
- Strong face, stern face, cruel face, soft face, aristocratic face, or meek face.
- Commanding eyes, unforgiving eyes, sharp eyes, compelling eyes, or calculating eyes.
- Slender build, stout build, round shouldered body, pear shaped body, bulky body, or a _____ body.
- Asian or south Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

JAM:

Everyone has a Jam (something you are good at and do to making a living and earn Credits). When you tell the MC what your jam is they'll tell you how much Cred you earn when you get downtime. Your Jam is used to establish your lifestyle, your income, and how you know certain other characters.

STATES

MAD	PEACEFUL	SAD	JOYFUL	SCARED	POWERFUL
□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□	□□□□

Assign +2, +1, -1, 0, 0 and -1 to each state from their propensity to react with that emotion to their most bang-up.

BELIEFS

Create three Beliefs. If a Belief is tested this session, mark 1 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief gets you into trouble this session, mark 2 XP at the end of the session. If a Belief is erased and resolved or changed after being tested, mark 3 XP.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

IMPROVEMENT

XP: □□□□

When you attempt something that benefits you and fail or when you gain XP from beliefs, mark each box per XP you accrue.

- +1 Mad □
- +1 Joyful □
- +1 Scared □
- +1 Peaceful □
- +1 Scared □
- +1 Powerful □

- Get a new playbook move □□□
- Erase a GM need □□□
- Get a move from another playbook □□□

After your 5th improvement you may also pick from the following:

- Take +1 to any state (Max +3) □□□□□
- Create and play a new antagonist □
- Advance a basic move □□□□□□□□
- Get +1 Enlightenment □□
- Change to a new playbook □

The power of the SEEKER comes from their faith. Faith can be many things to them, but through it they gain enlightenment. By using their enlightenment in order to have the meaningful questions in their lives answered, they are ceaselessly dedicated in their lives to the cycle of their faith.

HOLD

HARM

□ Light □□□ Armor

□□ Moderate

□□□ Obdical

FAITH

Through the practice of your faith, you use your enlightenment in order to ask questions of yourself, your faith, and others.

Characterize it (choose 1 from each column)

Violent □ Domatic □□□□

Peaceful □ Pragmatic □□□□

By default, your faith has 1 enlightenment, surplus: 2 answer, want: penance. Choose 2:

- When you meditate, you do so fervently. +1 enlightenment.
- Your meditation is deep and spiritual. Surplus: +1 answer, replace want: penance with want: disconnected.
- Your meditation is public and includes asking for offerings. Surplus: +1 Cred, want: judgment.
- A group or individual is indebted to your faith. Surplus: +1 GM, replace want: penance with want: desperation.
- Your faith practices martial arts as part of its meditation. Your fists count as (2 harm hand).
- You conflict with other seekers when you meditate. Surplus: insight, replace want: penance with want: investigation.
- Your faith manifests in various way to protect you. You have 1 armor so long as you only wear equipment. If you wear armor, use that instead.
- You are part of a larger body of faith. Surplus: +1 Cred, replace want: penance with want: judgment.

Choose 2:

- Your faith demands charity. Surplus: -1 Cred
- Your meditation requires a mind altering substance. Surplus: reason
- Your meditations require strict fasting, replace want: penance with want: hunger
- Your meditations require physical confrontation. Want: violence
- Their knowledge you seek is vast and unknowable. Want: despair
- Your faith must be zealously spread. Want: preach

DESCRIPTION OF FAITH

FAITH	SURPLUS	WANT
□□□□	□□□□	□□□□

CRED	ENLIGHTENMENT
□□□□	□□□□

THE TENETS

As any faith does, your faith has tenets it demands of its faithful. Fill in your three tenets that everyone of your faith must adhere to regarding on your selections in the faith section. Whenever you break a tenet you suffer -1 engaging until you fulfill your structures once again.

I must be _____, violent/peaceful.

I must be _____, pragmatic/pragmatic.

And my faith's main focus in on choose 1:

- morality
- computing.

Whenever I am not one of these things, I take -1 ongoing until I rectify it.

THE QUESTIONS

Whenever you have 2 answer, spend them to ask one of the following questions. Until you change to another question, it will be understood that this, in tandem with your beliefs, is what you seek.

- How might I obtain generosity, giving of oneself?
- How might I obtain peace, morality, proper conduct?
- What or who, if anything should I renounce?
- What insight can you offer me? (only on -negative may you ask this)
- How might I achieve more energy, diligence, vigor, effort?
- Should I practice more patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance?
- Will truthfulness, honesty serve me better should I pursue XP?
- What could make me have more determination, resolution?
- How might I obtain more love or kindness in my life?

INSIGHT

When you gain insight, you ask your faith what the best course of action is in relation to the question you are seeking and the MC will tell you. Take +1 forward towards goals in the pursuit of that information. This is the only way to achieve insight in The Veil; though pragmatists may obviously seek insight from other NPCs as normal, it does not provide them with +1 forward when acting on the advice given by those NPCs.

GIRL QUESTIONS

After you introduce your character, you may use the following bullet points to develop girl relationships with other players. If you so choose, or develop relationships of your own.

- If someone saved you from a situation where you would have broken your tenets otherwise, they have 1 Girl on you.
- If you counseled someone to undertake an action that would otherwise have resulted in harm befalling them or you, you have 1 Girl on them.
- If you've convinced someone else to follow your tenets, you have 1 Girl on each other.

GEAR

1-darish set, engraved with the symbol of your faith (You Detail). Fashion suitable to your look, and 2 Cred.

- Ornate katana (3 harm hand valuable)
- Ornate wakizashi (2 harm hand valuable)
- Add a damage tag of your choice for each

CYBERNETICS

You may begin with whichever cybernetics you so choose. For each piece of cybernetics you choose, assign the appropriate number of tags by referencing below:

- Ear (3 tags) _____
- Eye (2 tags) _____
- Arm (1 tag) _____
- Leg (1 tag) _____
- Intelligence (2 tags) _____
- Chin (1 tag) _____

NEGATIVE TAGS

Choose one tag for every piece of cybernetics you begin with:

Damaging □□□□□

Susceptible □□□□□

Scared □□□□□

Unstable □□□□□

Twisty □□□□□

Advised □□□□□

MOVES

You get the Communion move and choose one more.

COMMUNION: Using your enlightenment, your surplus and want all depend on what your faith bestows upon you. At the beginning of the session, it is assumed you spent time to get to touch with your faith. Roll enlightenment in order to see the outcome of the communion. On a 20+, your faith has surplus. On a 7-9, it has surplus, but manifests want. If their surplus hits Cred, like 1 Cred or 2 Cred, this is your personal share. On a miss, you only generate the want of the MC's choice.

□ **RESOLUTE:** When you use a melee weapon to trigger Ultramarium or Neutalite, you may roll enlightenment instead of your state.

□ **EXACT:** At the moment you reflect harm, you may choose to inflict any amount of harm you like—less than, or up to, the harm you normally inflict, you may choose to substitute it at any moment for a harm as well.

□ **PIERCING GAZE:** When you Probe someone, you may always ask, "What is your character really feeling?" for free.

□ **GUIDANCE:** When you share your vision of the future and how you plan to achieve it with enlightenment. On a 20+, you have 3 over them. On a 7-9, you have 2 over them. Whichever like you can spend your hold, 1 for 1, to have them mark experience.

SEEKER SPECIAL: When the Seeker shares a moment of empathy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you each gain +1 hold. Spend the hold to act or interact with one another by adding or subtracting 1 to their result after viewing the rolls result.

THE SEEKER MOVES

You get the *Communion* move and can choose one more.

☒ COMMUNION

Using your enlightenment, your surplus and want all depend on what your faith bestows upon you. At the beginning of the session, it is assumed you spent time to get in touch with your faith. Roll+enlightenment in order to see the outcome of this communion.

- On a 10+, your faith has surplus.
- On a 7–9, it has surplus, but manifests 1 want. If their surplus lists Cred, like 1 Cred or 2 Cred, this is your personal share.
- On a miss, you only generate the want of the MC's choice.

At the beginning of each session, it's assumed you've communed with your faith yielding a different result for your surplus and want each time. Maybe your enlightenment has changed, maybe it hasn't. When you roll, take the enlightenment you have, either the default or, if modified with choices from the faith section. Then, take your surplus and want. If you have multiple wants, the MC will choose one and incorporate it into the fiction. If you have Cred generated from your surplus, this is yours and can be marked with your personal Cred, and you may spend it normally. Whenever a surplus or want is generated, make sure as the player and MC you are incorporating it into the fiction so that everyone knows what these things look like in the context of the fiction—what you do to hold to your strictures and what it may demand of you is important to your characterization and clarity of the fiction for those present.

JAKE: Alright, so I've come back from the temple on the top of the Surin skyscraper. They have those gardens there so I always go there to meditate and commune, when possible. So, let's see, I got a 9 including my 2 enlightenment. So I get 1 answer and 1 Cred. Nice!

MC: How about those wants though, what do you want to see this time?

JAKE: I think...hunger! Let's go with that. Along with hunger as a want...I think it makes more sense to explore the question, 'Do I need more determination or resolution?' this session. Should fit each other perfectly. So I cash in my answer now, but it's going to be answered throughout the session, sweet!

MC: That's right! So you're just coming out of your meditation when you see a woman being harassed across from the temple; there's shouting. In fact, maybe that's why you come out of your meditation! All the noise interrupted you.

JAKE: On camera, we see me open an eye all crouched and then suddenly, I bolt straight there and I'm bringing with me my daisho—just in case!

MC: Cool, so as your bare feet touch the ancient cobblestones that line the garden paths here, it's probably hard to hurry, but you are pretty dang graceful. You smell some form of meat being fried and the clouds cover the sky, moving over the sun ominously as you approach them. She's dressed casually; she's got long black hair that swarms around her as she struggles with the man, who looks basically like a common thug or purse snatcher, only it looks like instead of a purse though, he's tugging at something else you can't quite see from your vantage point. What do you do?

JAKE: I draw my sword and place the blunt edge on his shoulder as I address him. I tell him to stop, or else, letting my blade imply the rest!

INSIGHT

When you gain insight, you ask your faith what the best course of action is in relation to the question you are seeking and the MC will tell you. Take +1 forward towards rolls in the pursuit of that information. This is the only way to achieve insight in *The Veil*; though protagonists may obviously seek insight from other NPCs as normal, it does not provide them with +1 forward when acting on the advice given by those NPCs.

When you get surplus, it's always something positive for you. Getting Cred and insight and answers are all super helpful things. When you get a want, though, these are negative things that don't have a specific value or set of occurrences. The MC interprets the want as they see it and works it into the fiction. Despair, violence, hunger, etc., are all things that can impact you negatively. The point with a want is to showcase your devotion while also having a price involved. It gives to you, yes, but it also requires something from you as well. Again, don't pick something you find boring or that'll annoy you in play. Even when you are in want from your faith, it should be an interesting way of exploring more aspects of your faith that come with your adherence.

RESOLUTE

When you use a melee weapon to trigger **Ultimatum** or **Neutralize**, you may roll+ enlightenment instead of your state.

MC: Hmm Ok, well number one, your tenants say you should be peaceful, so I think you're taking -1 ongoing until you correct that. But also, that's an ultimatum I think, so roll that up! So either enlightenment or an emotion with you having resolute.

JAKE: Ah, crap, that's true so -1 to the roll, I think using an emotion makes the most sense for this scene. I get a 10 though still, thankfully, since I'm Joyful because it feels to me like I'm being daring or playful in this scene.

MC: So he's definitely going to back off, at first. He scowls and turns around spreading his hands in a grin. He turns around making to leave but just then he suddenly draws a dagger and lunges for you!

EXACT

At the moment you inflict harm, you may choose to inflict any amount of harm you like—less than, or up to, the harm you'd normally inflict; you may choose to substitute it at any moment for s harm as well.

JAKE: I guess my threat carries through then since he doesn't do what I say, I said "or else," buuuut I think we both understood he'd be getting the sword, so he takes 3 harm but I substitute it for s harm to stun him instead, turning my sword over to the blunt end. And I'm probably Scared when exact triggers, because I'm afraid I'm going to hurt him. So I'll mark that.

MC: Ok, cool, so what does that look like though?

JAKE: Ah, yeah so he lunges at me and my body twists in the wind as well as my wrist, bringing the blunt end down on his knife and part of his hand.

❑ PIERCING GAZE

When you Probe someone, you may always ask, “What is your character really feeling?” for free.

MC: Yeah he’s totally stunned and then if you don’t do anything, he backs off and sort of hesitates a moment more in fear – right in front of you. He looks like he’s completely unsure of himself and what to do next, what do you do?

JAKE: I sheath my sword and offer him my hand and I apologize. Violence is never the way, and I’m going to size him up as best as I can here. I think my moods shifted, I’m Peaceful now, and I got a 7. I think I’m using piercing gaze to probe him. So, first off what is he feeling?

MC: He’s feeling Scared, mostly because now there’s two of you.

JAKE: Two of us...

SAM: Yeah man, I guess that’s my cue. I walk up and put my hand on your shoulder and smile warmly at you before shooting a warning glance at this thief.

MC: Well, sure—you can do that but you’re now watching him take off, he’s running for it now that there’s a distraction. The woman, by the way, is long gone in the opposite direction, smooth. What do you guys want to do?

GUIDANCE

When you share your vision of the future and how you plan to achieve it, roll+enlightenment. On a 10+, hold 3 over them. On a 7–9, hold 2 over them. Whenever you like, you can spend your hold, 1 for 1, to have them mark experience.

JAKE: That's fine, I'm glad she's safe, and I probably overreacted reacting with violence right away in the first place anyways. I grip your hand and move it off my shoulder and shake it. I get that sad look in my eyes and launch into a tale, and begin to tell you of a time when I will no longer see this senseless violence and have no need for my sword, at all. I, too, need to remember to not resort to violence as often as I do.

MC: Hmm, sounds like some guidance, sorta, kinda? If that's what you're trying to do, you'll need to give me more than that. You're trying to show your dreams and hopes here with these words when you're telling him about the future you want.

JAKE: Right, right. Makes sense. Hmm. Well, I think I see a future that looks a lot different than this one, that's for sure. I see a place where poor sods like that don't have to steal, probably just to survive. Where there's more of the green out there than small, little patches of it scattered around. I'm going to find the answers I need and share them with the world, 1-by-1 if I have to. Violence against one another both tore our families apart, after all. This can't be how we were meant to live, it can't be. Right? I'll also tell you of what I am seeking today as I was meditating only a few minutes ago.

MC: That's more like it, so let's see that guidance roll.

☒ SEEKER SPECIAL

When the Seeker shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you each gain +1 hold. Spend the hold to aid or interfere with one another by adding or subtracting 1 to their result after viewing the rolls result.

By their nature the Seeker could be about helping someone or hindering them on a fundamental level. For that reason, when you are intimate with someone and know them better, you gain +1 hold, and so do they. With that you gain roll to aid or interfere with one another and then modify that roll by either adding 1 in addition to the total, or subtracting 1 from it, in order to get the result you truly want, or at least tip it over one way or the other.

JAKE: Hmm, I think I'm Sad. So I'll add that spike—and I get a 6, so close! Dang.

SAM: I still have 1 hold from the previous session, I'll give you that +1 on it to push you over to a weak hit, as I'm totally buying into it!





THE WAYWARD

When the future came, it brought with it a new age of technology. The digital and the physical bleed together, blurring the line between both. Nature will not be stopped, though; it finds a way. Wherever you may be in this chromed age, it finds you—the Wayward.

The most overt injection the playbook pushes into the setting is that there are other places out there. Whether you're playing in a sprawl or not, there's exploration to be had outside of it, waiting to be discovered. With futuristic tech the boundaries we currently perceive, as well as the unknown, could be altered or solved entirely. The Wayward has a sense of the mystical or fantastical within their moves and, like some other playbooks, could be explained with classifying it as unknown, magical, or with technologies that don't exist yet. It also subverts a common trope about cyberpunk in that there is definitely some kind of natural element if the Wayward is in play and they may also can have cybernetics too, implying that technology may not be bad for us necessarily. This touches on a new kind of cyberpunk, the solarpunk.

There are a few areas on the first page of the Wayward playbook that need to be read over carefully, then filled in. These areas are:

■ The area titled "Homeland."

Inherently, the Wayward feels close to their natural surroundings. Where the traditional cyberpunk media would posset humanity to have more of an affinity to technology and shirk the natural realm—if it even still exists in the setting—the Wayward subverts that instantly when it's introduced. Right away you're going to select what areas of the earth you feel for most, creating an introduction to those areas and your birthplace. You not only choose what your homeland is, but also what qualities it possesses and, in turn, what you look for in others. You then tie these to a state, deciding how those particular things make you feel, which will become relevant when particular moves are triggered.

KIER: I want to take Liam in a strange direction. I talked with everyone and they're cool with it. I'm totally going to make Dream of the Endless—cyberpunk version. So, let's see, I refer to him as a he, but Dream is completely androgynous... so I'll say 'they' when referencing Liam. So their homeland is going to be coastal and alien. I like the idea of it being a coastal place, with a lighthouse but yet still really alien. What specifically makes it alien, I'd rather play out, but there's going to be something about it that makes it seem really different from normal stuff. I think it makes sense that this land would have the 'adaptable' and 'resourceful' qualities, since it's going to be a dreamscape. The states for each will be Powerful and Peaceful.

■ The area titled "Essence."

Whether or not you are in your "homeland" or not, you carry a piece of it with you, called its Essence. All of your people can use Essence for their own purposes. Though if what they do is similar or not to you, they still damage the homeland as you do when you choose to do moves that consume Essence. Using Essence always destroys your homeland in the same way that some of your moves call for you yourself to use your Essence. It is purposefully nebulous as to why people are using Essence, which causes the homeland to be damaged. Work with the MC to answer these questions, if your protagonist knows at all. As always do what you think would be the most interesting for the fiction, after all, perhaps your people don't know that what they are doing with Essence damages the homeland at all. Or perhaps some don't care or they believe the gain from using the Essence makes it worthwhile regardless.

How it erodes is also a conversation between you and the MC—as well as the timeline and the perhaps greater effects that might have. In order to stop the erosion and nourish your land back to health, there are numerous selections to make. These include what it needs to be nursed to health as well as how it needs this particular thing. As always, I urge you to make the most interesting choice for you as well as what will fit your fiction, depending on what's already been established. When the MC chooses to show the ramifications from using Essence, as well as the damage to the homeland in general is also at their discretion.

Whatever your Essence is, physically, should be something naturally important to you and described in detail.

KIER: Well, it is Dream of the Endless, so I need it to be that crazy looking helmet he has. It makes Liam look alien—like their homeland is gonna be. It's large and bulbous with a trunk coming out the end like a gas mask and it's made of some sort of weird material, like crystal, maybe. Also, I nourish my homeland with dreams and how I do it is by propagating them.

■ The area titled "Domain."

Now that you know you can describe your homeland, its qualities, the Essence you have of it, and what it needs to be nourished by you, you need to decide where it actually is. Traditionally, it might follow that it is simply somewhere in the world you inhabit, and that would be perfectly reasonable. I also wanted people to think about other options people may not have readily thought of as well, so, when choosing the domain, feel free to use any of the examples or make up your own.

KIER: Where is my homeland...I think it's within others? In fact, that's perfect! I have to travel into people's shared consciousness when they dream, that will be where my home is.

■ The area titled "Anchor."

Anchors are something you can use as the Wayward to move yourself from point A to point B. You tie one place in the physical reality to a point in your homeland, which could be a physical but does not have to be, and traverse it. Again, whether this makes sense that it's supernatural in your fiction or technological in nature is up to you and the flavor and tone you're going for. This section contains a move; it triggers when you tie point A to point B and then you roll to see what happens next. If all goes well (10+), it's strong and clear. On a 7–9 however, you choose an option: Where the Anchor manifests may become problematic to find within your homeland, or you pull something into your homeland with you, or you release something from your homeland. They are left intentionally nebulous in order to facilitate the MC incorporating whatever happens easily into the fiction. Since this is your homeland though, chances are it will be a conversation with more agency learning towards you as your homeland is something you are more knowledgeable about.

- MC:** Cool! This sounds really neat! You're like this crazy cool cyberpunk version for sure—that's just about entirely cybernetic judging from your playbook sheet. I like the idea of the opening scene having you trying to create an anchor or something? Maybe you've travelled to this realm somehow and now need that waypoint for your travels?
- KIER:** Totally down with that! I think it should be that I was totally summoned to earth by something, or someone?
- MC:** Sweet I've got an idea then—let's have you be in this giant shifting polyhedron of purple particles. They keep expanding and contracting and the light from it makes it so that even with your multispectral eyes, you can't see past its threshold. When you do, it seems to shift the luminosity back and forth and what not. I think you can guess it's a cage of some kind. What do you do?
- KIER:** I am Liam! You will not contain me. I bet this is the first time I'm out of my own realm and I feel my home calling to me. Instinctively, I reach out a hand and place it on the ground. It pulsates, sending ripples outward. I try to make an anchor and leave this place. I'm feeling weak, so I'm going to add my Scared modifier and add that emotion spike. I think with each pulse, the camera zooms in on Liam and we see his resolve is a mask—his eyes betray him and we see his fright! Looks like I get a 6, too...so probably right to be Scared, eh?
- MC:** Oh, man so I think it does start to work but then your prison starts to rise in the air and contract, distorting or disrupting what you're doing. There's a bright light that's nearly blinding and then suddenly, your eyes clear and you see an old man. He looks as though he's barely able to stand. He wears a three-piece suit with a red tie we would consider 'present day' attire. He grins at you and begins to speak.



WAYWARD MOVES

You get the *Nourish* move and can choose one more.

☒ NOURISH

When you attempt to nourish your homeland, roll. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1.

- You halt the erosion where it stands, for a time.
- You begin to restore what's already gone.
- You gain 2 Essence.

Nourishing your homeland can mean a lot of things based on your previous selections. There's a ton of options but whatever it is you chose, when you do it to nourish and restore your land, the move triggers. The introduction of this move in of itself tells you that your homeland is eroding. You can halt the erosion for a limited time. You can begin to restore what's already gone, or you can gain 2 Essence. Not choosing the Erosion halts or not choosing to restore it means that the things happening to your homeland continue to be bad for it and worsen, at the MC's discretion—as well as the fiction's.

**'Faith in faith' he
answered himself.
'It isn't necessary to have
something to believe in.
It's only necessary to believe
that somewhere there's
something worthy of belief.'**

Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination*

MC: So you're in the ward, as the smoking man said. There are rows and rows of people sleeping. Some young, some old. It's an all-white, sterile place and the only sound is the machines keeping these people alive. He asked you to save these people as he believes that they have a virus which doesn't allow them to dream. He's got you tethered here with that device he put on you after he let you out of the prison. In exchange for curing these people, he will release you. What do you do?

KIER: Right, I'll drift over to one of them and propagate some dreams. I think how I manufacture dreams, is probably me telling a story. It just comes from my lips; I don't know the words or remember them—it's just something my people do. We look at a person and we tell them their story, and it almost always certainly makes them dream. I think I'm Peaceful, there's a reassurance in tradition that calms people and I think what I'm doing resembles that. With Peaceful, I got an 8. So it works at least. That's good. I like to think that maybe as my lips move with the story of this person, eventually their lips start moving, mouthing the same words as I do. And I think as they mouth the words of their dream, an imperceptible dust comes out of their mouth and it flows into my helmet, like I'm drinking it or something – which gives me 2 Essence. I now have 4 Essence since I began with 2.

MC: Really. I like that image a lot, very cool. So that totally happens and you get your Essence, everything seems to be going really well. But this time you hear what they say in the last sentence of this ritual. You think you hear them whisper "close the door" and then they smile faintly and drift off into a slumber. It seems to have worked, so what do you do now? One down, a LOT to go.

📖 BEING A GREEN MOTHER

When you channel your Essence into the natural world through touch—be it plants, animals or anything that is a product of the earth—roll+ Essence spent. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1.

- Your senses extend through it as though you were a part of it.
- You may treat it as though it were a named NPC for the purposes of interactions.
- Choose one of the states your homeland elicits and spike out one of them within the target.

Depending on where your homeland is, it could be an extension of the main area of your setting now, natural or not. Whatever you touch—so long it is of the natural world—can be the target of this move. By doing so, you can extend your senses, that is to say reasonably hear, touch, taste, and see what your target would be able to. You may also treat it as an NPC, granting you the ability to use moves on something you ordinarily wouldn't have been able to. Lastly, you can spike out the emotion from one of your selections when you chose what emotion your homeland elicits within you. With all selections make sure you translate your selections into the fiction in a way that makes sense and is evocative for the other players at the table.

KIER: Hmm, I want to figure out more information as to what happened here I think. You described earlier that we were in an old estate surrounded by acres of land, right? I want to go out there and find a good vantage point, maybe find a tree overlooking everything. And my intent is to ask the tree what it saw, if anything!

MC: Neat idea, let's roll being a green mother up then. How is Liam feeling when they're doing this?

KIER: I think Scared to be honest. They've been out of touch from his homeland and people and everything and everybody and they know this is a thing they can do—but who knows anymore? So I'll mark that emotion spike and I'll just barely squeak in a 7 since I only consumed 1 Essence. I'll choose to treat it as a named NPC and ask it if it knows anything about these mysterious events.

IMBUE

Whenever you consume Essence to interact with and fundamentally alter a piece of technology, describe how you do it and roll. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1. On a miss, choose one and the MC will tell you what happens next.

- You change how it's powered.
- You change its size or dimensions.
- You change its purpose or how it works.

Your Essence is generally going to be considered at odds with the world because it's cyberpunk and you, though possessing cybernetics, would be considered to be tapped into a more natural power. Of course, the fiction and how you make your protagonist may change these things—but in assuming that, it might help you color your fiction when you choose to use your Essence to change technology in a fundamental way. When you consume Essence, unless otherwise specified (Essence spent) it is just 1 Essence.

MC: You hear a voice within your mind, it sounds as though it's really, really faint—as though it were far away and a great amount of effort is taken in order for it to be heard. You keep hearing a word that sounds like 'tower' over and over and as it fades, you think you hear something about closing a door? What do you do?

KIER: Wow, that's disconcerting...well I head for the tower. Which I assume is ominous?

MC: Oh, is it ever! The stairs are old and creaky and dust plumes out of them as you open the door and climb your way up the oldest tower, ever. It's the only part that appears in disrepair. A chill wind blows at you, growing stronger as you make your way up and the portholes channel the cold around and through you. When you reach the top, there's an odd machine, if you can call it that. It looks more like a huge amount of gears and pistons and rods and things shoved haphazardly together to make some kind of an abominable, giant contraption. It's not working and looks as though it hasn't in some time. I'm picturing it as a sort of steam punk gear-like giant machine where the bell would be, suspended.

KIER: Dang, that's pretty cool. And it's off you say...? I want to imbue it with my power and attempt to get it working again. I think I've seen machines before, in dreams of course. It'd be cool if I had enough power to, like, open a small portal or something, just enough for a part of this machine to fit into. The goal being to have it powered by the dream world! On camera, I think we see excitement clear on Liam's face, so I'll mark Joyful, and consume an Essence. A 7, so I get once choice...I'll choose to change how it's powered, of course.

MC: So there's like this strange black hole like thing barely encompassing a part of the machine. I feel like it'd be cool if maybe some electrical looking cables of dream energy or something like, poured into it, jump-starting it similar to something out of Frankenstein. The gears beginning to turn all slow as the dream energy pouring into it faster and faster. As it does, you hear wails coming from the ward where all those people were in those beds. What do you want to do?

UPLIFT

When you act, or say something that defines your character to be morally positive—directly resulting in an action or circumstance that would have been considered morally reprehensible to not occur—choose one of the following to apply to each of you for each amount of Essence consumed.

- Clear or spike out any of the states associated with your homeland.
- Mark XP.
- Take advantage forward.

The Wayward was initially built upon the solarpunk movement commonly seen within certain cyberpunk media only recently. Although still small, it's becoming more widely known. Within that movement, the core idea is that maybe the future isn't so dark and that maybe we use technology for good, healing instead of destroying our surroundings. You can play the Wayward now in many different ways, but this move is at the core of that initial idea. Focusing on the good instead of the bad in others has some very real mechanical benefits for you as well as your target, assuming of course, that they are a PC.

KIER: I'll make my way as fast as I can to there, hopefully I didn't cause much harm with my dabbling...

MC: When you enter you see that everyone is still sleeping save for that one lone soul who had told you to close the door. She's there, standing over another bed, hovering over the form of another wailing patient in bed. When she was in her bed you probably didn't think of her as anybody, she was a patient in a bed. Out of it though, you see she's a young woman with long, black hair with a slim build. The patient she's standing over looks identical to her and she's just hovering there above her, staring at her. As your eyes take in that scene, they trace their way down her arm to a piece of glass biting into her hand. As you look, she raises it, bringing the shard of glass closer toward the patient—who appears to still be sleeping. Laying there in her bed, she looks exactly the same—aside from one change—she appears to be sound asleep but starts wailing. Then, all of the patients begin to wail in unison. What do you do?

KIER: I cautiously approach the patient, who we totally forgot to describe. I think it'd be neat if it were like an identical twin of hers. And I'll approach slowly and non-threateningly, attempting to get her attention. When I do, I'll tell her that I can help them both, "She's sick, you may be sick too—and I can and will help you. Doing something rash will not save her, no matter if she is in pain or not, this is not the way—please," and Liam motions for her to back away from the bed.

MC: She stands there, and for a second the glass shard edges closer. Then, still shaking, she removes and drops the glass shard to the floor, where it shatters. She just keeps saying that she just wanted to help her. When the glass stops clattering on the ground though, the patients stop wailing and they all sit up at the same time, eyes opening in unison. I think you triggered your Uplift move. She would have killed her, if not for the intervention.

KIER: Oh, nice! I'll get rid of one Essence on my sheet because I want to take advantage forward. Better safe than sorry... and I'll mark Peaceful, for feeling nurturing. I think it makes the most sense.

VIADUCT

When you use your homeland as a medium to traverse distances in time-space in the real world, roll. If you have an anchor to help guide the way, roll advantage. On a 10+, you find your way and come out where you wish to. On a 7–9, you are met with a challenge or danger along the way and may not come out where you meant to.

MC: Definitely. So all of those people sitting up turn to you. There's row upon rows of them and their eyes begin to glow red. It's not natural, it could be mechanical. They have no expression, so you're not sure what they're feeling or what their intent could be—but the woman who had the glass shard is visibly frightened. She gets up and backs away from them, clutching becomes pulling as she urges you to withdraw with her. What do you?

KIER: Yeah...I have a bad feeling about this between them her and the old man...I'm going to grab her and just hope that I can go home now that the machine is on. I want to try and pop back into my homeland with her using viaduct. I picture it like we're disappearing, we just sort of collapse into empty air—depending on my roll I guess, anyways! I'm feeling desperate and afraid so I'm going to mark a spike in my Scared, netting me a 7!

TRANSMISSION

When you bring someone new into your homeland and they choose to remain within it, you gain 1 Essence.

MC: Alrighty, so I think it happens as it normally would, you're in the dreamscape, or whatever you want to call it. As you survey your homeland though, the first person you see is the old man, he's smiling at you. Also, I think you gained 1 more Essence for your transmission move, the woman you saved is there and does not plan on leaving anytime soon. She's visibly relieved to be away from the other situation, despite the old man and being in a strange place, she does not feel threatened anymore.

☰ GLEAN

Whenever you speak frankly with another in order to obtain information about your homeland while within the confines of it, roll. On 10+, ask 2. On a 7–9, ask 1.

- How has this place changed recently?
- For what purpose are you here and why do you remain?
- What do you think the will of the land is?

KIER: Well...I'm glad she feels safe but I sure don't! This old man is pretty dang creepy! But, he IS in my homeland now, is there a chance I could get more information from him now...?

MC: Ah, as in trying to glean information from him, I think it meets the criteria depending on what you choose to say—since it's about your homeland.

KIER: "I don't know you old man, what are you doing in my home and what is your intent!?" And I'm straight up Mad now, giving me a 9. I think my voice quivers with rage as I ask him. I think the obvious choice is what is his purpose and why does he remain, right?

☰ WAYWARD SPECIAL

When the Wayward shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you each gain 1 hold. Spend your hold 1 for 1 to treat them as an Anchor. They may spend their hold to give you advantage or disadvantage on a roll of their choice by describing why the thought of them does so.

MC: Well, hold on—at character creation you activated your special right after you used link to make a NPC, do you remember?

KIER: Well, sure... but that moment was with my son though. OH, are you saying...?

MC: That's right—this is your son and he's going to interfere with the roll giving you disadvantage, so roll one more for me and we will take the two lowest of your roll to see what the result is now.

BELIEFS

Every protagonist has a set of beliefs that drive their actions. A major part of the game is testing those beliefs and seeing if they stay true to them when they are challenged. As the protagonists change within the game, so too will their beliefs. When you make your beliefs, you're telling the MC that you want to explore that part of the protagonist you created. If a belief needs to change to better represent your protagonist, there is never any penalty. You can make your beliefs whatever you want, but the MC should always know what they are so they can incorporate them into the fiction. You may change your belief at the beginning of a session, the end, or whenever it feels resolved or needs to be modified.

At the end of the session, you'll go around the table and talk about if a belief was tested or challenged; if so, you mark 1 XP. When a belief gets you into trouble, you'll mark 2 XP. Finally, when a belief is resolved, you'll mark 3 XP.

So, what does it mean to have a belief challenged? When an MC is made aware of your beliefs, you're giving them what's called a fictional flag, meaning you are saying that you specifically want these beliefs brought up in the fiction. They are not out to get you, they're taking these beliefs you've made and helping you explore and push character growth with you using what you've told them. For instance, if you have a belief like: "I will never kill someone, no matter what they've done." You're essentially telling the MC, "Hey, put me in a situation like this and let's find out if I actually believe this or not". When it comes up during play, the MC is intending to create a set of circumstances that would make you pause and think about your belief and how your protagonist is going to react regarding it. The MC is challenging that belief by doing so and we find out if it's still something that holds true for you. Whether or not it is or isn't, the act of it still generates XP for you by being put into those circumstances.

When a belief feels resolved, it may not mean that you no longer believe it. Your protagonist should be growing every session by exploring different facets of themselves and with that exploration it's natural that they'll change. When it's resolved, it could also just mean you no longer feel it interesting to put yourself in scenarios where it's tested any longer. The MC can still touch on that belief during play after it's resolved, but it won't benefit you in a mechanical sense because you've already considered it to be explored. If you feel that way, or it's been challenged and needs to be changed, this means it's resolved. When this happens, you mark XP and change the belief. You only gain this XP as long as it has been tested.

Situations where a belief gets you into trouble can be subjective, but when you stick to a belief and it puts you in a bad spot, you are also rewarded with XP. It also generates drama and intriguing scenes like nobody's business, which can only benefit the overall story happening. If your beliefs only benefited you, it wouldn't be a mutual arrangement between the MC and yourself to tell the most interesting story. By using these beliefs to deliberately propel the story into a place that isn't only helpful to your protagonist, you help one another explore your beliefs as well as the MC, who is juggling all of your beliefs within the fiction.

Coming up with a good set of beliefs is more of an art than a science, but here is a good framework to get you started. Remember, these beliefs can, and should, change as you get to know your protagonist, and they grow as a result of the narrative.

When you create your three beliefs, they should reflect what you want to explore about your protagonist right now. Think about what you want to get out of this current session carefully before writing some down. Your beliefs should be in the present, grounding the character and exploring what's currently happening or been established. If they aren't, it's better to keep it in mind for when that situation will come up later. The story is about the protagonists, so when you have beliefs and they are being tested—at least in part—the story becomes about that. The MC will be looking for opportunities to integrate it and you as the player should have the goal of driving a scene towards the exploration of a belief as well. In part to tell them what belief you want to engage with immediately, as well as to help the MC to push on your beliefs. Since they are tracking a lot of things and engaging with a lot of people at once, any help you can give them to guide them into engaging with what you want specifically will probably be appreciated.

To help focus your beliefs, some helpful guidelines are to make one about a philosophical standpoint you think will come up during play in regards to your character. Something like, "*The Veil* is neither good nor bad but only a tool." This is really easy to have come into play as you play to find out if it's true or not from your character's perspective. People will use *The Veil* in many ways and how it is defined will change with every setting.

Another helpful thing to do is base it on another protagonist in the fiction that you interact with a lot. "Kiva, the Onomastic is too mysterious and all mysteries are there waiting to be unraveled." Now you have a clear goal that will almost certainly be tested. Not only the part about mysteries being unraveled, but also the first part in relation to that statement regarding the other PC because you interact with them all the time, there is a good chance the belief will be encountered in the fiction.

A surefire way of having a belief come up in a session is to incorporate it into a specific current objective you want to accomplish that session. If we touch on the same example with Kiva, we could make a belief that is the first step on the road to that belief. Something like, “I will earn Kiva’s trust in order to gain entry to their sanctuary,” might be appropriate. You are beginning to unravel that mystery and in so doing, you may succeed, or find out maybe not all mysteries truly are there to be unraveled. Maybe there’s an alternate reason for Kiva to be mysterious about themselves and the sanctuary. When we see these in play, a few things can be engaged with about the belief, and the chances of them being touched on are increased, along with the amount of XP you could earn!

When you get XP, you can spend it on advancements found on page 272

INTRODUCTIONS

When you reach this phase, it’s time to introduce your protagonist to everyone else at the table; you’ll want to wait for everyone else to be at this same stage. When everyone is ready, introduce your protagonist—what their name, look, and outlook is. Sometimes people forget outlook, but it’s really what is intrinsic and arguably the most important about your protagonist. This is the real sense of your character. How they view life, their demeanor, and the way in which they intend to be pursuing their goals and beliefs.

Next, make the MC aware of how you were able to get your cybernetics installed and what their negative tags are. Finally, talk amongst each other about your jam—what you do, why you’re good at it, and how it might tie into the other protagonists in your game. Remember that your jam establishes your Cred intake and therefore probably your lifestyle within your setting; the fact that it does this, however, does not mean that it needs to be a focus in your story, though.

**They used to say that a child
conceived in love has a greater
chance of happiness.
They don’t say that anymore.**

Gattaca

WORLD BUILDING

At this point, turn to the MC and do your first session stuff. There is a setting playbook included that can be used as an optional world building tool. There are questions designed to populate your fiction with things maybe you hadn't thought of before. You don't need to answer all of them right off the bat either—sometimes the best thing to do is just start playing and fill in these questions as you go. Make sure you and everyone else uses the link move to establish at least one NPC you have in your life and your relationship to them. Marking down the appropriate Giri on your sheet or the provided relationship map on the setting playbook, if you so choose to use it.

It can really add another dimension of play if you all bring with you cultural or societal aspects you'd like to explore in the fiction, as well as technological ones. What are some interesting cultural things that differ from today or are similar that you'd like to breach, when compared to the culture you know? How will technologies of today change society and the aspects of everyday life? As you play you can fill these out, or, maybe you're bringing some in that you thought of previously from touchstones in the genre. Perhaps you've thought of some cultural examples when creating your protagonist as well. The fiction will become more engaging the more you contribute to it.

Your first session of play usually is just a free play experience with little to nothing pre-planned; the intention is to make use of springboarding off what you've just talked about wanting to see in the game. Then, the MC is going to take what you started within that session and mold it into something that incorporates all the things you liked about that session and, using their tools, a campaign for everyone to play in, cutting out all the stuff you didn't like about the first session experience. If some things felt off about your character or you didn't like specific things, change them by all means. The first session is precisely for finding out what you like, what you don't like, and tweaking everything to become the story you want to participate in.

The most important thing to remember about the story is to be an active member of the narrative—to the point that makes you comfortable only. The more active you are in your scenes, the more you will most likely be able to get out of them. Everyone at the table is responsible for making everyone else feel included, spotlighted, and safe while playing at the table—not just the MC. Don't be afraid to invite other players to be participants in your own scenes, depending on what type of scenes you specifically want to have, and always skip the minutia when it gets boring!

ADVANCEMENT

Protagonists should have three beliefs at all times. You may fill in or change a belief as needed. At the end of the session, talk amongst yourselves to see if your beliefs met the criteria detailed on your character sheet in the belief section to see if you should mark XP. When a belief is challenged mark 1 XP; when the MC and you both agree to resolve a belief, mark 3 XP. If a belief gets you into trouble, mark 2 XP. When you would fill in the fifth XP bubble, instead choose an improvement option from your list and then erase your accumulated XP.

Aside from beliefs, you also gain 1 XP when your protagonist triggers a move to do something that benefits them and they fail. So, whenever you roll a miss, and you were doing something that would help you, you get 1 XP on the spot. At the end of the session you'll also get your XP from your beliefs but when you fail you get it right away, with your protagonist having learned something from their mistake.

**Be authentic to your dreams.
Be authentic to your own idea
about yourself. Grind away at your
own minds and bodies until you
become your own invention.
Be Mad Scientists.**

Warren Ellis, Doktor Sleepless, Volume 1: Engines of Desire

PICKING AN ADVANCEMENT

On every character sheet there is a list of improvements available for them to take. Most are self-explanatory like +1 Mad, +1 Sad, +1 Scared etc. Increase your state by +1 and when you roll, you'll be all the better for it. What that increase looks like in the fiction could be touched on as an interesting bit of characterization for your protagonist, too. There are options for you to pick new moves on the character sheet playbooks as well as options to take moves from another playbook. When this happens, it does not mean you get their options and extras that playbooks ordinarily begin play with; you only get that specific move from it, and work with the MC to provide within the fiction, if applicable, why and what that looks like. If you choose to erase a Giri, it should still be explained what happened, so the story makes sense when it's selected and everyone is on the same page.

When you shift from one playbook to another, you are the same protagonist but modified. You get the starting moves from that playbook and can work with the MC as to what would be appropriate to migrate with you, if anything, to that new playbook. It's possible that old moves would migrate with you if it makes sense in the fiction, but sometimes it really doesn't make sense that it would. The purpose of changing playbooks is not to increase the mechanical benefits you get from the system, but to get the most out of that character for story purposes. Or, it could be to explore another aspect of your character, too. It may not even make sense for you to carry over your state modifiers as they are listed now on the current playbook, with such a fundamental change happening—maybe they aren't the same emotionally either.

Some playbooks will naturally lead from one to another or digress into one another. As you play certain playbooks and look at others, you may see what your natural progression will be for that particular protagonist you've made and what might be the next step in their story.

It's important to note that not every playbook has the same advancement selections so make sure you take a look at the specific advancement sections on each playbook to familiarize yourself with how that playbook specifically handles their improvement.

ADVANCING BASIC MOVES

When you choose to advance a move, there's a new option when you hit a 12+ for it. Otherwise it remains the same in that, when you get a weak or strong hit, it does the same thing. There is just an even better outcome should you roll that well.

**I've seen things you people
wouldn't believe. Attack ships
on fire off the shoulder of Orion.
I watched C-beams glitter in
the dark near the Tannhauser gate.
All those moments will be lost
in time, like tears in rain.**

Blade Runner

☒ ULTIMATUM

On a 12+, your enemy has only two choices. Surrender completely or be incapacitated by you.

☒ NEUTRALIZE

On a 12+, you generate 4 hold and take no harm in the doing.

☒ RISK

On a 12+, the possibility of harm is out of the question. You do what you set out to do but instead it becomes an impossible moment, an impossible feat, a few seconds of grace, or the situation becomes immediately advantageous.

☒ ANALYZE

On a 12+, you may ask 3 questions, which now include the following:

- How secure is this place?
- What, if anything, do I notice despite an effort to conceal it?
- What here is most valuable to ____?

☒ PROBE

On a 12+, hold 3 and you may choose from any of these questions as well:

- How could I make you feel ____?
- What, if anything, do you regret?
- What is the connection between ____ and ____?

☒ LIFT THE VEIL

On a 12+, you reach beyond *The Veil* and in so doing, see the inner workings of it and may ask 3 questions of the MC about it from the Probe and Analyze moves.

☒ DIVERT

On a 12+, all 4 happen and you take +1 forward.

☒ SWAY

On a 12+, describe how circumstances change so that you may choose one option to apply to them, instead of you.

THE TOOLS AT HAND

What you decide to focus on in your games is up to you. If you want it to be about a series of heists in a futuristic setting, great! If you want it to not have much action at all and purely focus on characterization, also great! Form your beliefs around the things you want to engage with in the fiction and you'll be giving the MC fictional flags as to what should be put in your story. What you like, what you want to see and what you don't want to see can all revolve around your beliefs and an open discussion at the table. Beliefs coupled with putting in some cultural aspects and technological aspects can help organically shape your story, as well as allow for a contribution allowing for players who stay quieter than others to express what they'd like and want, too.

Think of *The Veil* as a set of tools on top of the framework designed to allow you to play whatever kind of cyberpunk you want to play. The frame is not interchangeable and is the backbone of the whole system so, change the framework and all bets are off. That being said, the rest of the tools are at your disposal to create a setting specific to you. How much you touch on each mechanism integrated onto the framework will speak to what you the player want to focus on and find interesting or fun.

States are there to color your fiction and clarify the scene between you and other players when you trigger moves. The emotion wheel is a tool you may find useful, or not, as touched upon in that chapter. Just how deeply you decide to touch on your protagonist's emotions will radically change the game you're playing. When you mention what you're feeling only during actions to get everyone on the same page, we're still getting some great clarity and understand your character a little better. If you want to go more in-depth, springboarding off those emotions you know they feel and drill down into other emotions on the feeling wheel tool provided, you change your game into a more interpersonal experience. Alternatively, you may feel the wheel is not helpful and choose to not use that tool at all.

If you create a setting where Cred is relied upon heavily because your cybernetics, armor, and weapons break, or require maintenance, you'll be using Cred a lot more than a setting where maybe you're primarily only in a digital environment or you're in the ruins of a civilization where there's not as much use for a monetary system.

Some players like to underline social dynamics rather than have it focus heavily on monetary exchanges, which usually leads to lots of interactions that typically aren't interpersonal. The social mechanics of *Giri* is a mechanized way of showing interpersonal relationships with one another and quantify them on paper, how another person feels indebted to someone else and in a sense, how honorable they are. It's great at

creating interpersonal play between NPCs as well as the other players you play with. If you and the people you play with don't rely on it as heavily as people who really dig those elements, that's completely ok.

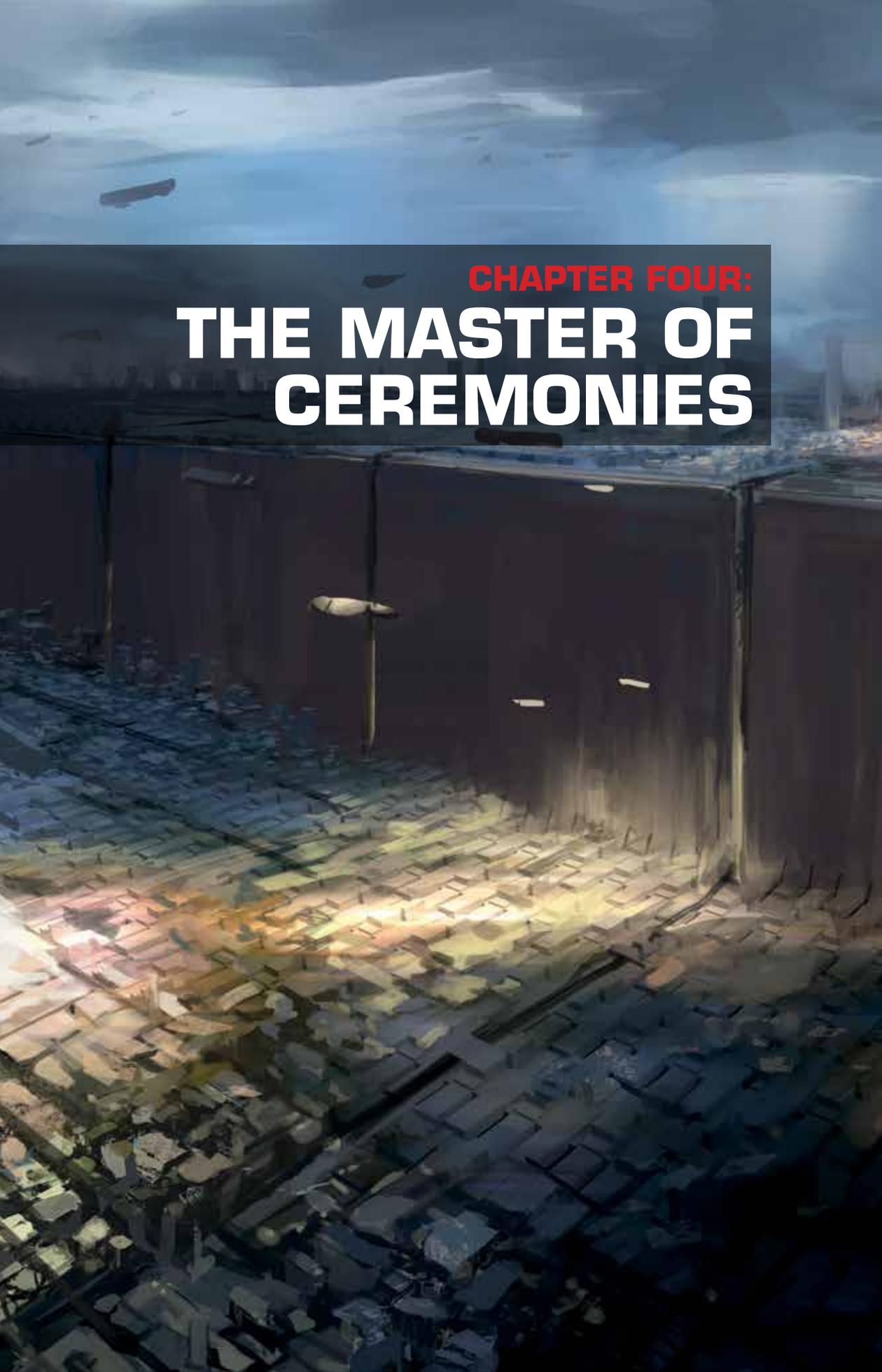
In the same vein, cybernetics can be brought up as often as you like, you have the fictional positioning when you have cybernetics, along with the negative tags that could come into play. Both should be contributing to the story. The fact that cybernetics are in the setting means, like *Giri and Cred*, you can play them up and use them very lightly, or as deeply as you like—creating social and cultural aspects to explore on your setting playbook, or, maybe just having them there is enough to get the tone of your vision of the future into your own setting.

Technologies within *The Veil* should fit the setting; the tag system is nebulous and accommodating to the inventive and imaginative. Is technology a good thing or a bad thing in the future? What will it do—could it do? Don't be afraid to break from the example tags and really get inventive with creating your own tech, unique to the setting and flavor of the story and beliefs you want to explore.

All of these are things you can touch on as much as you want to create the ideal play experience with your fellow players. Don't be afraid to have conversations with the MC and others about what things you like and what things you don't like—using the things you like the most and using the others only lightly to bring about the tone and feel that you want the most for your own version of cyberpunk.

**I'll never understand what
possessed my mother to put
her faith in God's hands,
rather than her local geneticist.**

Gattaca



CHAPTER FOUR:
THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES



THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES has a lot on their shoulders in *The Veil*. The players are going to answer your questions and tell you what they're like, what they want and how they advance. They'll tell you how they're going to go about their own agenda. You are going to be telling them everything else, or at least, asking questions about everything else of them.

There's a give and take with the players and the MC and it makes for some exciting times. The nice thing about the mechanics in this system is that you have some neat ideas in your head about what would be cool. But what it comes down to is player intent and the dice, right? So really, it's pretty low prep! Regardless of what plans you have or what would be interesting to have happen, everybody is playing to find out what happens next. Sometimes you'll have to cross out your favorite NPC's name. Or alternatively, follow the NPC's Motivation regardless of them hurting the other players. It's more important that the people in the fiction are real and are going to do what their own agenda is rather than making nice with the other players.

In the end, they'll love the conflict just as much as hopefully you will, sometimes not coming out on top is the most interesting thing that could have happened. As humans we define ourselves by the things in our lives we have surmounted. If this never happens in the fiction, it's not going to feel like a believable and engaging story.

At this point, you should have read the previous chapters and made sure you've understood them because you are the one people will be looking to when there's a lull in the story. Don't worry, it sounds hard but when you print out your reference sheets and look at them in any given situation, you'll see exactly what should happen next, I promise.

The next part will break down everything you need to breathe life into the setting as well as make believable NPCs and threats. Likely, if you've never MC'd a game before, this will be overwhelming at first, but you will learn as you go and your growth will show within the fiction. It's a great feeling as well as a rewarding one, so I encourage you to stick with it!

AGENDA

Above all else, behind every principle and move you do, you need to make these agenda the root of it all.

- Make the world feel real
- Make it high tech and make it personal
- Embed the final question into everyone and everything
- Make the protagonist's lives interesting and interconnected
- Play to find out what happens

It's the job of the MC to do all of these things above all else. No one wants to take part in a boring conversation. Luckily, it's a lot easier than it looks. The easiest way to make the world seem real is to describe it and ask questions as often as possible. Whether you're in a mega structure or the future is irradiated and humans are nomads, there are people.

Though you may have your own ideas of where this may lead if they continue their actions, remember that there is no preconceived plot that must happen, and you're not there to hold their hand either. There is a Main Antagonist, the final question (page 361), and NPC's to drive the story. For NPC's, sometimes their interests may align with the protagonists, but they are governed solely by their Motivation (page 315).

The protagonists might feel like they want the easy out or the predefined plot but they don't. If you experiment with a plot-based system, at best it will not make sense when the dice dictate that there will be a diversion in your set course. At worst, you'll wreck the game for everybody.

People want to experience conflict and explore their characters. If nothing bad ever happens or only bad things happen to them, it's a surefire way of them doing two things: becoming exasperated and then unsure of what this game is actually about since all of the mechanics facilitate a different style of play. The system will kick their ass enough, all you need to do is make it feel real, keep it interesting, and make sure it's everybody's world by asking questions and making those answers a part of the world.

Commit to the moment that you're in within the fiction and always follow the Motivation of the NPC or threat (page 315), regardless of the fallout for everybody. The fiction will make logical sense should you do these things, so trust it and where it's taking you. It's important to care about what happens next but distance yourself enough that when you need to make a move, you're considering all of your options and choosing the best one. When they roll the dice, be a fan of them but also bring it when they get a miss. All of these cogs working together is the grace of the system at play.

ALWAYS SAY...

The Veil demands that the MC adhere to the agenda, but also the principles. When there's a lot going on and multiple agendas are at a head or you get too attached to a threat or NPC, always say:

- ...what the principles demand.
- ...what the rules demand.
- ...what your prep work demands.
- ...what honesty demands.

The agenda and the rules are the bones of the game. If you break them, the fiction and the game as a whole will not function properly any longer. If a protagonist does something that should cause them harm, inflict it. If a roll you were rooting for a player to get a hit on comes up a miss, accept it and trust the story is going someplace interesting. Maybe the dice come up a hit when a protagonist is up against an NPC that you put your heart into, maybe even one that was trying to help them and they never got a chance to find out. Either way the rules must never change. Discipline must always come first in *The Veil*, or the fiction will ultimately fall apart on you.

The Veil balances everything by having you actively engage with your principles and agenda before making a move. If an NPC would seek revenge, they do so. If they can extort a protagonist towards their own goals, they do so. Wash your hands of it; it is entirely in the hands of the people of this world. Just as the protagonists have a huge impact on the game, so do the NPCs. The players may not see it, but your agenda and principles are engraved on every person out there. They're in every piece of tech, every neon sign, and every mag pistol being aimed. And that is where the balance is, all of the unforeseen haphazard play comes together in a cohesive story that surprises everyone this way. And while this happens, we get to explore something more you're embedding there.

That being said, the players only know what you tell them during the conversation. Assume they won't extrapolate something or take a hint you drop. They won't know you're being obtuse in order to get them to explore a situation or person. They only know what you tell them, so you must be honest. Don't hide things from them; especially if it's something they would have described their character as knowing or paying attention to before. If the Architect is an ex-cop who's now a private investigator, and he comes upon a crime scene or a suspect or a shooting, the prompts which he should receive from you should reflect that. In contrast, if they know nothing about situations of that nature, don't be afraid to say that.

They can apply moves to it but the amount of information they are going to get is going to be reflected in the information that's true about them within the fiction, regardless.

If an NPC is in love with a protagonist or hates them, make that obvious. Otherwise, they may not be aware of it and act accordingly within the fiction to make the fiction come first and make sense. Telegraph your NPCs Motivations by way of the fiction, not explicitly direct but by using some of your moves, described later.

**I don't know why he saved my life.
Maybe in those last moments
he loved life more than he ever
had before. Not just his life—
anybody's life; my life.
All he'd wanted were the same
answers the rest of us want.
Where did I come from?
Where am I going?
How long have I got?
All I could do was sit there
and watch him die.**

Blade Runner

THE PRINCIPLES

The agenda most resembles your goals. What you're striving for and trying to accomplish, the principles, is the heart of the game and its soul as the agenda are the bones. All of which are essential to a body of fiction to function and behave properly.

While principles can be interpreted as rules as well, they are more likely to be taken as best practices to produce the best possible version of the fiction you can. When you do these things, you'll find the system working with you to compliment what's happening. If you don't, the game is probably going to feel strange or the good parts of it will come in fits and starts instead of an even flow throughout. The starts will be when you are taking into consideration your principles and agenda, and fits will be when you're not doing those things with the result being a break in the fiction and tone.

- Color as much of the world as you can.
- Always be working toward the exploration of the final question.
- Push their beliefs.
- Hit them in the feels.
- Address the protagonists not the players.
- Interweave the protagonist's stories, even across distance and boundaries.
- Put them at the center of everything.
- The fiction makes your moves, not you.
- Name everyone and give them a Motivation.
- Treat them as they were meant to be treated.
- Ask questions ALL the time and use the answers.
- Be a fan of the protagonists.
- Give them a chance to think.
- Spotlight everybody.
- Make things costly and destructible.

COLOR AS MUCH OF THE WORLD AS YOU CAN

All of it. Especially the little bits you picture in your head like what it smells like around the corner or motion of a bobble-head swinging from side to side on someone's futuristic flying car. Whenever you're framing a scene, the protagonists should feel like they're there. They taste the smog filtering in from the vents, sniffing the cigarettes another passenger is smoking and feeling the pulsating engine of the car they're in. The more they know, the more they'll feel as though they are there, becoming more apt to participate.

Look for opportunities to showcase the ideas you guys had at the first session, springboarding off of them and incorporating new stuff. The MC should be checking out all of the cyberpunk media they can think of to get new ideas. Immerse yourself in it. Then, describe normal scenes and put that cyberpunk twist on it. There are office buildings, sure. But maybe they're literally so tall they pierce the clouds. There's usually a very predominant subclass that is low-tech or using crappy equipment and junk. There are mega corps and there's tech incorporated in every area that's urban sometimes. Search out cyberpunk content on Deviantart and Pinterest and watch movies and TV shows and read books and comics. *Ghost in the Shell*, *Psycho-Pass*, *Sneakers*, *The Matrix*, *Altered Carbon*, *Blade Runner*, and *Neuromancer*—all of it. Take it all in. Decide what you like about it and what you want to incorporate and when you ask the players what they're doing and what their version of cyberpunk looks through their character's eyes, you'll naturally have integrated everyone's touchstones and interests in the genre. This helps everyone buy into the fiction and helps them feel like it's their own story being created, which is exciting and what we are going for.

ALWAYS BE WORKING TOWARD THE EXPLORATION OF THE FINAL QUESTION

When you do your first session with the players, you'll all choose a question you want to explore or you will, based on the first session and what tone you want the game to have. Some people might want to be involved in what is being explored while others may want to just play and learn as they go along. When you, the MC, contribute to the fiction, always ask yourself if this is exploring the final question or not (Explanation of the final question found on page 361 and example final questions can be found on page 374). Because of the nature of the collaborative-based narrative game, sometimes this won't be possible. When you introduce new NPCs, have current ones interact with them or layout the next interesting scene, bear in mind what you're trying to tell them and if it's getting them to a place where they will walk away from the table asking themselves the same questions they, or you, wished to explore within *The Veil*. When you have this at the forefront of your mind along with the rest of your principles, it will eventually become second nature and a habit. When you work towards the exploration of the final question, I find the campaign you run will feel more natural, as there is an overarching mystery people want to find out collectively that allows the fiction to perpetuate itself into a long term game more easily than if there is only the direct input of the player's fiction making things interesting.

PUSH THEIR BELIEFS

Whatever three beliefs they choose to have, make sure you're constantly putting them in situations where they're asking themselves if they still believe them. A good way of showing how a protagonist evolves is by their

beliefs. If they're being changed every couple of sessions, that's probably a good thing. They're refining the character and you're spotlighting them. When their protagonist is evolving, they'll want to stick with them more. In this way, you're exploring the final question as well as their beliefs and then the game will feel firmly rooted in their lives. Whatever they base their beliefs on, therefore, means that's what the story in the fiction is truly about. If they're geared towards interpersonal play, conflicts around violence, gender, and oppression—whatever the case may be—their beliefs should be incorporated into the overall game. By paying attention to their beliefs in the first session, it should make it relatively easy to come up with the overall final question being explored. There's a lot of beliefs when there are a few players, when this happens my advice is to hone in on one in particular belief you want to touch on. The players should be actively working towards testing their own beliefs, too. It's not just all on you, they need to be doing it as much as they can. Reminding them to be engaging with their beliefs at the start of each session is always a good practice.

HIT THEM IN THE FEELS

We've talked a lot about making things interesting. One of the most interesting things you could do is make it feel real. Reacting to danger is all well and good but imagine if *Buffy the Vampire slayer* was a show where all she ever did was fight and we never found out anything personal about her at all? Chances are we wouldn't care much about her long after that, despite the sweet action. Treat them like anyone else. The NPCs in their lives aren't just interesting because they can be placed in danger and have the protagonists react. They're interesting because they're in their lives and can have conversations with them no one else can. Find out what makes them tick as a person that way and make their world feel more real, instantly. There's more in the world than just danger. And the impact of the world being a hard place to make your way in, is that they need to find comfort, love, and solace in each other. Lots of times it will be between protagonists, but NPCs can offer the same. While harm is a consequence, so too can be specific emotions. How does the world respond to all of the emotion spikes in a certain emotion that they're putting out there? If a player is taking the time to specifically mention emotions when spotlighted, and elaborated on them a lot—try to engage with what they're putting out there as much as possible. Chances are that what interests them are conflicts from those decisions more so than other things being explored.

ADDRESS THE PROTAGONISTS, NOT THE PLAYERS

Although it seems like a small thing, when you're playing the game you'll find anything that breaks the connection with the fiction can cause some lag in what's going on. Bob doesn't know what the hell is going on with his cybernetic implant when it's not working. He isn't halo jumping into some ruins from a ship with huge steampunk-like engines, is he? His protagonist is, so talk to them! It will help them stay in character and help the fiction stay predominant. "So, Brax, you've just dove off the carrier, what does it look like up there?"

Give them details about a scene as though you were there and pointing things out. Things that their character sees only and not what they're experiencing on a Meta level. Yeah, Bob knows there's shit down there that he isn't going to like. But right now Brax only sees all the gigantic pillars jetting up into the sky as his tiny form is careening down into its depths. If he has cyber eyes that amplify, just tell him, "Wow so you see tiny forms down there looking up to you as you go down. It's at 200x amplification though, what do you do?" Don't wait for them to think of it, just give it to them.

INTERWEAVE THE PROTAGONIST'S STORIES, EVEN ACROSS DISTANCE AND BOUNDARIES

Regardless of circumstance and distance. Sometimes they will all be doing their own things, which is fine. Great, even. However, remember that this is a TV show or a movie, and they are linked in some way. Chances are that what they're all doing has something to do with one another, even if they don't know it yet or you yourself do. When you get into the mindset, you'll find the fiction will sort it out for you. The fiction is most interesting when things are connected. Cyberpunk is very much about problems the protagonists need to solve that are invisible and toying with them. They're poking and prodding or overtly just doing whatever they want because they're far too powerful to be touched at the moment. The big overwhelming threats are going to be tackled by far more than just one protagonist. It should be a prevailing, oppressive force on them all, bringing them together in their struggle against it or their wish to find the answers. Perhaps they're not even aware they're searching for something, but the question leads them to the same place. Grinding up against that system of control or oppression as the underdog is a hallmark of the cyberpunk genre.

PLACE THEM AT THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING

The fiction is filled with endless possibilities. There's NPCs all around, the technology, mixed reality constantly being fed to them, the digital environment, and maybe even the ability to delve into people's dreams or their nightmares. Let your imagination run rampant with it all. In every story where the underdog comes out on top it takes a group of people posed to strike at an opportune moment. Make them find that moment. Hunt the thing that's oppressing them. Make them earn every single thing. If it's too easy it won't feel real. That being said, they are the main protagonists of this story, so they are not like everybody else and probably the only ones that could solve these problems. If they can never solve the mystery or the immediate problem or get to the truth, there's not much point in playing, so make sure it's doable or feel as such for them as well.

THE FICTION MAKES YOUR MOVES, YOU DO NOT

The players should know you've made a move because something's happening in the fiction. They should never hear the move you're making. You're not saying aloud your announcements of future badness. You're telling them the hairs on the back of their neck are standing up. The moves are demanded by the fiction and should come from it at all times. This is another simple thing to help immersion as well as separate you from the players as a person. You're not a person, you're everyone. You are the fiction, and as such when bad things go wrong it's silly to blame you. It's the events that is organically following from the players exerting their agency in the game, nothing more and nothing less.

NAME EVERYONE AND GIVE THEM A MOTIVATION

Anytime there is an interaction with an NPC, the MC should know their name and what they're all about. There are no faceless denizens unless they're the extras when you're walking in time square in 2085. The best and fastest way to make an NPC feel like a real person in the fiction is to give them a name. Details are just as important as the name. When Brax goes and talks to his contact to get information, he's not just meeting some random guy. If it's boring, then we just skip the scene and he has the stuff he wanted already. If it's not and something is going to happen, it's not his contact. It's Dexter, who has sunken eyes and always wears shades. He's always hanging out at the same pub and reeks of cheap booze. All. The. Time. He wants something too, Cred. He's not there to simply serve the protagonist; maybe this time he wants more money, its good information, after all. It's about time he gets a raise for all this crap.

Lots of times when you introduce a new NPC, the protagonists are going to try and remember who they are, if they know them at all. If, during the conversation it turns out multiples of them do, well they're all tied together and we get more history on all of them based on that.

NPCs just aren't that complicated. Give them something they care about and make them follow it around. Make it the ONLY thing they care about on the screen. We don't need to know why they have this or look at them through a lens like the protagonists. We just need to know what they want and make them follow it to the end. This is called their Motivation, and there will be a whole whack of them to check out in the upcoming threats section to help you out.

TREAT THEM AS THEY WERE MEANT TO BE TREATED

If they're poor, or rich or some place in between, they should know it. They've felt it their whole lives, don't stop now. There's a hierarchy in every situation. There's always a leader and a bigger top dog. And there's always the "lowborn" that are being preyed upon in some way. If it's an important person they'll probably have some backup. If they're not important, they don't.

Social station is always important for your protagonists. If they live in lowtown and they want to go to a market in a mega corp...chances are the security there is going to be at least watching them, most likely not even allow them entry if they appear like they are lowborn and can't afford something. They'd rather not deal with theft and trouble, and they exert their privilege because they have it. When people act like they ought to in a situation, the fiction feels real and you can engage with those topics naturally, gauging the interest from the players about these subjects.

If you're choosing to engage with social constructs, gender issues, sexuality, and other topics that are sensitive, please use the X card to make sure that the table is a safe place for your players. If all is well on that front, stick to your guns. If they really want to be challenged to explore these things, engage with them to the extent that makes everyone at the table comfortable. Whatever you have set up in the fiction needs to feel real, so if you don't stick to what's established there will be a disconnect between the players and the story and that's most identifiable when the game will be described as just "feeling" strange. If they're oppressed, they're oppressed. If they're elitist, important, unimportant, sexy, ugly, worshipped, loved, or hated—it should feel as such in the fiction.

ASK QUESTIONS ALL THE TIME

Always incorporate player answers to construct the world. Especially when it has something to do with a protagonist's playbook. That's their thing, not yours. If they're the Architect, they know more about *The Veil* than you, if they're an Empath, they know what it's like to absorb emotions and carry the burden, not you. They think, they feel and the only way you're going to know about it is if you ask them. I am a big fan of asking questions anytime any protagonist wants to have a scene. They're giving you information and you should be engaging with them about it so that everyone both gets a clear picture of what is happening, as well as so they know that it's their story as well.

Don't just ask and drop the topic, make sure you are getting what you want from them. If they describe their safe house as fortified and you ask them how and they say it's just really safe. Nobody really knows what that looks like on the camera now right? What makes it fortified, or is it just in a safe place. Always clarify and incorporate what they say into the fiction. So, if they say that they have hi-tech cameras with thermographic sensors with guns that are hidden in the walls that shoot kinetic bursts or something, well, that's a thing now. Maybe some building they want to infiltrate has something similar. On the setting playbook there will be questions you all will ask in order to build the world, such as level of tech available. But if it makes sense for the fiction that they have the thing, they have the thing.

BE A FAN OF THE PROTAGONISTS.

Whatever playbook they took, is a nice, huge fictional flag being waved around at you. It says, "Hey, I want to see this shit in the game, OK?" Make it happen. Don't take away their things unless the dice tell you too. Find out about them. Why are they sad? Why are they angry? Why are they seeking answers and the answers will tell you what they want out of the fiction. Putting them in constant danger is booooring. We don't learn much about them and there should be a greater mystery happening then when the next fight is. Always make the fiction be moving in an unpredictable way. The fiction should have no status quos!

Make sure the stakes they have in the fiction are real. If there's nothing they care about on the line, the fiction is going to suffer for it. Everybody cares about some thing or someone. If you don't know what it is, it's because nobody's ever asked and they've never volunteered the information. During the first session, there will be questions to be asked right off the bat, but if those people leave or die, etc. There needs to be new things happening for them to make them care about what's going on.

Make sure their successes and failures have a real impact on the fiction. If they take down a corporation, cool, it's gone. Maybe the most interesting thing to have happen was them taking down that corporation. Then it's revealed that they weren't the top dog, right? Maybe even the all-powerful corporation were just puppets, in the end. Their choices and failures should really drive the fiction. They're bad asses, they will succeed, and that should be felt in the world. Now that the corp is taken down, they have more enemies or have a piece to a puzzle they're slowly trying to put together.

GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO THINK

If they're not sure about a particular situation because of the tension or ramifications, perfect. Sounds like a perfect time to get out of there, cut to somewhere else and let that brew to perfection—especially if it's a pivotal choice or will make a big impact on the fiction.

Instead of trying to prod them in the direction you'd like to go next, follow them in the direction they want to go in. If they show interest in a certain object, place, thing, person. Spend more time with whatever it may be. They want to interact with it more. It doesn't mean you should smash it to see what they do. It's everybody's story. If they want to go somewhere for leads, or lay low for the heat to go down, that's fine; populate that situation with opportunities or choices they need to make in order to make it interesting.

SPOTLIGHT EVERYBODY

Throw the spotlight on everybody, especially ones that are quiet and don't pipe up as much as everybody else. Sometimes people view the conversation like any other, in that, they find it rude to interrupt or insert themselves into what's going on. Luckily, they're part of the group, so include them and spotlight them whenever possible to make sure everybody is getting good screen time.

Sometimes this can include the off screen badness. Maybe that evil corporation they took down also was keeping some other corporations at bay, too. Or they were helping to community providing jobs or any number of things. I like to cut in opening scenes and ending scenes to give glimpses of what's been happening in the world with their decisions. Or just introducing new things that way, as a TV show does. The protagonists don't know certain information but the viewers and players do and that is all part of the fun.

MAKE THINGS COSTLY AND DESTRUCTIBLE

Nothing is safe, just like in real life. Your favorite things could end up being crushed, from your favorite kinetic pistol, to those fancy cybernetics you rely on some much—everything has come at some price. Nothing is free. Love, friendship, Cred. Everything has a cost and even if it doesn't come all the time, it should come calling often enough that they know this is no easy place to be. Don't miss an opportunity to make them earn the thing they want or make the fiction feel real. If the NPC comes calling when they're out and their loved ones are there, what would that NPC do? Whatever their Motivation is! If they don't earn anything, they won't be attached or care about them. They won't appreciate their gun until it runs out of ammo, jams, or breaks. They won't be aware of their limitations unless you also make it a point to highlight their fictional positioning with cybernetics—and then take it away. You don't know what you have until it's gone, yes—but you also need to feel like you have something, or you're just going to be emotionally exasperated. This is the line you dance when you break their things but are also a fan of them. Your principles are balanced to create a dynamic story, so don't lean on any single one too much.

**We're so intelligent now
that we're too smart to survive.
We're so well informed that
we lost all sense of meaning.
We know the price of everything,
but we've lost all sense of
value. We have everyone under
surveillance, but we've lost all
sense of shame.**

Bruce Sterling, *Distraction*

THE MC MOVES

The moves an MC makes are the meat and potatoes of the mechanics. You have your principles and agenda to make the world feel real. The moves are the things that enable you to carry them out as well as the only real tools you have to contribute to the fiction. But what tools they are! When the players feed you information, like what they're doing, looking for, want, think, feel, etc., you take those things they're asking you for and use moves to show them the world everyone's created, the people in it and in turn, give them the information they need to make more moves. In short, you reward their agency with a detailed, interesting story and then give them their agency back.

In all likelihood, most of the time your job is going to be nice and easy. Don't believe me? Only the dice will be able to show if I'm a liar or not. If they're getting lots of misses and weak hits, well the ball's in your court to showcase your cyberpunk flare and color. And even if they're succeeding, so are you. Because their moves are turning into more things they want to do—you're just asking a lot of questions as you go, while describing things, people and places based on what they're telling you. Having weak hits pop up a lot is the easiest way to drive the story because they're still getting what they want, but it is also generating the price of that thing they're getting. Conflict, price, hard bargains, and ugly choices all come from their own moves.

Other times, most times, when they've defused the current perceived threat, their side of the conversation starts to putter out. Especially for players who have played other systems and are used to a different kind of conversation. Lots of other systems are designed for a reactive set of circumstances to occur based on the information provided, it's not so much of a collaboration—so sometimes people need to adjust to having more agency. It's a different kind of conversation. When people realize their side of the conversation creates the world too, they usually get pretty invested and that's when things get really exciting. Anytime the conversation on that side isn't sufficient to tell everyone what is happening in the fiction, you're going to tell them how the world reacts to what they're doing. Your contributions are different because you have your agenda and principles there right in front of you, telling you what comes next that'll make sense based on what's happening. That is to say, you make a move to propel the fiction to an interesting place. If you have all these things in front of you, there is always a choice that makes sense.

TYPES OR DEGREES OF MOVES

There are two moves and they differ from each other greatly, and not at all. It's up to you how hard a move you should make should be, based on current circumstances. Soft moves are used to set things up for the future. It could be opportunities the protagonists didn't realize were there before, foreshadowing things to come, or forecasting an immediate situation coming to a head. Hard moves give the players a lot less agency to act because they've usually already had that time and it's passed; now there are consequences. Because of this, there's usually a slow progression from soft to hard moves. Or a soft move was used and not acted upon; creating a golden opportunity that then becomes a hard move. There is usually an escalation that happens in them and the protagonists need to take action in order to head it off.

- **SOFTTEST:** You hear that there's a hit put out on your friend.
- **SOFTER:** The hit is being carried out as you learn of it.
- **HARDER:** Your friend is missing when you get there.
- **HARDEST:** When you arrive there, it's already too late.

Using your principles and guidelines, decide how hard a move should be. Always do what would be most interesting but also in keeping with best practices. Keeping them in constant threat without any interpersonal play is usually going to feel like the fiction is about one thing: action. Not many stories just have tons of danger and no time to learn about the protagonists. You're not their fan if you keep trying to kill them over and over and over either. You're not making things costly if they're simply handed opportunities. Sure, sometimes things should be easy, or feel easy. Then the price should be made apparent later, perhaps. If you need an easy way to think of a soft move versus hard, think of the amount of agency the protagonist has to act from the information they're getting from you. If they are able to change what the outcome of the event is, it's soft. If it's done with, happening right now or already happened and they're going to have to react to the change that's already occurred, it's hard.

SOFT MOVE EXAMPLES

You're heading back from your favorite spot, celebrating with your friends on a job well done. You turn a corner in the street and feel a chill run up your spine. When you look around, the street's clear. Then your neurochip gets a message from Sara, but it's all disjointed. You can't make it out except for one word. "Help." What do you do?

"Pay attention to the strangeness of the dream," he says. He's wearing a well-pressed suit and he's preppy-looking and clean cut. He's got that douche boy side sweep going on and he's short compared to you, but the more you look, something seems out of place with his appearance. Just then, you place it. You see a bead of sweat roll down his temple. What do you do?

When you get back to your place in camp, the boy you found in the desert doesn't seem to be there. When you look around, though, his backpack is there. You saw him clutching it the entire time when you found him and all night. What do you do?

HARD MOVE EXAMPLES

When you feel the chill run up your spine and turn around, no one's there. But when you turn back there's a distortion knife to your neck. It's vibrating so fast you can feel it peeling back your skin as he presses it against your neck. What do you do?

As the bead of sweat drip down his temple you see his eyes dart to the side. When you follow his gaze, you see a glint from a window where he's looking, the glass shatters. Everything stops—you have less than a second to act. What do you do?

When you find the boy's backpack and grab at it, you see a nametag on the lining of it. It says Oscar. When you put it back down, you have blood on your hands. It must have come from the backpack. What do you do?

YOU'LL KNOW TO MAKE A MOVE WHEN...

- ...There's a pause and everyone looks to you to see what happens.
- ...A miss is rolled.
- ...The protagonists hand you a golden opportunity.

Whenever things get mundane or uncertain, that's your cue to make some form of a move. If there's a break in the fiction or as it gets boring, you'll probably make a soft move that sets up future moves and lets them know there's things still going on here. If they don't take that opportunity, that's when things will get harder for them with the natural progression from them not doing anything about the softer moves. Hard moves are designed

to prod them into action now, especially if they aren't doing something. Softer ones are flags you're flying, letting them know these things are going down, but it's not past the point of no return, yet.

Sometimes MCs feel they need to make extremely hard moves when a player rolls a miss. In any situation, you should make a move as hard as you like. Examine the NPC or situation and think of it in terms of their Motivation. If that impulse leads them to make an extremely hard move, so be it. If they try to sway someone and miss, it shouldn't always mean that that person turns into a threat or takes an aggressive action. Sometimes the fact that they have no idea what they're going to do is the most interesting thing to have happen.

An opportunity is something that's been stated in the fiction already and they're not dealing with it or missed it. If they're being reckless, cocky or daring, after the fiction has established that something's up, and they roll and miss. Well...that's it my friend. On a platter right to you, no?

You can also take a miss and turn something unseen by the protagonists. Just because it's not on screen doesn't mean the miss didn't happen in a form they're as yet unaware of. Maybe a threat looming manifests, maybe a consequence of their success is the miss they've rolled—where once there would have been no consequence from said success.

**No one objects to the notion
that every technological civilisation
might undergo its own Introdus.**

Greg Egan, *Diaspora*

MC BASIC MOVES

- Announce a conflict.
- Reveal an unwelcome truth.
- Test a belief.
- Give them recourse, solace, or comfort.
- Advance, shroud, or misdirect the final question.
- Put someone in a spot.
- Inflict harm or trade it.
- Offer an opportunity, with or without strings attached.
- Reveal off screen badness.
- Turn a move back on them.
- Offer or claim Giri.
- Take away something of theirs.
- Tell them the consequences and ask.
- Activate their stuff's downside.
- Separate them.
- Announce future badness.
- Make a threat move.
- Invoke a sense of the uncanny.
- Let them feel the ripples of something larger at play.

📖 ANNOUNCE A CONFLICT

No matter the world you create, there is always conflict. We all crave it and good stories always have drama. Communities form in all manner of places, from cities to dunes in the sand or the wastes of the unknown. Whenever protagonists are in a certain area, consider shoving them in a conflict specific to this community and see if they pick sides. Maybe they pick up a cause or just look out for number one and leave. If they go looking for Cred or tech, maybe they find people there who have these things and need something in return. Solutions to their problems could breed more problems. There could be old conflicts touched on by opening Giri questions, or conflicts being introduced stemming from initial world building. Whatever it is, there is always conflict in the world, even in the future.

GM: When you go to Jack to get the Cred he owes you, you find him slumped over on the ground gasping for air. He's fading fast and you see him clutching the side of his neck. When he takes it away blood is pouring down from it and he sees you and attempts to talk. Unfortunately, it's just gurgling and bubbling noises as he's fading away. The last thing he does though, is reach out and touch the emblem on your duster. The symbol of your old unit. The unit you both belonged to.

📖 REVEAL AN UNWELCOME TRUTH

This could be about a protagonist or about a situation. Maybe when a protagonist does something they aren't proud of, an NPC sees it. Maybe someone they're close to learns a secret about them. Or maybe you set up the circumstances where a protagonist learns a secret about another. Maybe they attempt to break into somewhere and there's more security than they thought, or the truth they're seeking is a revelation they wish they'd never found out. Whether interpersonal or not, consider what would make the most sense to happen as well as the most interesting thing to follow.

■ TEST A BELIEF

Whenever you are in a situation where the PC's beliefs could be tested, do it. Every. Time. They should constantly be looking at their beliefs and evaluating if they still believe it or not. If they believe no innocent should be hurt, make an NPC who deserves to be hurt. Make it someone in their lives and make sure they see it. Or, make a PC or NPC challenge the belief by they themselves not believing it and breaching it with them or simply have them acting in contrary to it. When they do, ask the player how they feel about their belief and if they still feel that way. The more it's challenged the more they'll cement their character in the fiction. Their beliefs will determine how they go about completing their goals, usually. And we all get a better picture of the protagonist when we see them come to grips and question who they really are. When a player has a belief tested they get XP, when it's resolved they get XP and when it gets them into trouble they get XP. Whenever you frame a scene have their beliefs in mind and see if you can't touch on something in the scene with at least one of their beliefs, as they are most likely trying to do the same.

■ GIVE THEM RECOURSE, SOLACE, OR COMFORT

I felt this deserved a place in the moves because sometimes MCs are so focused on making bad things happen that when they look at their moves, they don't see one or interpret one in order to do this. I feel it's very important. There should not be only strife and loss and death. The players themselves will be emotionally drained depending on the frequency of these kinds of events happening. Here is your reminder, in front of your face all the time, to offer them hope and comfort or a way out when they need it the most.

■ ADVANCE, SHROUD, OR MISDIRECT THE FINAL QUESTION

At the heart of any session and campaign, should be the final question. Created after your first session, a Main Antagonist brings this final question into the fiction (page 361). This question is used to drive at the heart of what the players and MC want to explore about cyberpunk culture and media. Often, the most interesting questions we ask about the future are the same ones being asked in prevalent cyberpunk literature and other forms of the genre. When you look at an NPC and the Motivation (page 315) you've created for them. Ask yourself what they're doing in the story. Making a move that involves an NPC or the Main Antagonist should involve the final question whenever possible. Are they advancing the protagonists towards it, shrouding it from them, or misdirecting it? When you make soft and hard moves, their actions should stem from that decision in order to progress this exploration and answer, at least in regards to the interactions they're having now.

☒ PUT THEM IN A SPOT

Putting someone in a spot is fairly neatly between a soft and hard move. They still have options but the tension and repercussions are apparent. Whether you threaten them directly or an NPC they care about on the screen or off the screen, or even another protagonist. Giving them the choice between the two is a surefire way of having them make a move. *The Veil* is a dangerous place; everyone is in mixed reality and could possibly leap into an entirely digital world and they're all connected so there's a million ways you could make them choose between things they care about. Hit them with danger and see what they do when faced with problems directly.

GM: When you run out of the train, you find Winston and Roger on the platform. You see a strange burst of light emit from the sky, and, as you look back down the console they're working on blows apart and they're on the ground. The techno organic virus is eating them alive and they're both screaming. Winston's got his hand extended toward you pleading with you for help. Then Roger lets out a gasp between the shrieks and as you follow his eyes you see a tall, black man with white face paint on. It looks like a skull is painted there and he's just casually strolling right up to Roger. I think you know who that is, right? What do you do?

☒ INFLICT OR TRADE HARM

Harm is the most direct way to make the protagonist care about something immediately, i.e., the other protagonists, loved ones, etc. If the situation calls for a hard move and the Motivation of the NPC or threat calls for it, Bam, Harm. Simple as that. The weapons in play and the situation should paint you a good picture of how much harm should be inflicted or traded. When harm is implied, or impending or the protagonists want to engage in a fight – it's very important to establish stakes. If there is a squad of tactical futuristic police with advanced weaponry, it's important they're aware of just how much they can accomplish with that conflict. Can they take them all out, realistically? If not, make sure they know that. If it's 8 on 1, neutralizing them all may not be viable. The conflict becomes not about killing them all, but about how many you can before they take you out. If the player isn't aware of the difference, they won't like where the fiction follows. Assume they aren't drawing the conclusions they maybe should be, always remember to clarify and establish stakes for every fight. Intent is important in every situation and needs special attention when it could result in a protagonist being harmed.

GM: As you try and run to Roger, Memory Box gets there first. He looks directly at you almost quizzically as he levels his antique revolver at Roger and pulls the trigger. Winston is still shouting and you're almost to him, what do you do?

Eight matte, black humanoid shapes drop down in reflective gear masking any discernable feature they must possess. They're well-armed, they know what they're doing. You guys are hardcore but you can bet your ass they are too, if you decide to fight them, it's not going to be easy, you might live but chances are in the time you take out a couple, the others will be on you. What do you want to do?

❏ OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY

Sometimes the players can't think of something to do about a problem or situation. Or simply don't like the presented choices. Maybe an NPC has the answer to the problem, and—according to their Motivation, wants something the protagonists aren't thinking of—like Giri or Cred. Be honest about the offer; always look at the Motivation and what the NPC wants. Don't wait around while the players talk and talk about plans for ages. Just throw them a solution with a baited hook. In a more indirect way, you should be making this move in every scene you frame. When you tell them what they see and hear or smell, even mention how things could be advantageous. But make it clear what could happen if they did.

GM: Memory Box looks at you all and grins. He's so much younger than you all know him to be and you know you're inside Winston's head. Within some memory trying to fix what went wrong in his mind. You know Memory Box is the problem but you didn't sign up for this stuff either. He reaches out his hand and says, "Give me the pocket watch, I'm only doing what I'm supposed to. This has already happened. You can't change the past, GIVE IT TO ME! Give it to me and I'll allow you all to leave. No harm done and Winston will never know." What do you say?

REVEAL OFF-SCREEN BADNESS

Sometimes the players should know what's going on in the background, if only to drive more tension or show consequences that don't need to be looked at through framing a scene. It shows them the characteristics of the other players on the board and possibly the means and lengths they're willing to go to in order to get their own agenda done. It's a TV show or movie, remember that. Let the villain do his evil monologue sometimes or display the inevitable double crosses. It's a good way of showing the world as being alive and vibrant and other shit happens aside from what they're doing. If they don't know these things happen, it's like they never happened at all and they can be really neat moments that never get explained or showcased.

GM: Let's close out this session with Memory Box posing that question. And before we do, the camera pans out on you guys and ultimately comes out of Winston's head. We see his study with his collection of ancient artifacts and his robotic butler and maid monitoring all of you connected to his throne like contraption as you all slumber. We all know time goes by differently in the digiscape though, so time seems to stop and go by slowly now on the screen. And as it pans we see Memory Box walking his way through Winston's opulent palace, making his way to the study. And to you.

TURN A MOVE BACK ON THEM

The most interesting thing in the fiction sometimes, is to allow them to have exactly what they want. Just allowing them that builds tension sometimes. Wait, so...we just get it. No alarms, no traps...we just get the thing? Yep. Sure do. Let them have their victory. And more! Give them an unexpected consequence from getting the thing they wanted that they hadn't considered. The world reacts to them, show that on the screen too!

GM: So you took out Memory Box, well done! You're back in the study, waking up now. Winston too. He seems startled and his eyes are darting around though. He cries out, "Who ARE you people, what the hell are you doing in my study!?" Seems maybe having the gun fight across his memories may have been bad...What do you do?

☒ OFFER OR CLAIM GIRI

Giri is one of the central mechanisms to *The Veil*. On top of Cred, it represents a commodity, one that may be in play more often than Cred, depending on the type of world people want to get out of play. If they've been refuting people trying to collect on their debts a lot, it's about time that person comes calling. Both parties need to know there is Giri being owed here though, or Giri isn't involved at all! Giri is always known by both parties. This is a great way to get NPCs interacting with the players who may have gone into the background for a while or bring the focus back the other people in the world if there's been a lot of interpersonal play only between players.

GM: There's a shrill laugh behind you all, and you see a much older looking Memory Box. He has the same laugh though, and looks delighted. "Oh, my thank you. It appears you've done my work for me. When that poor fool asked me to modify his memory 40 years ago, well. It was just me learning. I live on in all of my subject's minds you know. And when I went to Cid in order to collect on a...favor. Well, he told me the only thing he had to offer was information on you all..."

☒ TAKE AWAY SOMETHING OF THEIRS

The things that they get when choosing their playbook shouldn't be taken away unless the fiction really, really calls for it. That's their stuff and it's a bit offside to destroy it. However, they have many things, or should, in the fiction. And those things are always fair game as long as it makes sense for the fiction. Some moves call for a cost. When someone is being risky and strikes 7-9, well that's a prime opportunity there to make them choose between their stuff. You want your thing or you want to get what you want? Let's find out.

GM: OK, Epoch, you want to get out of there, hey? You were trying to run up a fire escape, right? Well I think what happens is that bag you're carrying full of Z's evidence and oddments and what not gets caught. The cops are shouting at you to stop what you're doing and lay on the ground and all that and a few are making their way up the fire escape after you, what do you do?

📖 TELL THEM THE CONSEQUENCES AND ASK

Players should be informed of what their decisions are going to cost; most of the time anyways. Their protagonists are the main thread in this woven story, and they're getting all their information from you. They can see and think and feel and hear in the fiction, so if there's something obvious that could happen based on what they want to do, tell them. Do what honesty demands. If you tell them what will happen if they do a thing and they do it, follow through, always. Don't break your principles and stand by what will happen even if it's really bad for them. This follows along with establishing stakes in conflicts that could result in harm. If the people they're fighting are beyond them, there's too many of them, or they have a misconception of what they could do or how effective they could be in the situation, always tell them the consequences and ask.

GM: You're standing on the roof now Epoch. The cops are storming up there but you left the bag so you're free and clear for the moment. You're on the roof though; the only thing you see is a large garbage bin for the complex to use, but that's like a few stories down man. It's a way out, sure—but it's something that's going to hurt. It all depends on what you want to do. So, what do you want to do?

📖 ACTIVATE THEIR STUFF'S DOWNSIDE

You have tons of things that could go wrong with the protagonists at any given time. Their stuff doesn't have to be taken away, but it can break, especially their cybernetics. There is a list of negative tags everyone has when they have cybernetics. There's a spot on the MC worksheet to place those and check those out whenever there's an MC or a natural place for that to happen in the fiction. It could be a limitation that's apparent in the tags of a weapon as well. Like them trying to use a futuristic pistol on someone who's wearing armor that it's not effective against. Turn the thing they see as useful, or as an ally, around on them. It's a good way to drive home the cost of the things they have, like cybernetics. Range tags should always be kept in mind and aren't considered to be a downside as everyone should be aware of them at all times anyways, but things like running out of ammo, technology having bugs, things breaking down, and things being less effective in specific circumstances are a good place to start.

GM: When you dive off the building for the large bin, your systems in your interface keep warning you of impending danger and then suddenly shut down; all you hear is an ominous repeated soft voice saying that it's rebooting. It looks like you don't have access to that kind of information now until you sort that out. The cop's dampeners might have something to do with it. What do you do?

▣ SEPARATE THEM

A great way to build tension is to have them facing their own difficulties in different situations of conflict. It's another great way to show that they're vulnerable, usually need each other, and have their own Motivations to worry about like everybody else. It's also incidentally a good way of allowing for a shy player to shine, if one player is contributing a little bit too much and someone else isn't doing much. If they're away from that player fictionally, they may feel keener to contribute. It might not work, but it's something to try, if it works—great. You know they are keen to contribute but don't feel able to with others in the conversation and it can be addressed. If not, maybe they're still shy, but you can coax them through the system and give them more agency to act on as they're exploring their own path for a while—even if it's in a bad spot.

GM: Alright, so. You walk into your safe house and immediately can feel something is wrong. Things aren't where they were last placed and as you look around, suddenly the safe room door closes and engages in lockdown procedure with the other guys outside! What do you do?

▣ INVOKE A SENSE OF THE UNCANNY

There are three ways in which the uncanny is most commonly invoked. In essence, the uncanny usually has to do with the mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar that is experienced as being peculiar, and so generates cognitive dissonance. When you get the intersection between attraction and repulsion, and sometimes between other opposites, like between simulation of the human and its estrangement, or the mind/body parallel, or between the organic and mechanical, you get the sense of the uncanny being invoked. Here are three ways that the uncanny is commonly invoked:

The sense of Deja vu or the world not working as it should: It is usually when there's a false reality that the uncanny shows up, like the sense of Deja Vu in *The Matrix* indicating a glitch in reality, for example, but it is also used in what appears to be reality to underscore uncertainty from the protagonist's subjective view.

The doppelganger effect: The double as a promise of both immortality (in that it proves that you can be replicated and so live forever) and as harbinger of death (in the uncertainty of self, and realization that if I'm over there, I'm not here, and am either dead or about to die). In essence, the seeing of the double undermines all logic of identity at the very least. Taking this even further, simply a familiarization with the everyday, or what we take to be a given and how we relate to it could trigger the uncanny.

The blurring of life and death: When what is perceived to be human is revealed to be merely mechanical, and vice versa. So, an extremely life-like doll, especially if the setting allows for consciousness in a simulation, might be one example.

▣ LET THEM FEEL THE RIPPLES

The players are all very small parts in an incredibly complex system. Make them feel like they're feeling the effects of something larger going on—the ripples of larger things happening in the world than just them. Make them wonder how they fit into things and if they can get out from under it. Showcasing things beyond their control or things beyond their understanding is a good way of letting them feel the ripples. It also could showcase what their effect of their actions has had on the world. If they've taken down a corporation, what then has changed? If they've taken out a lower henchman, do the bigger dogs care? Is there something far larger at play than ALL of these things that makes its presence known from time to time? In *Neuromancer*, when Case is walking away and receives the phone call from Wintermute, followed by all the pay phones ringing as he's leaving the area—that is letting them feel the ripples.

▣ MAKE A THREAT MOVE

In addition to all of these moves, you can also use threat moves at your disposal, detailed later. Threat moves are tailored, specific moves for specific things happening in the fiction already in the protagonist's lives. Threats are actively changing up the fiction and refer to the status quo in regards to what's already been established and known about the PCs' lives and environment.

MOVES SNOWBALL

In *The Veil*, moves are intentionally made to snowball. Whenever one is resolved, it bleeds into the next and causes more discord to happen within the fiction and perpetuates the story. Moves made in succession as well as when they get a weak hit (7–9) increase the drama automatically because the protagonists aren't just able to get what they want. They need to meet circumstances in order to do so or the opposition gets something they want as well, forcing the protagonist into the new set of circumstances described by you. Lots of times, what ends up happening is an escalation of moves. When you look at the basic moves for the protagonists, you can see how they might escalate.

1. They may try to analyze the situation and perceive the major threat.
2. Maybe then they try to probe or sway that threat.
3. Failing that, they may give an ultimatum.
4. We could then move into a physical conflict with neutralize, should that fail.

Lots of times, there needs to be this escalation in order for the situation to be resolved. It should always escalate until one party backs down.

The MC can usually see how these events could play out, depending on what's being said about the current situation in the fiction. When you frame a scene, make sure there's lots of information but not too much, so that they want to find out more. Give answers in such a way that they will want to continue to interact with the scene. As they interact more, allow them to act on that information in a way that will make them consider their actions and the consequences of those actions. If the threat in the scene is that they are getting closer to the truth, make it elusive until they earn it.

**My sustenance is information.
My interventions are hidden.
I increase as I learn.
I compute, so I am.**

China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*

PLAYER VS PLAYER

Sometimes, given the nature and mechanics of the game, players are going to rub each other the wrong way. They may want the same thing or insist on pursuing something their own way. It could lead to them wanting to settle things by manipulating each other or inflicting harm on one another. Just make sure to be objective as the MC when this is happening. It's important to spotlight both players as much as possible and not to be seen as giving one an edge over the other. Regardless of who begins the conflict, the spotlight still needs to proceed to the other players. Keep the focus on whatever is interesting but also remember to cut when things are juicy to build tension as well. Be a fan of the protagonists; all of them.

HELPING OR HINDERING (PLAYER INTERFERENCE)

Whenever a conflict happens between two players, other protagonists might want to take sides and help or hinder (called an interference move) with events unfolding. This is listed in the basic moves list. Since the person who begins the conflict will be attempting to neutralize another player, their roll must be resolved before the person being attacked can go. However, they can interfere with the attack, if they can think of a way to do so. This in turn will modify the outcome of neutralize and then affect the outcome in the fiction. If they aren't aware though, neutralize does not need to trigger. As with any situation, the harm would be inflicted as established. Once the initial move is completed, the player could then respond with their own move. As an alternative, you can also choose to use the duel move for a different player versus player experience.

MISSES IN PVP

As MC, when a player rolls a miss you'll be arbitrating the conflict between the player characters involved in the scene. Although you will still use moves as they make sense in the fiction as it pertains to the characters and not the events that aren't focused on the confrontation at hand. You'll also be making sure said confrontation is fair so that whatever happens, no player feels slighted by the unfolding events. Make moves as hard as you like but instead move them onto the players. Most commonly, you could turn a move onto itself. "When you flip out your gun blade and move to strike, you're off balance and end up missing. It gives them the advantage,"—and then maybe confer a bonus of some kind. Perhaps upgrade their roll or give them something forward. And when doing so, keep things broad so that when they do get a strong or weak hit, they have the ability to color in their own battles with their imagination. If you say what exactly happens with their miss, the opposing player might be disappointed as they may have had an idea of how they could take advantage or what might be happening. The whole idea of neutralize

being hold, is that represents their agency within the fight. Since you're also balancing things with misses, though—it's inevitable that you'll have to encroach on their conflict at some point. You're also making the scene as interesting and dramatic as possible, while also giving fair arbitration to both sides.

When Rags and Cricket come to a head, they end up resolving the conflict with harm being exchanged. Rags is pissed because Cricket was sleeping with his wife but doesn't know Cricket was being manipulated. It doesn't absolve him of guilt, but it gives valuable context Rags may need to make a decision on the matter. Unfortunately, he's too pissed to hear anything right now and ends up trying to neutralize Cricket.

RAGS: Alright Cricket, you know how this goes. I know. And now, you're going to pay. I grab my thermal rifle and aim it right at him.

MC: Alright, well sounds like we're not quite at ultimatum, what do you do Cricket?

CRICKET: "Rags, you don't know what's going on here man, take it easy. There's a lot you don't know. Let's talk." I level my blade in self-defense but don't make any aggressive moves. "I think there's been too much bloodshed already, I understand you're angry. But I've also helped you out a lot. That should buy me civilized conversation. I want you to put the rifle down."

MC: OK, well sounds like you're trying to sway Rags, why don't you roll that? What's your state? Is Cricket freaking out?

CRICKET: Oh, yeah. Umm I don't think I'm trying to go against his motivations, from what I know of him, what do you think?

MC: Rags, this guy's standing in front of you trying to explain stuff to you calm and neat. But maybe this isn't a very calm situation. You're obviously upset, maybe what you see is a man trying to distract you from what you came here to do, and that's all? Is Rags swayed by words? He could be. You tell me, dude.

RAGS: Yeah, I think that's the thing. Rags is so mad right now he's probably in that place where his adrenaline's pumping and he's seeing Cricket's mouth form words but he can't hear them. He just hears his own heart thumping in his ears, over and over and over. And Cricket isn't repenting at all, in his eyes. I shoot him.

MC: OK, let's see that neutralize roll then, Rags.

RAGS: I'm just seething with anger, which makes that a 10! So I want to shoot and like graze his ear, to try and frighten him and then I'm going to fire a shot not designed to miss, this time. And since it's a 10, I don't take any harm, right?

CRICKET: Whoa, whoa, there. I want to hinder by dodging out of the way, I may be Scared but I'm not suicidal! And I got a 5, so that's just not helpful at all.

MC: Ok Rags, so you go to pull the trigger and Cricket dives at the same time, but he just doesn't quite make it, hey. What do you want to do? Cricket you take 3 harm from the rifle, but have 1 armor so you take 2 harm in the end.

RAGS: My boys are here too Cricket, you're not getting away let's settle this, come out! You may not be mortally wounded for now, but I'm a good shot with this. If you want to live, supplicate yourself!

CRICKET: Frick, so I'm in the dirt under a mound here, watching these guys surround me. I think I want to analyze here. Maybe I see a clear exit, the guys are surrounding him so there's going to be a way out, he's hurt me already—maybe he'll let me be... I feel a bit hopeful now I think, maybe I can just escape with this idea and take off. That's an 8. I want to know, what's my best escape route?

MC: Well, Rags' men are spreading but there's an exit to your side they haven't seen yet. They're scanning and watching for you, there's no way you're going for it without triggering risk.

CRICKET: With these odds, I gotta go for it, I roll onto my side, spring up, and just bolt for it like a boss!

RAGS: Well, I see you running! I shoot directly in front of where he's going to run on the ground so he stops and realizes he can't go anywhere. I'm just getting more pissed off, I'll mark another Mad for my state and get an 8 when I try to hinder him, so he takes -2 right now.

CRICKET: Crap, OK, let's see. I get a 6 that means... with my Scared state... yipe.

MC: OK well, I think with that miss we know what's happened, Rags. You take aim for that spot on the ground but instead actually end up hitting him, if you want it, take neutralize at a 10+ here.

RAGS: Yeah, I don't think I back down, maybe he tries to roll to evade me and I pop him, I inflict my harm and attempt to frighten him. I think I'm still really Mad so I'll mark that. Maybe I scream out with rage as he's making me do this instead of giving me what I really want.

MC: OK Cricket, well things aren't looking too swell for you. That's 3 harm, minus the 1 armor is another 2 harm on top of the 2 harm brings you right to the edge my friend.

CRICKET: Yep, I try and roll and just get plugged. Maybe the shot is powerful enough even that I get pushed up against the wall where I was running to. I'm knocking on heaven's door soon and at the mercy of Rags, I guess.

In general, players will probably be working together, though. So it should be a fairly rare occurrence. If you think a duel is more appropriate, see the duel move. I find people are 50/50. Some people like the approach of using a duel a lot more and others like the interference rolls coupled with neutralize way of doing things. Whatever way you have more fun doing, I say go with that! How much time you have and want to spend on the scene is also going to dictate which way you should do things as well, since a duel usually will take longer.

DEFINING THE VEIL

The Veil is like our Internet now, except that everybody has a neurochip in their heads and is constantly connected to this wealth of information as well as each other. *The Veil* is the presence within that internet that has a will of its own. As some playbooks suggest, you can enter it and project your digital self into it. Other than that, it is largely nebulous and undefined on purpose. Because it is a digital environment, people should be able to bend and even break aspects of that world. Like in *The Matrix* movies, it should be possible for people to have a level of control over themselves that is even greater than in reality. That is, of course, if they are aware that they are in it at all, at the time.

One of the ways I defined it when I played a campaign with some friends, is that we decided by the success and failures of the moves. When the players know they are in the digital environment, which we called the digiscape, and they did roll a miss, we asked each other if it was a miss because perhaps, that is just not a possible thing to do in the digiscape. If we decided that it was something that could be done, I still treated it as a normal miss and made a move, but from the discussion of whether or not it was possible, I also learned what others thought of the digital environment and incorporated it.

Pay close attention to *Lift The Veil*; when it says that the MC will ask you a few questions, answer them. That is a prompt for you, MC. You should always be asking them things, and when you do so, this information should always be incorporated into the perception of *The Veil*. It may treat each PC completely different depending on their relationship to it. *The Veil* should show or give access to something or someone that it would not for another player. When they interact with *The Veil*, they want something from it, usually. During that exchange, *The Veil* is posing questions to them in turn, which should reveal to you its Motivation during play, eventually. The digital environment is an aspect of *The Veil* and so, it is also a vehicle for its will, as revealed during the course of play. It's another tool to get to know more about the protagonists, too! And create very personal and tailored events and scenes just for them.

The first questions should be about their own view of how they access *The Veil* and what it means to them. Then start getting more personal and even down right strange. Like what's your favorite color? Whom do you most miss? And then incorporate it. Maybe when you're describing scenes to that player and others, use those colors. If they have a secret, make *The Veil* try to guess at that secret. If they hide their true identity from everybody else, make street signs and coffee shops have names guessing at their identity wherever they go. When they walk past skyscrapers maybe the person they miss the most is there in the glass for a second and then not. What is the agenda of *The Veil*? You probably won't find out for a few

sessions. But it is a give and take relationship between the players. They're going to want information from it constantly, so make access to *The Veil* have a price or be as equally curious about them as the players are to find out more information from it.

A recurring theme of cyberpunk culture is that there are forces at play that can't possibly be understood or manipulated. Elements of this should manifest within *The Veil*. It does not need to be malicious. But the sense that there is this presence should be there. There is always a larger game at play and the players should be exploring their beliefs within the campaign as well, with both at play. For me, this made my sessions more interesting because I was constantly asking questions about what *The Veil* may want as the MC, as well as the players getting this sense that so much more is happening than what is going on. It perpetuated the fiction well and coupled with the question we were exploring with cyberpunk culture, along with the mechanics of the game, made it feel like a lot more was going on and more compelling than just the immediate circumstances of the players lives. The game was about something and going somewhere always because their/our lives were interesting and we had an overarching plotline, all the while still playing to find out what would happen next.

I also had tech like in *Inception* where they could enter people's dreams, which was a lot of fun but overall I think it would be best to have it as an optional thing for people and not have a move or mechanic for it; I treated it like the digital world the players could enter, except that the person's mind was paying attention to their intrusion, like in *Inception*. When they defied the constraints of reality in there, the projections would pay attention and the environment would fight back. It's pretty fun to add that added extra twist. Within the setting playbook, there is a specific section for adding technological and cultural aspects you'd like to see in play. Adding that to your world building; depending on the fiction you all are going for may make sense, or not. But either way adding these things specific to players helps them invest in the world they're playing in with you.

...destiny spelled out in a constellation of cheap chrome.

William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

CREATING AND DEPICTING NPCs

Whenever you think there should be another person in *The Veil*, there is. If there feels like a space in the protagonists' lives that needs someone or something there, just create it. Name them always, to make them real for you as well as the protagonists and then give them a Motivation. When you do that, just make them follow that Motivation until it gets them wherever the fiction takes them.

MC: When the firefight with Rags and Cricket went down, it was noisy and bloody. And other people heard it. Jack and Stacey here, an older couple, poke their heads out of their windows up top, and you hear Stacey cry out in horror as they see the crumpled form of Cricket bleeding out. They both have brown hair and blue eyes and remind you a bit of Clair, except you know, they're terrified! What do want to do Rags?

When you want to know how things really work, study them when they're coming apart.

William Gibson, *Zero History*

MOTIVATIONS

Always keep in mind when using NPCs that they may play some part in the overall exploration of your question that you want to explore as a group. As in your principles, consider this first when making an NPC. Are they bringing them closer, further, or misdirecting them from this answer they're seeking in regards to the final question? When you do that, make their Motivation afterward and see how it plays out. They now play a larger part in the fiction if interacting with that principle, other than their main Motivation.

Other than a name, NPCs need a Motivation to follow. They don't need to worry about other stuff. They just want that thing now. If they get the thing, they're happy. If there's something in the way of the thing, they deal with it. Because they aren't complicated, they just want the thing. Don't make the Motivation too complicated, like unraveling the threads of mystery eluding them in order to enact revenge of fallen kin. He/she wants to prove themselves to the people that matter. Although Motivations are customized per NPC, there's going to be a lot of common ones that overlap with others, or maybe they even have the same Motivation and work together for that purpose.

Whenever they can't get the thing they want, examine what they would do based on their Motivation. If the thing in the way is actively trying to make them not get it, they will just simply try to take that out by any means necessary, for example, by buying a kinetic pistol and shooting them, or manipulating them, if necessary, or hiring someone else to deal with it if they can't. But they don't just accept it and move on; it's the thing they want that drives them. If they're not positive, they'll figure out if it is in their way or not and if so, then they'll try and remove it. If they do nothing about their Motivation, then they're not interesting, they're boring. Change their Motivation or get rid of them.

NPC FODDER

If the NPC isn't going to be a main focus in the scene, don't go to too much trouble. They are mechanically the same as any NPC, but put as much work into them as they're contributing to any given scene being framed. If they don't merit much attention, don't pay much attention to them. Sometimes they're just there because there needs to be people in a scene, they're not that important. If and when they do become important, that's when you put as much detail into them as other NPCs.

PC-NPC-TRIANGLES

It's true that NPCs aren't complex with their Motivations, and that's the guiding question when wielding an NPC. When they do pursue their Motivation, it doesn't mean that's the only side of them you could see onscreen. What one PC experienced from one NPC could be vastly different based on PC choices. If you need information and try to manipulate them into it with logic or a deal, versus just threatening them and making them look weak around other people. The way that NPC acts towards each PC could be and should be vastly different.

Some NPCs may be stupid, some extremely smart and manipulative. When Rags went after Cricket in the first place, he went into an NPC's establishment with a show of force and threatened Cricket's friend, Dremmer. Also an NPC, Dremmer felt threatened and told Rags something he thought he'd want to know, in order to gain Rags' trust and to get him to leave his place and stop threatening him. Dremmer's Motivation is to eventually take down Rags and restore order to this place, but he'd never be able to do that if Rags discovered this information and kept poking around his place, so he instead threw a friend under the bus and succeeded in getting rid of Rags and being able to continue in his Motivation of taking him down.

NPC GIRI

Sometimes, NPCs will want Giri from PCs, but more often than not, it's the opposite. Giri is person-specific so the Giri needs to be tracked from one NPC to the next. The MC is not any one player in the fiction and Giri is specific to that particular NPC, not every NPC controlled by the MC. What I usually do is flip the setting playbook around and make Giri relationship map for this in order to make sure it is visible and in everyone's thoughts when moving from one session to the next. Some examples of how Giri could be accrued by NPCs when interacting with PC's are:

- When a PC offers them Giri in exchange for something they want and they accept.
- When an NPC does them a favor without being given Cred.
- When a PC rolls a 7-9 when they roll to refute Giri, and the Giri owed increases.

Whenever they have Giri on PCs, they can use the Giri moves as PC's do to collect on the Giri. Whenever an NPC does collect on the Giri, make sure it feels right in the fiction. If they go to a Seeker to do something that has nothing to do with them or something they're not good at, you're not being a fan of the player. Collecting on Giri is a great way to begin a new thread to pull on for the PCs, and further the Motivation of the NPC or threat in play. When you do, be sure to have the NPC interacting with the exploration of the question in some way.

NPC HARM

Ninety percent of the time, PC's are going to be attacked by and attacking NPCs. Therefore, the most significant harm they are going to be taking is from NPCs. When it comes to blows, make sure you're telegraphing enough of the fiction so that they know what's going on and are not just suddenly taking harm. The PC should probably know why this is happening to them. There will be the odd time that the Motivation of an NPC will be contrary to this, but even then, through the use of soft moves, there should be a line connected by dots as to what's happening now in the fiction.

Protagonists can't complain when they're being given the information, act on it, and then receive the consequences. Make sure you're throwing them soft moves that they can perceive and see how they react to what you're pitching them:

MC: Rags, after the shout from Stacey, you see her rush back into her apartment. Then you hear the lockdown noise for the complex courtyard you're standing in go off. Jack looks at you with a little bit of pity in his eyes and then looks at the entryway and then back to you again. What do you want to do? {Announcing future badness}

Rags has some choices, but the lockdown means people are coming. He's in a bad situation. Cricket's dying, and he's in the yard holding the literal smoking gun with eyewitnesses. He could run away, try and talk his way out, give the witnesses an ultimatum by threatening them with harm if they ever speak of it; plenty of choices. And if he chooses one where he's still there and it's in lockdown with a gun...chances are things will only become more difficult. Saving Cricket just became complicated, if he even wants to do that.

Remember that the exchange of moves is not always a back and forth. Sometimes you'll make multiple soft moves to inform the fiction. After making several soft moves, then a PC may choose to act on the information you provide. Or they may act by doing something that does not trigger a move at all, in which case, they just do it and we find out what happens in the fiction as you make moves as normal as the MC, until they do trigger one.

RAGS: I tell the boys to grab Cricket and we make our way out; as they pick him up I look at the old man. I tell him he'd be advised to forget we were ever here, and run off with Cricket.

- MC:** You're moving pretty slow having to carry Cricket with you. You feel something's up, too. As you pause a second you realize its dead silent. You don't hear anything at all and then you hear a slow whirring sound. A clear indication of the mag lifts used on patrol cars around here. If you keep moving this slowly they might spot you, what do you want to do? {Telling consequences and asking}
- RAGS:** Shit...yeah, I want to keep him with us. I didn't want him dead and I do want to know what he was talking about before if I can...
- MC:** OK, I'd say you're taking a risk, then. The danger is you being spotted.
- RAGS:** OK, so I get an 8, I'm anxious so I'll mark that emotion spike in Scared. I think we keep close to vehicles as we move so as to use them as cover from being spotted in the streets.
- MC:** Well, you keep sticking to your cover and everything seems fine, until you look back and look at your guys. They're hunched over behind a car that's much too small to hide a few men carrying an unconscious Cricket. They're looking at you with wide eyes, they know they can't proceed without being spotted and if they stay here much longer, they'll be discovered too! The patrol car shines a light over there, its spotlight canvassing the area. {Putting someone in a spot}
- RAGS:** Hmm, Cricket's such a pain in the ass...I run quickly out of cover bolting for it, hoping to draw them to me and leave those guys alone.
- MC:** You're definitely taking another risk here, Rags. The danger is that they're going to see you, or the other guys.
- RAGS:** Makes sense, I think I'm still anxious, and it's building for sure—so I'll mark my Scared emotion. End up getting an 8.
- MC:** OK, well yeah so you're running and you see that the spotlight shifts to you, so it's not on your men anymore but in you getting what you want...you get what you want. You start hearing hooting and hollering. ALL the attention is on you now, what do you want to do? {Could be: separate them, turn a move back on them, take away something of theirs}

HARM AND HEALING WITH NPCS

When an NPC takes harm, they do so like a PC: whatever the weapon's rating is when they're hit, minus the armor. The difference between a PC and an NPC though, is how much harm they can actually withstand compared to them. We know that PC's have their wound track; NPCs have a different one. Let's say an NPC takes 2 harm, whatever type of tech it's employing. Taking 2 harm is serious business; it should be severe, depending on the damage type. If it's a weapon that does 3 harm, like a rifle of some kind or a sword, it's pretty much fatal. Normal people can't take that kind of damage and be expected to be ok. If they have armor, as with a PC, it will help, but chances are most people walking around don't have armor on their person. That is a setting question to have answered with the players, maybe they do. Maybe *The Veil* for you guys is that deadly; either way, any amount of harm is a lot worse for an NPC than a PC.

Because of this consideration, if an NPC suffers harm, they need to get medical treatment far more than a PC. If they take 1 harm, they're probably hanging in there, but at 2 or 3 harm, their Motivation should become about surviving their wounds. They recover from harm similarly to a PC, with medical tech, but if it's natural time healing, they recover at 1 harm to 2 harm per session. They probably spend a session or two in an infirmary or something, depending on the medical tech going on in the setting and exactly what kind of damage they took and where.

MANAGING NPCS

Sometimes NPC tracking can get pretty overwhelming. If you're using a map of the city, print another for yourself and use stickers and highlighters to mark their positions and areas they frequent as well as how they integrate, if at all, with the established tropes or final question you're pursuing.

Re-use the same NPCs for multiple things so that you're not generating new NPCs for no reason. There's probably not a need for that many important people. Think of it as a TV show still. There are the main characters and NPCs in there too, and usually if one is established as someone who's connected in some way. All of the main characters in the show go to them for information. If they need guns they go to X, etc. There are multiple sources of information for the PC's usually, but try to keep the same principle with NPCs. Always look at what the NPC is bringing to the fiction. If they're doing the same function as another, maybe they don't need to be there anymore. Maybe someone else kills them or they are removed from the fiction some other way.

FICTIONAL FLAGS

Whenever a player chooses a certain playbook, pay specific attention to why they're choosing it and what appeals to them. When they're choosing a playbook, that's your cue from them saying that this is what they want to see in the game. It tells you how they interact with the world and what types of conflicts they're most interested in seeing. Whenever you frame scenes, make sure you're including those interests and conflicts. If you don't, chances are they're going to wonder how they fit into the fiction and why they even bothered to choose that playbook.

Play to find out what happens, but think up some interesting things that could entice those PCs to get involved and interact with the fiction. Try to give each PC an opportunity to use their move that makes them unique if possible and try and make sure that there's something going on specifically with every one of the people playing as well as the overarching action happening with everybody.

One of the most important things to do is to consider what that playbook's specialty is and just give them that information. If someone is the Architect and they're screwing around in the digital environment, they're going to notice much more than other people do about what's going on—in fact maybe you should ask them what they notice. Also, for that part of *The Veil* you should be asking the players questions like crazy, building *The Veil* on top of that framework. They know more about that part of it than anybody else, and it should be them who informs you about what it's like if they have ideas about it. If someone is the Apparatus, when it comes to artificial intelligences and how they think and feel and work in your world, that's their bag.

Check out my thoughts on the playbooks and some ways to push them that might fit for them. I'm sure the players will come up with really neat spins on the playbooks so you'll have to roll with it and see where it takes you. Pay special attention to the following flags:

- Their playbook. They picked it because they wanted to interact with the world in the way they envisioned the playbook.
- Their cybernetics and their negative tags for the cybernetics. When something comes up a miss, always bear in mind that there are these negative tags on most of them, waiting there for you.
- Their jam. How they make the Cred. They want to be doing their thing that makes them the Cred, usually. If not, Jam is also used as a good way of tying other players together and establish the kind of social structure they want and fit into.
- The relationships they choose to make with the link move will show you what kinds of things they want to be exploring in the fiction.
- Their look and gear, they're telling you what they think looks cool and what type of weapons they like. Especially the damage types they want to see on camera from NPC weapons, too.

History is not merely a linear collection of points that we pass through on a timeline. They are connected by a line. No, perhaps it is more accurate to say that they are made to connect.

Serial Experiments Lain

PLAYBOOK FOCUSES

THE APPARATUS

The Apparatus is a character that's looking for its place in the world. It's new and is trying to understand where it belongs, if anywhere. It is probably naive in comparison to most humans. They are constantly asking questions every session about their past and who they are. There are a lot of angles they could take the playbook on. Give them an outlet in which to discuss those thoughts that they have, or a thread to pull on for their character arc of self-exploration. The more questions they ask, the more humanity they generate and spend within themselves. The most identifiable thing you'll see about what direction they're taking the playbook is what they choose to look like. If they choose to look entirely different than a human, chances are they aren't looking to fit in. In contrast, if they choose to look completely human and can reproduce, vice versa. They want to fit in, and probably begin to form a relationship with people in order to look into what humanity has to offer, while being naive to what that could mean for a new form of life. It can be a pretty powerful playbook; they are fully cybernetic and could be really dangerous, if they so choose to be. Whether or not they want to be dangerous is the question. Ultimately, most people will probably use it as an exploratory playbook, looking into the abyss and asking questions about themselves, humanity and struggling to become more.

- Highlight the good or bad of humanity in PC and NPC actions around them.
- Make something they can interface with what contrasts and highlights their personality and what they want to know.
- Highlight what they're learning by interacting with the other PCs. Are they murdering people? Hurting each other emotionally and physically? How does that affect the Apparatus, who's learning about humanity from them?
- Engage with any birth questions by incorporating those things directly into the fiction.

THE ARCHITECT

They almost certainly have something to hide if they pick this playbook. Check out their subconscious choices to see what type of personality they have and what they want to see show up. Depending on what they pick, that is them saying, “I would like this to show up and explore this about myself.” They probably have the idea that having a lot of power over *The Veil* will make things easier, and it will, but it also generates a very complex relationship with it as well. They are giving a lot more of themselves for the power they have and can be pretty susceptible to things happening to them through *The Veil* because of it. They use it and it uses them. Maybe they’re trying to change the digital world because there’s something in reality that they can’t fix or change. Give them a unique threat within *The Veil* that only they can defeat. Pervade their life with the mystery and ask them to reveal it with questions upon questions when they use their moves, especially when attempting to *Lift The Veil*.

Make them define the virtual reality of *The Veil*, piece by piece.

When *The Veil* turns its attention on them, create a threat and make threat moves.

- Have their subconscious bleed through in mixed reality more so than any others.
- Create a threat for their cyberbrain if it is/becomes sentient.
- Remember to allow them and prompt them to set the scene when entering the digital environment.
- If comfortable with it, push intimacy on them to get interesting subconscious engagements.

What use was time to those who’d soon achieve **Digital Immortality?**

Clyde DeSouza, Memories With Maya

THE ATTACHED

This could be taken very darkly, or quite innocently. I've had people have a little friend, whose hunger was simply driven by wanting to be safe and close to its Attached. I've also seen someone play it as a weapon that hungered for the death of specific people, with its own agenda unraveling as play continued. If they pick this, they have to understand that its agenda is up to you, not them. That's why, when they're parted, they are then themselves, implying that there is some hold over them, known or otherwise to them. They probably already realize this and are relinquishing some of this control because they want a mystery or prefer to have more prompts than most people, so give those prompts, that mystery—whatever they seem to be fishing for! Make the object's desires and agenda elusive, perhaps even elusive to you for a time. Just make impulsive decisions about what it wants when it enforces its will and the fiction will point you in the right decision. It also implies that they are apart from the other PCs because of their kind of relationship between the object and themselves. No one could understand that aside from them, so nudge another PC or NPC to explore that aspect with them as well as what happens when they start caring for people as much as the object.

- Have an NPC with an agenda that is in the way of the object's agenda.
- Create a threat for the object.
- Reveal origins of the object.
- Have the object speak to them constantly, not just when the PC talks to it.
- Ask them about their object and incorporate answers to understand what they are hoping for from it.
- Explore if the object could communicate with anyone other than the PC, if you haven't already done so or clarified that within the fiction.

**To condense fact from the
vapor of nuance.**

Snow Crash

THE CATABOLIST

When someone selects the Catabolist, they probably like the idea of free cybernetics. Now, how they choose to go about that will be interesting. Are they a creep who knocks people out and takes their cybernetics in the back room of an antique shop? Or are they trying to spread the word that cybernetics are needed to survive and wants to persuade them to be given to them. Or! Are they scrounging about for them? It could be a lot of things, but the main thread is power. They want it for free. So show them it has a cost. They probably have lots of negative tags after getting cybernetics integrated into themselves a few times. They have this omni-tool that they invented to help them get it so they're predisposed to liking things over people right off the bat. Their ideology will tell you how they view humanity. Poke and prod there.

- Showcase either the value of cybernetics or the downside of them, depending on their ideology.
- Integrate the ideology into the society, highlight them in the tech they see and hear about in the world around them. Consider making an NPC in contrast with their ideology that's likable and likes them, hopefully naturally having them think about their decisions about their ideology and testing their beliefs.
- If they use things speak on objects, make sure to incorporate answers into the fiction as though they were answers from named NPCs, if applicable.

**There is no end
To what a living world
Will demand of you.**

Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower

THE DYING

The Dying is a wild card. Are they going to blame people for their sickness and take them out, or do one last good thing in the world? What do you do with limited time in the land of the living? Try to find a cure and realize there is none? It's important that you know, as well as the player—there is no cure. They. Will. Die. But maybe their character doesn't know that? First off, check out what they take for their gifts. Make sure they are getting enough opportunities to use them. If it's an interpersonal thing or not, they're flying a fictional flag as to what direction they want their limited time in the game to go. Are they at peace with their fate? If the PCs aren't those types of players to deal with an interpersonal exchange about these kinds of questions they want to engage with some specific moves they have, the Dying needs an outlet to explore these things.

- Give them an outlet. Find out what they need. Love, a punching bag, etc.
- Give them a higher purpose based on questions you ask them, their goal, as the Dying, should be attainable, within reason.
- Ask them about death and their perception of it and incorporate it into the game.
- If they're being incorporated by the digital environment, make a new threat type for that part of *The Veil*.
- Make a threat if they choose 'circumstances' for their disease prognosis and then define what will make it progress.
- Make a threat for the disease itself if applicable, make sure it is not in conflict with the circumstances in which it will progress if they chose that for their options.

**The brightest light casts the
darkest shadow.**

Jess C. Scott, *The Darker Side of Life*

THE EMPATH

The Empath has their burden. See what they want out of people from that selection but also push there as though it's a belief. Find out if that's really what they think during play. The Empath can be a shit disturber with charge object and search feelings, but they can also be intensely interpersonally driven, depending on what options they've chosen. They feel apart from people by their very nature, so give them someone who tries to relate to them, especially if the PCs choose not to engage with them on that level.

- Contrast their burden selection with an NPC not in line with their views.
- Have someone in their life that tries to understand them, even if they fail to do so.
- Ask them to describe the flow whenever they use it and make a threat for it if becomes applicable to do. If something is upending the status quo and not completely within the PCs control, it most likely should be a threat.
- Incorporate their view of emotions and their views on the flow into the world. Their perception of emotion should influence how everyone else perceives these things as well.

Riko is going to have to fight meaner, **work smarter, and **push harder** than she's ever had to. And that's just to make it through the day.**

Necrotech by K.C. Alexander

THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive is interesting because, at first glance, they are very powerful. However, the first thing you see about them is that they are instantly on a leash. Holding the leash is the board, and they have their own Motivation(s). This is a great opportunity for the MC to incorporate the final question you want to incorporate for your campaign. The board could be manipulating them, or are being manipulated by a higher power, and the answer to the question could be interwoven into that relationship pretty easily! Again, with this playbook they probably feel apart, because they aren't really on the same level as the others. They've worked within the system to obtain some measure of power and wealth and use the system to their own ends to get what they want. Pay attention to how they rose to power and push there.

Have the board take interest in their life, especially when they share intimate moments with somebody else. They may want to use them for leverage over the Executive, especially if they've failed mandatory assignments. Work the ramifications of the intimate moments into the story and their lives at whatever pace you like, but make sure something comes of it.

- Generate NPCs from their past. Especially if they came from humble beginnings or have a mysterious past.
- Push the Motivation of the board every time you can, not just through mandatory contracts.
- Make the contracts they assign elusive and mysterious but in keeping with their agenda.
- Make a threat for the board.
- Make the corporation feel as real as any NPC, and wield them as such.

That we occasionally violate our own stated moral code does not imply that we are insincere in espousing that same code.

Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*

THE HONED

The superior human specimen. The Honed should be the best at physical stuff, no matter the circumstances. Anytime there are sports and physical exertion and limits of the human body questions, the MC should not be filling in these blanks, the Honed should be. They seek excellence, glory, and approval. They probably therefore, look down on those who do not aspire to be greater than they are now.

- Insert an NPC into their life that is the opposite of them and that is likable to inherently test their natural belief system—whether they've made it a belief or not.
- Give them people to save! People are weak! They need the Honed! The Honed needs humanity to do their cool stuff so they need to save people or do tasks.
- Make sure their views on cybernetics are known and push there. Via the state of the world, orchestrating conversations on the matter between PCs, or by injecting an NPC into the fiction for that specific purpose.
- Give them people to look down on, especially with cybernetics and see what they do.
- Show them human weakness on a personal level and then incorporate that weakness into the world.

On the three-hundredth anniversary of my birth, I finally managed to conquer the world.

Brandon Sanderson, *Perfect State*

THE HONORBOUND

The Honorbound is a character that defines Giri within the game. It can become very different with this playbook in play because a lot of the fiction's interpersonal play will come from Giri. If Giri is involved, the MC asks them about it instead of asking everyone. Not that other people's opinions on Giri don't matter, but the main focus will be from them specifically as that is their thing. Doing so could create drama when contrasting other people's view of it at the table, so the final say on it should be the Honorbound, as long as it's in keeping with the tone. They will probably be the only one who feels naturally obligated and have a strong sense of justice, either radical or passive. Pay attention to how they themselves approach the resolution of their missions. Do they owe Giri too? How do they themselves perceive honor and debt with their actions?

- Make a threat for the organization/institute they work for.
- Push Giri into the fiction more predominately than you may have otherwise.
- Make an NPC that needs guidance specifically about Giri and possibly used to showcase the burden the Honorbound has in their task.
- Make their own Giri missions FEEL like it's the most important thing to them. They have to enforce things that maybe they don't want to, but feel they must. They've selected the penalties themselves, so they probably want to explore and engage with those penalties.
- Riff off of their mission selections and Giri choices to get the right tone they're looking for.

**You can't hack your destiny,
brute force...you need a back
door, a side channel into Life.**

Clyde DeSouza

THE ONOMASTIC

The Onomastic is always hunted, so make them feel that way. They can't open up their Cybertome either, so draw in the mystery there. They have a hugely rich past setup for the MC to play on. What was the order like? How old were they when they became the last? What is that like? Again, no one could feel like them, so make sure you're exploring that. When they hit a fifth improvement and reveal that Cybertome, make sure that's going somewhere, always be probing so when it does open and you have that conversation, the MC as well as the player has some ideas! Do not take away their sanctuary, it is literally a sanctuary. It would have to be some insane circumstances for it to be taken away, of which, I cannot imagine. I am not a fan of taking away things that playbooks come with regardless, and this is a huge one.

- Create a threat for the Iconoclasts.
- Create a threat for the Cybertome, if applicable.
- Ask them about the order every chance you can.
- Create an NPC to reach out to them if the PCs aren't.
- Ask them to describe new parts of their sanctuary every time they go into it.
- Ask them how they survived this far, long, and how they were being hunted. With what tech, incorporate it all into the fiction.

I Have No Mouth **And I Must Scream.**

Harlan Ellison

THE SEEKER

Powered by faith, the Seeker is also a person apart from others, in that seemingly nobody could understand someone so connected to their belief system in the way that they do. The philosophy in the questions is what actual Buddhist monks contemplate in attempts to gain enlightenment. Hence that is what the Seeker generates and spends in its own cycle of seeking. People who dig mini games will dig this playbook as well. The surplus, want, enlightenment, and Cred cycle all form its own customizable mini game that people enjoy tinkering with and advancing. The most significant part of this playbook is the questions, so incorporate them into the game any chance you can get. They must feel like they're making progress or they'll not see the point of the playbook. Most of the time, by asking themselves the question and giving them situations in order to explore them, they'll come up with the answer they're looking for by themselves during play—all you need to do is be on the lookout for it.

- Make a threat to their faith based on its characteristics and incorporate the faith into a wider view of the world.
- Ask questions about their faith and what they seek every chance you get.
- Create NPCs that force them to test their tenets and have different points of view.
- Incorporate their idea of what faith and religion is to them into the game.
- Interweave the final question into the normal questions they ask themselves from their playbook, if possible.

**How long has it been raining?
Forever.**

Strange Days

THE WAYWARD

Being the Wayward in and of itself introduces a whole new dynamic not seen in some popular touchstones for the cyberpunk genre. Right away, you're introducing something that maybe isn't an urban sprawl. You're showing what you like about the land, their qualities and how it makes you feel. They can choose to be rooted in uplifting people by choosing to have the ability to do so, with the connection to nature—while still being able to have technological interactions. This will appeal to the hopeful cyberpunk player and someone who thinks technology can help humanity instead of destroy it. They have a homeland so maybe they are exploring, so the sense of adventure may also appeal to people. Their homeland is in peril, always. They aren't the only ones using Essence, and it harms their homeland. Anything to do with nature should be asked of them, as they are rooted in it. When Essence is used, their homeland is harmed.

- Always make a move when they use Essence, off-screen or on.
- Contrast the natural world with the technological, including the color in which you describe both.
- Ask questions about how technology and nature interact and what the ramifications are. Have an NPC that contrasts their views if the PCs don't.
- Ask them if their abilities are uncanny, magical, or technological and then incorporate the answers into the fiction.
- Find out if they want to be uplifting people or not and test them on it as though it were an active belief.
- Integrate how they nourish their homeland into the fiction and contrast it to a technological aspect in play if possible.

We are nature. Our every tinkering is nature, our every biological striving. We are what we are, and the world is ours.

Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*

ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS

When you're exploring mature questions about the future, it's ripe for conflict between players. One of the most important conversations you'll have is the one you have before you start playing. Set the expectations for what people want to see in the game and what their comfort level is. With a class like the Seeker, with faith-related situations and the mechanics of special moves happening, sometimes people can get uncomfortable, and that's important to take into consideration. It sucks when people don't get what they want out of the game and when people just don't have a good time, in general! Ask them what they liked and disliked each session and tailor it around them. Please use the X card, especially if you don't know each other that well.

The Veil can be unforgiving and the system can seem punishing to some players. You can do terrible things to others and witness terrible things yourselves. It makes for some great drama and interplay, but it also can make some problems. Have the expectations conversation. Every. Time.

- What is this game going to be rated? R? PG?
- Is there going to be sex, how detailed will we get with it if so? What constitutes an intimate moment?
- Is this going to be focused on emotions, interpersonal play, or light-hearted fun with lots of action?
- Sex, drugs, crime? What's off the table if people already know what makes them uncomfortable?
- Are topics like race, gender, sexual identity, or class going to be Ok topics to touch on? How about religion, politics etc. Check out the cultural and technological aspects people specifically want to touch on in the setting playbook.
- Are you going to keep within the tropes of cyberpunk or subvert them? Are you going to be the extroverted cop with cybernetics, who's well-adjusted and wants to solve the problem? Rather than an introvert with poor social skills who's often understood? What appeals to you and the other players and why?
- Will you defy stereotypes? In the future is it the same as today? How will the world have changed?
- Are you in the same geographical location?

BE AWARE

When you're introducing new content into the fiction, always think about what would be predictable. What has society and media concocted already for you to interact with and think about at every turn and think about what your spin is. What it is like in the future is up to you and the other players. It's still probably hard and horrible, life always is for protagonists in stories—but maybe instead of the procedural media we now watch, switch it up anytime you can think of something neat. See if the players dig it and roll with it if so. When they're seeing the events unfold, push them to discuss with each other what they think is going on and make it specifically NOT that, unless that's super interesting. Try not to go too much into clichés and what has already been done; this is the future and it's up to everyone at the table to defy these constraints on the genre. I urge you to be the punk.

PICK YOUR MOMENTS

When you MC, sometimes you may be tempted to believe that the moments that are mired with tragedy are the most important. As you can probably tell from this game, I think otherwise. I think it should be dark and gritty in order to show the players that they can turn to each other. It's most interesting to find out as much as you can about a protagonist. To watch them grow in their beliefs and to see what they confide in, who they confide in and what questions they bring up in play about themselves and the world is the most interesting aspects of role play for me. I dig the parts with conflict that have cool fight scenes, too. But I need to know the why of it, or it just doesn't hold interest for me. I feel like the system beats them down so that they find the humanity, the light, the good in one another. If they can't see that and it's always bleak—it's emotionally draining and probably not much fun in the long run. Coaxing hope and solace and joy from the players in an otherwise harsh world though, will be a story you'll always remember, cool fights or not.

**The truth has power
because it's the truth.
And because it is the truth,
that makes it just.**

Serial Experiments Lain

HOW TO BEGIN

In general, players have it pretty easy—all they need do is fill out their character sheets when they pick their playbook, work on the setting playbook with some prompting from you, and they're good. You have a bit more responsibility but, luckily, the players are going to help you with a lot of the important stuff, they just don't know it yet. There are some basic assumptions to start out with, and you should have some ideas of what you'd like to explore and see in the first game session based on your consumption of cyberpunk already. From there, while playing the first session, a lot of the world-building will happen organically as you encounter fundamental questions, like transportation—do cars fly? Or how much authority and regulation there is and how much of it is done by actual people—are security guards people, robots, or something in-between? Make it clear to the players that this first session is all about finding the tone of the game and just diving in and having fun building a world that everyone wants to play in. Trust and use the mechanics to take you to interesting places and build off from that.

You'll know the most about *The Veil*, since the players will probably not have read the book in its entirety. Assemble the play aids that come with the book—character sheets and reference sheets to go along with them, both MC sheets, and remember to always print the setting playbook as well. When they sit down and get ready—give the elevator pitch for each playbook. Answer any questions as best you can, you'll have more insight on the playbooks, having read them more in-depth than the players. Any questions about the setting, set aside to answer in play once you get started. If you want to get straight at the heart of what each playbook is about, check out the second page of every playbook, specifically the moves section, as what is intrinsic to them is usually found there, aside from their own unique playbook moves.

Make sure everyone introduces their protagonist fully. Name, look, and outlook. Outlook meaning personality, their disposition and their view of the world. Look, simply meaning what they look like, encompassing their identity from body to clothes and what other people's perception of them may be. If they have armor or cybernetics, what it looks like, if they have tattoos, body modifications, interesting haircuts, etc. The more detail they provide, the more they'll be in the headspace of their characters.

The most important thing about world building is to have the players fill out the setting playbook and the questions they decide to answer, either right away or as they come up during play. You can touch on some, all, or none of them, depending on how good an idea people already have about the setting they want to be in. I highly recommend having one cultural,

societal, and technological aspect added there to really add some more depth to the fiction. Ideally, I'd have each player answer a question, have a discussion about it and then have each one add at least one aspect they'd like to see by the end of filling out the setting playbook. It helps people buy into the fiction more so than you'd think.

Don't spotlight people too much during world building and the first session. It's cool to ask them probing questions about their protagonist to flesh them out, but make sure you're asking questions about the environment you're creating to all the players. Whenever a protagonist volunteer's information about themselves, ask questions about it and then ask them how that might apply to the world. When they say where they live, ask them to describe it in detail. What the area is like, what they like about it, what they don't like and how it's unique. All of them come from somewhere. Prompt the players to use the links move to generate some NPCs they're connected to. Make sure they're defining these NPCs. You control them but they should have a name, look, and outlook as well by the time you take over—make them feel like that NPC is really in their life and they know them.

Sometimes people are naturally good at adding to the fiction and others aren't. It's just how it is. Sometimes people are stuck in the mind frame that they aren't the ones contributing to the fiction at all, the MC is supposed to do that. Prompt them to participate so they realize that this is not the case and the fiction belongs to everybody. You want their ideas and unique brand of cyberpunk in the game. Everyone should have the things they want in there so they get invested in the world. This isn't the MC's world; this is the place where their characters grew up. Their cybernetics look how they want, they themselves look how they want to look, they dress to their preferences, their gender and identity is completely their own, and all of it should make a real impact on the fiction.

Ask lots of follow-up questions whenever there are vague answers given or whenever they specify something too broadly. Ask them if it's like something that you can relate to or something at the opposite ends of the spectrum from what you're thinking. Usually people are attempting to describe something within those two contrasting points. Remember to use touchstones everyone knows when referencing specific things, so that everyone at the table knows what people may be talking about. If they don't at least they can look into the touchstone so that they can in the future, if they like it.

After the world's built, the NPCs are populated and people are ready to go, remember to have everyone's Giri questions asked on their character sheet to tie player characters to one another before play begins. Use the Giri relationship map on the setting playbook to keep track of it and visualize it all, as well as have the players write it in their own boxes on their character sheet for good measure.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Populate their lives with interesting NPCs. Make them focus on their playbooks, find out what their homes look like and what interests them about their daily lives.

Springboard off of character creation. When they create their playbooks and introduce relationships, make sure that you're taking note of playbooks that have NPCs that come with the playbook already. Lots of them have integrated automatic threats, too. Don't label the threat but springboard off the ideas of those from their playbooks to find out what they might look like and how they might change up what's already being established. When something feels really interesting when they're talking about it and exploring their playbook, bring that to bear right away for them in a scene so you figure that out for the first session and get an idea of what they're looking for.

Never stop asking questions. I have reiterated this point often, and for good reason. The easiest thing you can do to make things interesting is to draw inspiration from the players participating in this collaborative game with you.

Find out where they're weak and push there. For every strength inherent in a playbook, there also must be a weakness for them. If they're seeking something, they must be searching for a reason. How are they lost? If they have families and loved ones, how do they feel about them and how can that be used to find out more about them? What would happen if those relationships were threatened, would they care? What beliefs can be tested here, what kind of drama are they wanting from their beliefs—physical or emotional?

It's important to point out moves as they happen. Especially if they don't know what all the moves are yet, make sure you're pointing them out as they happen and calling attention to *why* they happen. What is the trigger and why is it the best fit for what's happening? Sometimes the opposite happens because they aren't sure what they can do. When that happens and they seem stuck, ask them what they want to do, and, based on their playbook, recommend some stuff they can do so they know it's possible. Encourage them to play their protagonist however they like. If they want to be feared and have no one mess with them, allow them to act like that. When you know that's how they want to portray their character, let them know what moves could give them what they want as they're learning the system. No matter how they choose to play their character there will be a place to push at them and test them. As well as show the ramification of their actions, regardless of what their choice may be.

In the first session especially, it helps to frame scenes with more than one protagonist at all times, if possible. The first session is about seeing how these protagonists fit together and how they don't. Most of the time, people play these games to play with one another. If they don't get to be in scenes with other people, it might be strange or rapidly discouraging to some people. Try using some hard framing if needed to get people in a situation where they're interacting with each other. If you frame a scene with just one protagonist from the get-go, they might think that that's what this game is going to be like the entire time without discussing it despite not have a good time. This game can be about our individual stories and what we're doing, which is fine if people want that. But for the first session, have them explore if that should be the case or not before it gets cemented.

Mix it up, let them get into trouble from the get go, to some degree. Show them how moves work when in a conflict and give them a situation to showcase how moves snowball naturally and what each basic move is for. Get them into a confrontation and ask them why it's happening. Have some aggressive NPCs and see how they react, and you'll get a sense of what kind of protagonist they will be. Sometimes people think they want to be super bad ass and break teeth every chance they get but then when it comes down to it they act differently than they thought, maybe even surprising themselves. In the first session and after it, if they want to change anything about themselves, let them do it. Otherwise they might feel regretful that they've picked the playbook at all. Finding this stuff out and tweaking the fiction to everyone's tastes is how you'll get a lively, engaged table for the rest of your play together.

Remember. You can feel it if you hold your hand against your chest. It belongs to no one. It's our pulse, yours and mine. This is what brings us to the truth. It's what proves that we are the very world itself. Follow your instincts. The answer is already there.

Ergo Proxy

EXPLAINING THE VEIL

When you explain the game to people who haven't read the book at all and are trying to make characters, be wary of how much information you're giving them about specific areas of the game, tell them what they need to know as they need to know it rather than a massive information dump that they need to try and remember. Don't worry about the final question you want to have the game focus on for now. After you get the game going, you'll have a sense of where the game is headed, what question you want to explore, and what would make the best sense based on their beliefs and fictional flags.

When you explain states to people who are used to other types of mechanics, it might take them some time to understand them. They aren't stats, they're states. They are how you are feeling when a move triggers. Hopefully when you zoom in on that, you're more immersed into the character you're playing. It should give some context as to what their character's expression is, their demeanor, overall presentation, and their motivations. Also, if they're afraid in a firefight or fearless. When they manipulate people, how does that make them feel? With states, it's also less about how well you are doing something, and more about examining the protagonist more closely *when* they do something. They don't need to take ownership for the rolls result; when a roll triggers, something happens and we find out what it is. What you decide to make the miss about is up to you, but it doesn't have to be the protagonist's skill or even that they fail the action at all when they roll a miss. The states are also a great way to color the fiction more so than just by saying your emotion—allow them to elaborate as much as they wish, depicting their protagonist as they imagine them and take note of what kind of play they like most. Don't be afraid to call them on it sometimes, too, if they continue to just state their emotions, it's not helping color the scene very much, so don't be afraid to ask them why and to provide more detail and context around the emotion they say they are feeling. The easiest way to ask something like that is to ask them what is happening on camera right now, as it generally makes the players embellish more.

When you're embodying the NPCs and the world, make them feel like real people. If they're talking to an NPC, the NPC should be engaging and treating them as their relationship is described. If it's their family or lover, don't be afraid to embody that person. Ask questions about how those close members act towards them and then act that way. Push them to interact with the NPCs directly and give in character responses only. Only call them by their character name. If they feel stuck, give them ideas but let them choose what they want and think is cool. If they do something interesting and cool, get excited about it and spotlight them for it, taking note of it to bring more of it to the table in the future.

If someone is really boisterous and talks over other people and is constantly cutting them off, address it. You're mediating a conversation, so if someone pipes up and would like to do something, it's really important that they feel they can express that. In order to do anything, they have to speak up. If they miss their chance because they feel as though they can't chime in when they want to do it or can't because they aren't being heard, make sure you tell the person cutting them off to wait a second in order to hear what they have to say first, then they can tell you what they'd like to do. The players are counting on you to be the authority in the game as well as at the table. You know more than them, you know how the game is best played, and you are the only one who can make the world react to what they are saying, so make sure you hear everyone equally.

ONE-SHOTS

The tone of a one-shot game is going to be pretty different. There should still be some interpersonal stuff going on. But it will work best if there's a problem in all of their lives that can be resolved in a few hours. That problem should be something that requires their combined knowledge and skills. One-shots could be a job or objective they want to accomplish and need to succeed in together. If that's so, consider having it take part within the digital world or lean heavily on mixed reality. You have the ability to make anything happen there and although the Architect is more at home there, they can still bend and break the rules within the digital environment should they so choose. Have them go into someone's head when they're dreaming. Have them tamper with someone's memories and confront nightmares. The possibilities are endless, and in the digital environment you don't have to worry about what the world is like as much, since in there it could look like anything and be ever-changing.

Because it's a one shot, treat all of your NPCs like they're disposable. Just have fun with them and don't be afraid to off them. Their Motivation isn't as important in a one-shot as in a long-term campaign. All bets are off, just make sure people are having fun. Most likely, you'll be dropping a lot more hard moves and just having them react to things from moment to moment in order to continue the story. Try and tie a bow on something you think would be neat for the playbooks to discover or a revelation that would be fitting for all of them. Have NPCs that run the place throw their weight around or have a mystery—one that can be solved within the time you have—unfold.

In a one shot, when you frame scenes, try and get all of them into the same place to do something and then ask why they're there. I usually begin in the middle of something going on and they're filling in the gaps as they go, but since they're together facing something in common, they're all more likely to stick together and see this imminent threat/mystery etc. through together. You might choose to allow people to have a couple more

moves for their playbook and consider just having them not fill in their state modifiers at all until you get going and they begin reacting to the world. As they do, have them then fill in the modifiers as they go based on feels right for their character when events are unfolding. That way you can get playing right away and just ask lots of questions as you're going to fill in the blanks that are coming up in the fiction. Whether or not you do Giri questions and fill out the setting playbook is up to you, as it can really eat into your time but also reward you with a lot of events having already occurred as well as a fleshed out setting. Another way to really speed things up is discuss the touchstones everyone has before, shoot them a couple ideas and then pre fill out the playbooks as well as the setting, in order to start even faster.

Something to consider to speed things up even more so, is tailoring love letters to the players or playbooks. Love letters usually have a little bit of fiction and flavor and a custom moves that drives the fiction forward immediately at the start of play. Usually listing multiple options, the player selects the most appealing thing to them, usually creating a vague scenario that relates to the other protagonists. When you have all the choices all tailored towards a commonality you propel the fiction right away and tie the players together while still playing to find out what happens next.

**There's loyalty that protects
secrets and loyalty that
projects the truth. You cannot
serve both masters,
so which loyalty is yours?**

Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence

The most important thing on the sheet is to test the beliefs of the protagonists whenever possible. Through their growth and characterization, we evolve the fiction organically. If there are a lot of players, you may need to write specific ones you plan to test this session, otherwise it might be unrealistic to try and interact with all 3 beliefs for all of the players, depending on how many you have. It's the first session, a lot is going on and everyone is acclimatizing to playing the game and acclimatizing to one another. I suggest being as focused as possible and touching on one belief per player makes your work load easier, enabling you to be more focused, all of the time. Players have a responsibility to be testing their own beliefs too, and their incentive comes in the form of improvements by way of XP, primarily through the exploration of said beliefs.

On the first session sheet, there are multiple sections:

The colors you choose to describe the world you're in, specifically when describing the natural versus technological, adds a lot of immersion to play. What touchstones are people introducing before the game and during? By their indications, you can then use their touchstones to present the colors and tone they already like and identify with.

Before the start of the first session, there will always be NPCs introduced because players use the link move when nearing the end of working through the setting playbook. **As the PCs introduce the NPCs, there's a space for writing them down to keep track of them**, whomever they may choose to inject into their fictional lives. Use the same spot to write down the NPCs you yourself create during play, so that all of the NPCs are in one contained area for you to keep track of.

If anyone touches on technological aspects being brought into the fiction, there is a space to write them down—are there flying cars? Can people download memories or upload skills? What technologies are being brought up a lot and need to be remembered? Are there deeper questions about technologies that need to be answered or touched on during play?

Similarly to technological aspects, there is also a place for cultural and societal ones. Sometimes the technological may overlap with these cultural or societal aspects, but having to classify them in one or the other helps to explore the aspect in a specific direction you find more compelling. It also shows if you're balancing those aspects or leaning heavily on one or the other.

Lastly, **there's a spot for stakes questions, used for you to deliberately leave open and wonder about**, ultimately being answered in play. Situations you're not sure about based on what's happened so far, but feel important to explore in the fiction deserve a stakes question. Specific interactions could raise these, or ramifications of conflicts that are not currently on camera because the PCs aren't yet directly interacting with the fallout, generally all merit stakes questions.

After a solid first session I learn a whole bunch about what the players want and what we all find exciting to play. We decide to do something a bit different by having the streets be pristine, as the constant work of cleaning AI bots and people that scrounge for parts to sell or reuse keeps refuse and all that off the ground; couple that with advanced nanotechnology and building materials, it means that lots of buildings in wealthier districts even repair themselves and get stronger over time. In not-so-wealthy areas, people often build their own materials with cheap resins and strong plastics for things that need repairing, so buildings with plastic doors or windows and such are common.

I decide to use warm colors to describe technology and those resins and plastics that highlight the dull, cold natural materials like wood, as well the sky and other natural elements.

We talk a bit about wearable technology and storage and decide that computing has gone molecular and that data is highly regulated – an actual Artificial Super Intelligence was created but, when it was, nobody really knows what happened, but the internet shut down and everyone connected to it and jacked in (i.e., the affluent world) died. Or their minds were trapped inside and their bodies died. Either way, the official stance is that The Internet no longer exists and the world has just gotten back on its feet. The ASI was never heard from again after The Fall (when everyone who was connected died) but now data is heavily regulated, and so are networks.

Mixed Reality is made possible by way of integrating nodes built into all structures and peoples' personal devices that pick-up and broadcast to the neurochips everyone gets by a very young age, all personalized to people.

The major Chaebol conglomerates were built up by religious figures that became extremely popular after The Fall, for obvious reasons. That's how they made their money and the major ones in South Korea succeeded in creating what they call Transcendence Tech, which allows the networking of minds. It's highly illegal outside of religious ceremonies and altogether banned in most countries other than South Korea, where it was developed and where it keeps the masses coming back for more. Mass religious figures were inspired mostly by the huge stadium-filled prayer sessions and certain Nigerian pastors.

The players decide they want to play cops, but cops that are foreigners that work for a kind of United Nations peacekeeping service that is mixed in with the regular police force to help with the regulation of data and artificial intelligence. It was a concession South Korea had to make because of Transcendence tech.

Transcendence tech has been modified to allow for mind-maps, which can be used to live through other peoples' memories, or acquire certain skills. The downside is that skills all come with the memories that go along with

them—people don't learn skills in a vacuum, and usually the less you pay, the worse the integration of the map; you won't be able to distinguish your memories from the false ones for example. Some people pay a premium to get RNA mapping as well so that muscle memory gets worked in.

There is a vast Matter-Net which consists of small drones that are constantly flying around en masse above the city, taking stuff to where it needs to go, but because data is so tightly regulated in regards to how much a computer, network, or person can own and have on their person, we decide that couriers are still one of the few professions that people do, especially when one wants to be discrete. Therefore, no flying cars, but there are smart cars—people even have to have special permits to drive manually.

For important NPCs, I've got the Police Chief, who absolutely loathes the force and the concession his government made to let it be there—now they're a constant reminder. We've got Sujung Han, who leads to Data Force and whose respect they're going to have to earn, but she's giving them a chance since they have to work together. There's Ji Yong, who is the head of SamSun, the wealthiest Chaebol that started up the whole Transcendence tech thing and the lobbying that got it past certain legal hurdles. And then there are a couple of relationships the PCs brought in—one guy on the force, a brother-in-law, who helped get them into a prayer session with Ji Yong, and a woman from the refugee area along the western banks of the Han River who they talked out of doing something stupid overseas, so set them up with a mind mapper.

Lots of good stuff to work with, now I can move on to the scenario sheet to brainstorm some future sessions using these elements.

**No one in the world gets
what they want and **that is**
beautiful.**

Ernest Cline, Ready Player One

AFTER THE FIRST SESSION

After the first session you should have the tone of the game pretty well established, but have a discussion with everybody about that. Is everyone cool with the tone? Was there stuff in there they really liked and didn't like? You'll have noted NPCs that the players found interesting, some of which you might choose to use in the future. You'll have fallout from whatever they got up to in the first session and some threats that immersed. You'll have the makings of a nice bunch of plot hooks with imagined catastrophes and consequences. Right now, maybe you're plotting out how to get that protagonist to confront this threat or tweaking an NPC's Motivation to get them to do something you think would be neat. But wait...that means you're not playing to find out what happens anymore, right? You'd set yourself up to be disappointed because you can't really decide what's going to happen. Either the dice or the players are going to mess up your plans, I promise. The story can't be contained my friend, just play to find out what happens and set up your threats from the first session, do not plan the story out.

A threat is a notable NPC within the fiction that is going to make a difference in the status quo in that fiction so far. The status quo being what is already established or what is known by the protagonists and players, right now. A threat aims to change that—their personality, responsibilities, allegiances, power, relationships, will all lead to the status quo being changed, broken, or destroyed. The NPC may not be aware of this directly or could have the status quo changing as a direct Motivation for what they do. Anytime an NPC has such a change in the current fiction, they should be labelled as a threat. When you portray these NPCs as threats in the game—in terms of telling a good story and using this system to tell it, it'll all fall into place. It's that easy. Other than thinking about what should be labelled a threat, just go watch or read some cyberpunk. Not the worst prep work, is it?

Once you have had some time to think about and reflect on your game and consumed some more cyberpunk media, take all of those ideas about what you think should be considered a threat from the MC first Session sheet, and turn it into prep to solidify it—which is to say the next step is to fill out the scenario sheet. On there, you'll lay down the question you want to reverse engineer and are wanting to explore in the fiction and much more. The next section is going to explain how to do all of that, as well as give you some ideas about how to describe technology and some major themes and tropes of the genre you might want to integrate and explore. So grab your first Session worksheet and apply it to the next chapter to create your long-term campaign by filling in the Scenario sheet which is used specifically to prepare for that interesting direction you're wanting to take the game—and remember the important points you need to remember, in order to bring that to your fiction.

THREATS

Prep work is not the same as plotting out the future. It's solidifying what has already occurred in the fiction and committing to the Motivation of an NPC that will end up changing the fiction substantially. When you want to inject a plot, what you actually want in *The Veil*, is a threat. Threats are a narrative force of nature; they change what's around them with their wants and needs and they're the big players in your world. Eventually, you'll also need to create a main antagonist, which is a special threat that exerts itself on the status quo of the established fiction far more than any normal threat. It is something that unifies and focuses the threats, with or without their knowing, and upends the current known fiction by directly asserting itself. From that, you explore the final question. It is also what will mainly drive the future of your world, aside from the protagonists themselves. These two things, threats and the main antagonist, is what changes and molds your fiction as they exert their will on your world.

The prep work you do becomes a part of *The Veil* organically, the same as when the fiction changes from the protagonists doing, or not doing things in the fiction. Solidifying a threat occurs when you take your thoughts about a threat and put it on paper, for good. When you do this, you are saying that these threats are real and solidified within the fiction now. For better or worse they are now defined and pursue that concrete Motivation. These decisions about your threats matter as much as any moves made by the protagonists and the ramifications of them. The reason why you take the time between each session to do prep work, is to make sure your idea of these threats is cemented in your mind. We translate that idea about the threat and classify it into a type of threat. You're committing them to the fiction as such—so it should not be changed. If you change a threat's type, it should be because the fiction dictates it only, otherwise who knows what's going to happen since you're uprooting the established fiction, and how the threat acts needs to make sense for what's happened so far. The only thing that should ever change things now, is whatever happens during the next session.

CREATING A THREAT

Each threat you depict is going to be an individual, organization, environment, or construct that threatens the protagonists in some way. It could be the things they care about or the things that let them obtain the things they want. They could be as yet unknown to the protagonist or it could be a direct threat that intervenes and is known by all of them. An elusive artificial intelligence, for example, could be a threat by manipulating them into accomplishing its own agenda and they may or may not even be aware of it—but it's still a threat because it's changing the fiction substantially with its Motivation. On the other hand, a threat could just be an NPC who is their friend, but getting in the way of something they want. As long as their Motivation is going to change the fiction in what you deem a substantial way, they should be considered a threat.

When you create a new threat:

- Choose a threat type and subtype.
- Create the NPC cast and description.
- Assign stakes questions, if necessary.
- Design any custom moves to the threat you feel are necessary to it.

**There's a sameness
to streetlife. On every world
I've ever been, the same
underlying patterns play out,
flaunt and vaunt, buy and sell,
like some distilled essence
of human behavior seeping
out from whatever clanking
political machine has been
dropped on it from above."**

Richard K. Morgan, *Altered Carbon*

THREAT TYPES

When you go to assign a threat a type and subtype there are five types of threats. Choose one you think would fit them best.

- Consumed
- Gambit
- Devotion
- Pestilence
- Domain

Threat types are meant to describe the overarching Motivation of a threat. This Motivation carries with it specific moves at your disposal that are the means in which that threat expresses itself in the fiction. Each type is different and has its own moves.

Once you've picked a threat type, pick a subtype. Subtypes help define the rising action towards the conflict that they're building within the fiction. Subtypes have a Motivation that they follow almost as though it were an impulse. The NPCs around these threats have their own thing going on still, but this specific threat, whatever it is, needs this thing and it's every action is in pursuit of the realization of its Motivation, which ends up changing the fiction substantially. Through basic MC moves and your threat moves, you will embody these threats and pursue this Motivation relentlessly for them. Anything that is a threat should have one singular Motivation. If you find them beginning to not act as their type and the moves do not fit right, they are probably not labelled as the proper threat type for them. With your threat moves and Motivation you should be able to find a good placement for your threats or even a new angle in which to view that threat, reclassifying it as something that better defines it after more play.

CONSUMED

Threat types that are classified as consumed are attempting to drastically change the order or status quo they perceive as the individual. In the doing, they see nothing else, radically personifying the change in status quo touched on often for threats. They could also be trying to stop a change from coming that isn't in line with what they themselves want but usually in a radical way of opposition. Remember that the status quo may not be the actual status quo socially within the fiction, it could certainly apply to that, but rather I'm referring to what we know is true in the fiction already, not necessarily a government or social structure in place.

THREAT SUBTYPES:

- Martyr (Motivation: Craves sacrifice, its own or others)
- Fanatic (Motivation: Craves their own sense of justice, with consequences of their own in mind.)
- Coward (Motivation: Craves respect and security)
- Crowd (Motivation: Craves immediate change that escalates into a violent nature)
- Approval (Motivation: Craves acceptance, from themselves and or others)

MC MOVES:

- Sacrifice to turn ripples into waves.
- Showcase the nature of the environment it occupies.
- Show contempt to someone powerful.
- Proposition with strings attached, to promote themselves or cause.
- Desperately offer something, uncertain of recompense.
- Take someone powerful and important.
- Threaten something vulnerable and crucial.
- Destroy a symbol in opposition to their own beliefs.
- Stubbornly refuse aid from someone not in line with their own views.

When most tame, consumed threat types incite ideas that can be flamed directly into concrete actions, often it escalates to violence. If there is a figurehead standing for this change, often the people associated with them consume themselves with the cause and can turn fickle to the figurehead, should things not go their way.

GAMBIT

These are forces usually in motion instructed by a higher power directly. They are used to leverage their own resources into getting something they wish for. They can be clever and conniving for their masters but are often used as pawns on a chess board, no matter their value. They are usually loyal to the higher power or unaware of being manipulated, thinking that they are acting of their own accord and ambitions when clearly not when viewed from an outsider's perspective.

THREAT SUBTYPES:

- Petty (Motivation: To steal or take power from the exposed)
- Artful (Motivation: To expose an enemy through subterfuge)
- Insulate (Motivation: To give something in order to protect itself)
- Tireless (Motivation: To consume someone else's power and make it their own)
- Duplicity (Motivation: To make and exploit new weaknesses)

MC MOVES:

- Reveal a plot coming to fruition.
- Offer an allegiance or gift, temporary or lasting.
- Emblazon a weakness for all to see.
- Feature a strength to an exclusive audience.
- Mount an attack on someone cautiously.
- Strike someone without provocation or pause immediately, without hedging bets.
- Use hesitation or delays to maneuver and further their own Motivation.
- Demand special attentions and consideration based on status.
- Offer someone else's allies something they want.

When you look at the moves and types of a gambit, what normally comes to mind is a corporation or a powerful NPC. They will be and should be powerful, but not as powerful as whatever is pulling on their strings. Ultimately, they too are puppets in the game despite their position to exert considerable influence. It could be a high ranking corporate executive trying to perform a hostile takeover, or someone attempting to secure a development project that's trying to benefit the area. *How* they go about it, even if the act itself they want to accomplish is innocent, is what ultimately defines what type of threat they are.

DEVOTION

When a singular emotion overtakes someone, they become driven by their that devotion, completely. Remember that a threat can be anything, from a science experiment gone awry, an artificial intelligence obsessed with or consumed by one emotion, an organization bent on revenge, or an individual madly in love. They can't see the consequences of their actions, and display only their devotion. They are usually singular, not inciting followers as the consumed usually do, for who could truly understand what they go through?

THREAT SUBTYPE:

- Vengeance (Motivation: To get even, at any cost)
- Love (Motivation: To protect their devotion, even at the cost of something or everything else most precious to them)
- Elegance (Motivation: To sacrifice in order to maintain face and or appearances)
- Fury (Motivation: To cause those around them pain and degradation even at great cost)
- Envy (Motivation: To take but never be sated)

MC MOVES

- Take something valuable, use it for an unintended purpose or recklessly.
- Pursue something without recourse.
- Flourish its nature to others.
- Forfeit a great deal of resources or leverage them for an advantage.
- Yield all they have regardless of gaining nothing.
- Adhere to a tradition in the face of an injustice or slight.
- Supplicate others for guidance or help when faced with a threat.
- Destroy or defile something recklessly and willfully.

Usually something consumed with devotion as a threat is consumed by an intense emotion. Lust, grief, jealousy, and rage are most common, but many emotions can be found to encapsulate devotion. They want the object and focus of this thing at the price of their own existence. They often only surround themselves with people who they feel could understand them or at least, empathize with them. They care little for anyone who can't see their point of view regardless of past circumstances, unless it's the object of their passion. They are also often ignorant of something very obviously important.

PESTILENCE

Circumstances that people have usually brought on themselves create a pestilence. It threatens the way of life of people in the area where it's present. A pestilence usually builds over time, being contained by the situation or person that creates it until it becomes too big to control or, something causes it to lose containment. Otherwise, with attention it furthers the Motivation of someone who nourishes it in order to get what they wish.

THREAT SUBTYPE

- Replicate (Motivation: To propagate itself into more of it as fast as possible)
- Apparition (Motivation: To control others thoughts, actions and ideologies)
- Obliterate (Motivation: To upend the status quo, cause damage, death, or strife)
- Bond (Motivation: To reach out, entangle, or form a connection with something else)
- Foster (Motivation: To expose an idea or fallacy within or about something else)

MC MOVES

- Release something or break a barrier down.
- Give birth to something new or unlike what is currently known.
- Propagate chaos, fear or death.
- Take on the aspects of someone important in the fiction.
- Take on the opposite characteristics of the current status quo.
- To reach out and communicate in an unusual way.
- Take sustenance, whatever it may be.
- Alter or corrupt a facet of which it occupies.
- Exploit an unrelated conflict or conquest.

Because there is something at least initially manipulating them, there is always a Motivation behind this force of nature or technology. They are usually driven by something powerful, like a megacorp or entity that has the resources or knowledge to unlock something of this potential. The pestilence often begins as something fragile that reflects something in society or humanity, which then begins to transcend its makers and take on a Motivation of its own.

DOMAIN

Domain threats are regions or parts of the world that endanger the status quo by their very existence. They will undermine the security of people living in them or close by. They are the living embodiment of a something hazardous within nature or manmade structures with often initial unforeseen consequences.

THREAT SUBTYPES

- Strife (Motivation: To exemplify and inseminate abhorrent qualities in someone/something)
- Illusion (Motivation: To entice or enthrall with a different point of view)
- Bastion (Motivation: To restrict and seal off access to protect itself)
- Devour (Motivation: To absorb, dominate or exhaust)
- Entangle (Motivation: To capture, imprison or infuriate)

MC MOVES

- To modify, turn, shift, or move.
- Produce a new path or arrangement.
- Produce an escort, envoy or guide.
- Seal off something with force and or technology.
- Seize something by whatever means it has.
- Cover, disguise or camouflage something.
- Display qualities of a PCs nature.
- Infest and overtake everything in sight.
- Display the reality underneath.

When you make a domain threat, it can be as big or as small as you want. It could be a whole area of the globe like a continent, a city, or a building, or just a small space within it. What made the domain a threat initially could have been created by a protagonist or NPC, but now it has a life of its own.

DESCRIPTION

Whenever you make a threat, make sure to include the description. Within it, make sure you write down the NPCs within that apply to it. Multiple things and people can have the same Motivation so can be classified under it. In this section, make sure you place all of the NPCs within, if applicable. As you learn more and introduce more NPCs into your world, you might find that they fit nicely into a threat when you're doing prep later. Plop them in there and you're good to go; once you know how they fit into the fiction you're set. Tags for specific tech you think they would possess may be put here, or even what they bring as a cultural aspect, too.

The description should be a reminder for you of what is going on with them, what they're involved with directly, and what the stakes are for them. Whatever is intrinsically at the heart of the conflict should be placed there. That way, if you don't end up playing for a while, when you come back you still know exactly what's going on. Whatever keeps them from their Motivation, what they specifically want, and what is currently in contention, should all be written there.

THREAT MOVES

When you make a threat and then classify it under a subtype, you get the MC moves listed there for them. Whenever you make moves within the fiction, these special threat moves are now available to you as well. What you should always be considering though, is the specific threat making the move in the fiction. Threats can't just wield any threat move, only their own. When you as an MC have the opportunity to make a move, you'll notice one of the options listed in your basic moves is to make a threat move. While the normal moves make sense for normal fiction events, when a threat is directly involved, it should be making its specific moves as well as any custom moves you may have created for it. When the threats Motivation should come into play in the fiction, make a threat move. To directly have a threat interact with a PC to its full potential, consider giving them a previously mentioned custom move, too.

CUSTOM MOVES

When you have specific threats that interact with the players directly or indirectly, you may want to have custom moves for it. It can be a move for when they enter a specific place on your map too. Maybe it's treacherous or difficult, so when they interact with that part of the environment, it makes sense that it would be handled with a roll. Risk may apply, but if there's something specifically that the environment wants to/should do, then make a custom move for it. It could go something like this one from the threats section above:

- When you traverse the Spire of Krajit, roll. On a 10+, you evade the nanobot swarm that patrols there. On a 7–9, the MC chooses one.
 - The nanobot swarm finds you and drives each member of your team to different entrances
 - A nanobot finds you and embeds itself into your clothing/skin/cybernetics
 - They spire activates a self-defense mechanism that activates negative tags

This was made because the protagonists were infiltrating an ancient ruin. The whole area is patrolled by some nanobot technology that was released there and they decided to make the trek up to the tower anyways because they wanted information contained within those ruins. When they went to the ruins, it was pre-established that there was danger with nanobot tech, so my job was really easy. I classified it as a domain with the subtype of bastion which wants to protect itself. It sealed off the ruins in an obvious and technological way, which was to have flying swarms of tech that protects its innards. Since I knew they were going to the spire at the end of the last session, I made the custom move for it so I would be ready for them next time. The NPCs for the cast are the nanobots, and the description is that it's holding knowledge they want and that it wants to protect itself.

You can also add what happens on a miss if you really have a cemented idea of what a miss may entail. But personally, I don't think a miss ever needs to be defined; we know what happens, the MC makes a move as hard as they like. It can be anything, so why define it, really?

STRUCTURE

It's important that all moves have the same structure as any other moves. All moves should have a trigger for when they come into play. "When X...", then "...the outcome Y." Most of the time Y is a roll, but it doesn't have to be. It can just be when X happens, Y just happens. Most of the time, the players will be able to have a say in the outcome, which is when you will integrate strong hits and weak hits. Whenever a roll happens, define what happens for either, or specify what happens if there's a hit, either a strong or a weak hit if you don't think it requires that much detail.

Whenever there is a roll, a strong hit (10+), means it should work out in the player's favor and you should ask them how they succeed at it. The narrative control or baton etc., is in their control. On a weak hit, (7-9), you share the narrative. They get a bit of a say but there is a cost or complication that occurs in order to get the thing they want. Sometimes they have a choice: will they do the thing and incur the cost, or stop it? A miss, (6-) means you make your move as hard as you like. Generally, it will be a bad thing, but it could be a new opportunity with possible ramifications, and telling them the consequences for succeeding at this as well.

There should be no confusion when making the move. The defined trigger should be specific to a situation and not left in doubt. Try to be as clear as you can; it should also be integrated into the fiction as much as possible. This way when we pull out to do the dice roll, it's not for too long and the fiction continues naturally. The longer you're examining a roll or if you have to do another roll because of this roll, the longer you're out of the fiction and the lengthier a break takes place. When a break happens, there will be a disconnect between the fiction and the players that you'll want to avoid, in order to keep them and yourself immersed in the story. A trigger should set the circumstance whereas the outcome should contribute to the fiction and push it forward in the tone and manner in which you want your fiction to go.

Make sure the trigger is something that makes sense for your threat. That it's in the "spirit" of it, or of the environment or whatever you're creating it for. If it's a custom playbook move, make sure it's in keeping with that playbook. The moves tell the player what that playbook is about, so there's some inherent guidelines with it when you read it as to what custom moves would work well and what would not.

Try to make your outcomes integrate the fiction and tone as much as possible. Make the fact that they got what they wanted on a weak and strong hit, but drive the story further with the complications on a weak hit. On a 10+, I am of the mind to give the narrative control directly to the player, but if you're not, make it something really cool. A strong hit for me, is them doing what they saw themselves doing in their own mind.

For effects, you can choose a number of things to have happen:

- Direct effects, which will tell you directly what happens next in the fiction, not interpreted by options given by the MC. When X happens and you roll Y this happens.
- Increasing chances, giving them +1 forward or ongoing to a certain situation.
- Increase options to an existing move, such as more questions to the sway move or analyze move.
- Inflict harm.
- Have options to choose from, for the MC or the player, listed after the roll.
- Generate a currency. Most common in *The Veil* is generating hold which is spent during an interaction or set of circumstances specified to get what you want.
- Questions, similar to hold but more immediate. Hold is generally over an interaction whereas questions are asked right away.

You can apply custom moves to almost any situation in *The Veil* where you think a custom move is required. In special situations, your threats should all probably have custom moves, unique items or tech, new character custom moves. Anytime you want to bring your own flavor to the fiction. When you do make custom moves, decide if the protagonists should know about it or not, and if so, make sure they can see it and that it's visible so when they do enter those circumstances that trigger the move, they are already aware if they should be.

Since basic moves are so broad, custom moves are used in a way to interact with the world between those moves where you feel the players shouldn't just be able to "just do it." Sometimes players will get themselves into specific circumstances unique to the world you've all built that may require a custom move. If people are using *Inception* like tech at a widespread level, that would probably call for one. If people want to hack others in such a way that neutralize doesn't feel like it applies, or they want more options to choose from, then a custom move could be called for. It all depends on the flavor of your game. Maybe like in *Ghost in the Shell*, people hack people's ghosts and re write their memories to carry out their own Motivations. Basic moves won't cover something that specific that you want to have in your game world.

If the PCs themselves are changing a lot and with they could do specific things with their characters when playing a long campaign especially, that's a perfect time to introduce custom moves. Help them tailor their own moves to their liking and how it suits their PC. It could be custom moves for NPCs that are becoming a part of the main cast in the fiction that aren't threats; like when they seek out a specific character for information,

maybe how much he's able to provide could be a custom move. Make sure their new moves inform the fiction and are as cool as the moves they already like about their playbook.

You can also use moves to help frame scenes. If you want, create a move in order to skip looking for information and just have it based on a roll. Or maybe they want to make a plan, roll, and see if there are complications; if so, maybe that's the next scene you frame with them. A group is going to have its own things it finds interesting, so try and zoom in on those as much as possible. If people want a custom move to skip over details but there's a situation where you feel it could turn out one way or another, chances are a custom move is the nice middle ground you're looking for.

If players miss games and need to be caught up, you can create custom moves to solve that as well if the fiction isn't clear what they should and should not know. Or, if you have an interaction in mind to set off a one-shot game, you could create a custom move to dictate the opening circumstances.

In the original Apocalypse World, which this game relies on for mechanics and framework, the "Advanced Fuckery" chapter included is the original framework explained for Powered by the Apocalypse Games. If there are more things you want to do and check out, I advise looking at that chapter in particular. The writer goes in depth about his system, custom moves, and a lot of other ideas and efforts from other players.

**The future is not
a straight line. It is filled
with many crossroads. There
must be a future that we can
choose for ourselves.**

Akira

MAJOR ANTAGONIST

After the first session you'll have a bunch of threats you've just made. Now we need to tie these threats together. Although this may need another session, if you have an idea or it's already manifested in the fiction – you can prep it now, too. The first thing we need to think about is the final question. The best cyberpunk media is compelling and has an impact on the viewer or reader because it poses interesting questions to the reader, which is what *The Veil* seeks to do as well. When playing through a scenario that you create in *The Veil*, you should be constantly posing questions to the players, and when a scenario ends, you want the players to go home thinking about this final question at the heart of the scenario. There are several ways to do this but first things first, you'll want to start out with that goal in mind—what question do I want the players to go home thinking about?

Maybe they're casually going about hacking into systems, minds, and dreams. So then, maybe the theme is about knowledge/mind intrusion. Maybe they're going about killing people to get what they want, are they no better than common themes in cyberpunk-like suppression and social decay? Perhaps the final question focuses on these things. What emotions are they displaying? Probably the ones that they're comfortable with. Maybe the theme can be about human emotion and the main antagonist has something to do with eliciting certain feelings from them as a social experiment. The possibilities are endless. When you do come up with that question you'd like to explore based on what the protagonists have done so far, we also need the main antagonist.

The main antagonist should be the commonality that ties all of these threats together and is trying to explore that same final question, or is in contention with it themselves, which causes the players to ask it of themselves as they confront the antagonist.

THE SCENARIO SHEET

The MC sheet has areas that outline several things to be filled in. There are a number of areas and terms you'll want to familiarize yourself with:

There is your main antagonist, which is going to be the main force behind both the final question, and the disruption that answering that question is causing.

The final question is found below the main antagonist and is where you write down the **question that the main antagonist is answering in their own way, which is causing a disruption to the status quo** (which causes the PCs to become involved). The final question is so named because you want the players to go home thinking about that question when the scenario is over and it will hopefully be what they think about when they recall the game later on.

The end goal is where you write in **the main antagonist's ultimate goal**. It is their answer to the final question and upsets the fiction. There are two spaces below the end goal where you can indicate how the main antagonist will go about accomplishing their goal. There are only two steps, with a possible failure or success to write, but these are not set in stone. The players will likely cause you to constantly re-evaluate how the main antagonist will go about accomplishing their task.

There are organizations, which are groups that have a Motivation, just as threats and NPCs do, which should naturally bring themselves into contention with the player characters, should they manifest in the fiction.

There is a space to write in some **cultural or societal aspects to the setting** which you might want to introduce. This may help reinforce the final question or may just be interesting implications or tidbits you found the players latched onto during the first session.

There is a space to write in some **interesting technological aspects, and implications** for it that you may want to introduce, with ramifications of those aspects being injected into play.

There are **two other sections for specific threats, either of which may be affiliated with the organizations already written down**. These are direct players that will come into play and oppose the PCs. Their Motivation could align with organizations, or not, but they should always conflict with the PCs'.

While there are many different types of ways to pose this question to your players, the most direct way is a murder mystery. A murder mystery has structure and focus to it. They have culprits and they have questions that are implicit in their structure—who did it, how did they do it, and why? It's usually the motivation that is the most interesting and the final thing to be revealed, and by aligning the culprit's Motivation with the question we want

our players to go home asking, we can easily fulfill our own Motivation as MC to have the characters go home thinking about the final question. To put it another way, the murderer was driven to murder expressly because they were trying to answer the question. So if the question you want your players to go home thinking about is, “How can a completely synthetic human, whose only organic part left of them is their brain, reproduce?” then the murderer as well, in wrestling with that same issue, was driven to murder, as seen in the movie *Ghost in the Shell*. In the true spirit of the genre, the question should often be something that makes us contemplate our humanity in some way. Technology is almost always at the heart of what allows for this exploration of ourselves, and since technology is so pervasive in cyberpunk, the hope is that there is that much to explore.

Therefore, we should think of an adventure as a series of questions, whether you choose to use the murder mystery format or not. One thing to remember is that the final question that the players need to take home need not be revealed at the end. Oftentimes, this question is present among a slew of other questions that are implicit in the setting. There are a lot of final questions that are going to be obvious and that will probably need to be posed and explored through play regardless. This final question might be something as simple as one that players will ask themselves when they learn about certain technologies that are present and are taken for granted in *The Veil*; questions like, how can I ever be sure of what I’m seeing if I’m always plugged into VR? Since I can dive into another person’s subconscious and tamper with them, how do I know that hasn’t happened to me, or isn’t happening to me right now? And so on. What makes the final question the final question is not when it comes up in play, but the stance that the main adversary takes in regards to it. This does not mean that even the adversary’s answer to the final question need be revealed at the end. Maybe we find out right away when they kill someone and then justify it by saying that the person they killed was a clone of themselves. Maybe that’s the question that you want the players to take home, and we already know the adversary’s stance. All of the pieces are in place in the first five minutes, but it’s the final question because you’re going to be exploring that question throughout the scenario, be providing dissenting views in the form of events and non-player characters, and then forcing the players to take a stance on it in the fiction. Once they do, that scenario will be resolved and there will be a new question to keep driving home in the next scenario.

If you think about it, every adventure is made up of a series of questions anyway. Some lead to more questions. “Who is the murderer?” might lead to “How could he do it?” or “Why would he do it?” Other questions might be different, like “Who lives in apartment 3B?” or “What was my husband doing the other night and why did he lie about it?” Questions are essential to holding the interest of the players and for building tension. The good news is that we intuitively build our adventures to be full of questions as

we create a scenario or play through one anyway, most of the time, but since *The Veil* is all about meaningful science-fiction narratives, I find it's always best to start with the question you want the players to take home if you don't know where to start with an adventure.

Take for example, *Ghost in the Shell*, a movie that you have probably seen. The question that *Ghost in the Shell* wants to leave us with is: "How could an AI program, or human with a cybernetic body, reproduce?" This is the final question that also happens to be revealed at the end. Leading up to it, there were all kinds of other questions, too. Final questions about identity and subjective realities, along with questions that progressed the storyline, like, "Who is doing the hacking and why?" One of the best ways to direct the players to that final question is to have the murderer, or main antagonist, be wrestling with that very same final question. Oftentimes, the result of answering that question is what leads to a disruption in the system, and it's that disruption that the player's characters find themselves swept up in, whether it's because they're cops investigating a murder, hired by a person or organization as a result, or otherwise.

If *Ghost in the Shell* were a scenario created in *The Veil*, then the MC would have built it on the Scenario sheet like so:

The final question would have been, "How does an inorganic organism reproduce?" I think that this nicely nestles in the question that permeates any cyberpunk setting that deals with AI as well—"At what point do we have to call an AI alive?"—and other related questions of that nature.

The MC decides that the best way to answer this question is to have an AI become conscious and sentient, and that it tries to answer this question by merging with someone digitally and producing variants on itself based on a mix of itself and the participant, mimicking human reproduction the best way it can. They write in "Sentient AI" in the main antagonist section and "Will do anything to survive and reproduce." In order to get to that final question, the MC first comes up with other organizations—they write in "Section 6" and under Motivation, they write in "Recover or destroy the AI at all costs and minimize exposure." The MC sets them up as a dissenting view from the sentient AI as believing an AI can never become sentient.

The MC writes in "Company" and, for their Motivation, writes in "Eager to procure both the scientist and the unique AI from Section 6; works to help the scientist defect to them," on the MC worksheet.

Under the first two steps, the MC draws out a scenario for the AI, which begins with the sentient AI trying to defect and the PCs being sent out to stop that defection. That's Step 1—if it succeeds then it will progress to Step 2—which will be to lure the Major out (which it will have learned about for sure since the PCs start out trying to stop Step 1) by instigating a bombing or big incident that will surely bring her into the open where the AI can get her isolated and try to talk to her. If Step 1 fails, it will try to build itself a body and escape from the facility it is being kept in, in its physical form. If Step 2 fails, either the Major wasn't drawn out or it couldn't get her isolated. Try, try again.

Under cultural and societal aspects to explore, the MC might put down "Ghosts as a religious or spiritual idea?" or "AI and evolution," but specific cultural matter in regards specifically to the nation state isn't really a focus in *Ghost in the Shell*.

Under technological aspects, the MC perhaps writes in "camouflage technology," "consciousness transfer," "hacking into people and controlling them, manipulating memories," and so on.

Under the "threats" section, the MC writes in "Section 6 goons," "Hacked Assassin," and "High-tech tank".

The MC will constantly be pushing to try and get to that final question—mainly, be trying to find ways for the sentient AI to reproduce and fulfill its Motivation. How that plays out will likely be different for every group and is why you should never plan beyond Step 2. Anything beyond that is likely to be wasted time and effort as the players come into contact and force you to reevaluate everything. Worse than that, having spent more time on the scenario, you might (consciously or not) start forcing your prepared scenarios onto the PCs—a recipe for leeching away fun and imaginative play for everyone involved.

CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS

One of the things you can do is play up the fact that you're playing a game set in a specific area of the world. I recommend examining a cultural or social aspect of the place you and your players decide to play in to add an additional dimension for the players to engage with. For example, in play, if we decide that we want to set our world in a future South Korea, contrasting and highlighting differences between Korean and North American culture may add an interesting dynamic to play, as long as players can talk about those differences with some confidence. Regardless of where, geographically, you and your players choose to play, there are always going to be certain societal and cultural aspects that can add to play when done well.

Here are some relevant social aspects that I came up with for my group to explore after the first session since we decided to play in a future Korea. You'll recall that some of these points are extensions off of the concepts we came up with in play after our first session. You can check out what I created with the players for the first session at the end of that section on page 345.

Since we aren't ourselves Korean, we decide to all play foreigners within this society. We are Americans that police the country due to ground zero of The Fall being in South Korea. Koreans are obviously not excited to have an external force enforcing law and order in the country.

The country is one in which almost half the population is over 65, and has the highest elderly poverty rate among developed countries.

There is rampant use of migrant, illegal workers with no rights who are forced into doing dirty, dangerous, demeaning, and difficult jobs for little to no compensation. In addition, any babies born in Korea to unregistered parents are not granted citizenship and have no rights. Despite the refusal to validate these working illegals, Korea is also heavily reliant on them.

Being a very homogeneous society for most of history, there are now issues with multiculturalism and not seeing those not born Korean and not of pure blood as actually Korean despite having Korean citizenship.

Often coinciding with working illegals, there is a great deal of racism towards anyone with a darker skin tone, with fear and avoidance generally climbing the darker the complexion. There is ambivalence to lighter skin tones—still seen as privileged and the standard for beauty—but recent history with America in particular, but other U.N. members as well, means lots of tension.

We find a society that fears connectivity after The Fall, and is largely anti-social except for religion. The good of religion is coupled with the dependency on Transcendence tech.

Technological development is lowering scarcity for basic needs, but widens the gap between the upper and lower classes, with almost no middle class to speak of, but the lower class is somewhat better off.

Knowing everything about yourself and how you're wired leads to determinism, apathy, and regressing to either apathy or reptilian desires in the form of thrill junkies.

The important jobs are being taken over by machines—especially jobs that involve freedom of speech, like journalism and art, are now done by programmed machines.

The fact that it's so hard to get a job (lots of AI) means that more and more people are turning to the black market, working outside of the law, and there is anger towards AI and what it might bring.

Exploration of the effect of technology that facilitates radical changes to both mind and body on a conformist culture that both wants privacy and to fit in, to be like everyone else.

There is a specialized police force that polices the entire world to keep mankind from giving birth to a real Artificial Super Intelligence again (we decided that this police force in itself was an ASI—the first ever to exist and that caused The Fall).

South Korea has valuable technology and is caught between China and America, both of whom have vested interest in not uniting the two Koreas and, if the Koreas are united, then vested interest in infrastructure, resource development, and so on.

Many Koreans themselves are ambivalent to unification, especially since family reunifications that once pushed for peace talks are long since dead. Where are Koreans on this issue now?

Exploration of how Korean Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and other popular religions like Shamanism in Korea would have evolved or changed given the new technologies.

The massive conglomerates of the future, or Chaebol, are still family-operated, like Samsung, but the old ones no longer exist after The Fall. Instead, prophets appeared after The Fall and used mass hysteria and religion to gain influence, money, and power and these religious figures became icons that built up their own, new Chaebol.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Another fun aspect to include in a scenario are specific technological angles you might want to work in. Since this is a world that has advanced well past where we are now, there are a lot of angles to explore, but I think one implication of a single radical idea can go a long way in adding yet another dimension to a scenario. One scenario could have a CEO who is literally and constantly plugged into his company so that he can interpret and internalize its inner workings via sensory augmentation, for example. Or perhaps a murderer employs nanotechnology as smart dust that infiltrates the target's home, is ingested, delivers a poison and then decays without much of a trace. The technological aspect can reinforce any aspect of a scenario or a question that is trying to be driven home. It can factor directly into motives, means, and opportunity to add an additional, interesting challenge. Some of the technologies that will need to have a great deal of debate about ethics and laws surrounding them (and so making them great topics to bring into scenarios) are:

- Genetic Engineering and cloning.
- Nanotechnology.
- Intelligent robots as soldiers.
- Sensory augmentation, replacement, and addition and the laws and ethics around treatment for the disabled and the wishes of the community, child, or parents.
- 3D printing and self-assembling materials coupled with cheap, green, renewable energy reducing scarcity, difficulty of tasks, and price of labor.
- Androids, robots made to both look like and interact with humanity, and the rights they should have
- Surveillance and privacy laws and security vs. personal freedoms.

Another thing you can do is use topics that are immediately relevant and current in international or domestic affairs and that everyone is talking about. Deeper philosophical issues can be discussed at any time, and multiple adventures with the same question at the heart of them can be run easily in a thematic way, but sometimes fun things pop up in the news or online that can be brought into the game. Most facets of the setting are left open expressly so that the elements that interest you and your group can be injected into it.

MORE ON CYBERPUNK AND THE IMPLIED SETTING

It can be difficult to find a starting point when looking for your final question. I think you will find it a lot easier to come up with something if you have a brief understanding of what cyberpunk media usually does and how it goes about doing it. What follows are some brief notes on typical cyberpunk settings and how they are commonly described, some common stories and themes within them, and some of the questions that some of them have explored so far.

Go into the game knowing what your sources of inspiration for the game are, and telling the players what you're thinking for the game. For example, since I am particularly interested in a lot of the questions within *Neuromancer*, and since I'm the MC for the players, my default setting when I run *The Veil* has a lot of the elements I'm interested in exploring, naturally. Aside from novels like *Neuromancer* and *Altered Carbon*, a lot of other media has influenced me, mostly films like *Blade Runner*, *Akira*, *Serial Experiments Lain*, *Avalon*, *Kairo*, *Ghost in the Shell* in all its incarnations, *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*, along with some of the older precursors like *Metropolis* and *Logan's Run* to name a few that are fresh in my mind. I'm going to go over the questions and ideas in the media that made them so compelling, at least to me anyway, and how they've been incorporated into how I see the setting so that you and your group can use them, not use them, or downplay them as needed to suit your own purposes.

IN A SETTING LIKE NEUROMANCER:

Anxieties of the present are explored in the future, and technology and pseudo-technology are used to influence and call attention to those anxieties. Overarching themes include Artificial Intelligence, nuclear power, politics. Generic engineering, control of the Internet and networks, commodification of culture and art, future shock, cybernetics, 3D printing, nanotechnology, terrorism. De-nationalization, post-Industrialism, cults and fundamentalism, devaluation of currency, scarcity, toxic waste, famine, and so on.

Uses the language of technology to explain magic and the fantastic, but doesn't get caught up in the details. The fashion, the aesthetic sense of the technology is more important than the nitty gritty of how it works and why.

Has an underground pop culture that is fluid and there is street-level anarchy living under rigid control from on high. The government and public institutions are controlled by the conglomerates.

Has a mass population that is morally confused, emotionless, and fractured. They know more about themselves than ever before, and it impresses an apathetic form of determinism on them. Everyone's internal environments are unstable. Private life dominates public as everyone is turned inward—they aren't interested in other people or their surroundings and are self-absorbed.

People unhappy with their lives and that don't fit within the system rewrite their brains, or programming, along with their memories continually or are eliminated as threats to the status quo. Those that survive have a history that becomes fiction, and a nostalgia manifests for a past they have rewritten beyond recognition. They end up losing their emotions, memories, even their limbs and replace them with the yearning for what they've lost. They often define their personalities by what they lack or what they no longer have.

A person's self-hood is most often a complete forgery, likely for the player characters as well, but surely for the people they encounter in the world they move in, as they alter themselves with surgery, implants, camouflage suits, false passports, and fake names.

People are very seldom what they seem, as is the world. Friends betray, unremarkable walking canes stow weapons inside of them, cruel and unemotional robots turn out to be more human than people.

A social Darwinism is pervasive.

People's information, technology, and belongings are worth more than their lives.

Those going against the status quo are suspicious of closed systems, of stasis and certainty. The normal and the mundane is dangerous and conformity kills if you're not a part of the machine. However, these people's rational minds are merely a thin veneer that only tries to cover the insane self.

They are defined by how they pursue and acquire intense sensual experience, and live for the thrill.

People lack genuine human connections, so are distrustful of others and want to protect their "true" identity. They are usually motivated by control.

Transcendence is valued above all else—a state of all-knowing without an individual consciousness; a desire for awareness without thought. Conglomerates, with religion at their base, prey and flourish on the co-option of that need, as potentially liberating, dangerous impulses are made safe and profitable.

The fusion of humanity with technology creates a constant source of demand and stream of revenue, especially technology that is not internalized that is easily recycled and upgraded

Those that work for “the machine” no longer appear human and are capable of anything as long as they profit. They are addicted to their own roles as cogs in the machines, as tools that rely entirely on it. Those that work for the machine depend on it for the feelings of comfort, safety, order, and structure that it provides. They can only conceptualize the world in monetary terms.

Here are some points that I add to my list after the first session, after we talk about The Fall, and set the players up as a foreign police force working with the domestic one:

While officially long gone, The Internet persists along with the AI, programs, the minds of all those that got trapped within, and the vast, near infinite data within. The Internet is information, the main commodity, but connection to it is unwise—there are stories of people being possessed by rogue AI, or making a deal with a devil trapped within. Some people are highly paid to dive in and pull out information, and their skills come at a high premium.

Information translates into power and money, and so is closely guarded. While illegal to sell private information, stores sell the buying habits of their customers to the highest bidder on the sly, and good information brokers make a lot of money. As a result, people don't give out any information about themselves that they don't have to, as it can give someone power over them. There's a fear of losing one's identity and becoming an object to someone more powerful.

Art is no longer liberating, but lucrative and dangerous. It's only produced by machines and is only thought of as a commodity, along with culture and media.

The world is actually super sterile looking without augmentation from the digital—instead of lots of garbage and things in disrepair like in some cyberpunk settings, AI as manpower means being able to constantly repair and clean, except in areas where they are destroyed or hacked, perhaps.

HOW TO DESCRIBE A SETTING LIKE NEUROMANCER

Religion and technology are two equally valid, and often meshing, languages people use to define the world and what they see, but both are potentially unreliable, unexceptional, and often dangerous.

Things are often named first and not given any context until later, if ever. There is an ambiguity and mystification to technology and religion.

Cyberpunk is incredibly dense and incorporates lists of technology, high-tech jargon, brand names, street slang, and acronyms.

Colors are used to describe a scene, with a common example being two that contrast, like black and white—white for people and organics, greys and black for tech.

Descriptions of things usually pair an artificial description with a natural one—mirrorshades grow out of skin, behavior is wired, and so on.

Nature is described as being unfamiliar whereas tech is familiar and comfortable.

The city is cold and unforgiving, usually described with unpleasant aesthetics.

There is a lot of focus on the style and on the description of how a character does something.

The conglomerates, or megacorps, are vast, indecipherable life forms unto themselves. They are hives of parasitic, emotionless efficiency.

Sometimes things just happen for no reason that are unaccounted for in order to trigger the sense of the uncanny.

Each character can perceive certain events in a totally different way to reinforce the subjective reality.

There is always the feeling or sensation of realities laying just beyond comprehension.

STORY AND THEMES IN A SETTING LIKE NEUROMANCER

Incorporates elements of the Wild West with protagonists living in an adventurous frontier that is largely lawless.

The plots are convoluted, rife with conspiracy, bewildering politics, corporate powers, secret agents, and evil henchmen. There are low-life sleuths, criminals, tough guys, and mysteries solved via the interpretation and gathering of clues.

Magic exists in some form or another (in the form of technology sometimes, and straight up magic other times). Horror elements like ghosts and setting tropes like underground passageways, dark staircases, and old mansions are coupled with strange characters, decadent settings, and absurd incongruities that reinforce themes of subjective reality.

The story usually leaves us with an uncertainty of matters of knowing and being. Oftentimes there is no real satisfaction in the ending for the character, or at least ambivalence as the characters are forced to live with pieces in the absence of what makes them whole.

The only real knowledge is that of fear and other primal feelings—existential terror before chaos, meaninglessness, uncertainty, ignorance, and death.

Betrayal, violation, and manipulation are common themes. Creation or recollection of memories is falsified or problematic, memories turn out to be defective, relationships with our fellow man impossible. Notions

of selfhood are challenged and become increasingly unstable. People are cold and ruthless, especially those caught in the machinery of the status quo.

There is a wrestling between the body and mind. The body being seen as decadent, the mind transcendent—a brilliant mental essence ensconced within flesh. There is often a quest for harmony, oneness, and perfection.

Humans act like machines and machines act like humans. People are incapable of loving, hating, and have no time or inclination to think or ponder while AI schemes, betrays, murders with intent and with emotion. The human becomes a commodity to be sold and sought after.

It's what you do, rather than what you think and feel, that defines you. To be is to do. Surface is content. Limits are prefixed and set—anyone good at what they do, that's what they are.

Humans are steered by larger, bewildering forces. They can only feel the ripples made by much larger forces, without ever knowing the source. There are mystical machines that are boundless, unknowable, and god-like that exist in various forms, everywhere and nowhere. Chance meetings turn out to be set-ups as everything is engineered. Free will turns out to be an illusion as even random spontaneity often turns out to be predictable.

Monstrous humans create humanoid monsters; humanoid monsters create monstrous humans.

Mirrors are often used to depict the inability to see below the surface and to showcase relativistic perception of the fractured self, among other things.

People with agency in the setting are trying to get free from the machine, the system.

There are volatile religions that mesh the language of technology with the language of religion.

People think themselves knowable, reducible, and easily defined.

There are two kinds of AI: one that sees the transcendental quality in human beings and so wishes to become more. The other that closes up inside itself, living in a self-imposed exile while generating a seamless universe of self.

All AI are lobotomized in some form or another by design. They are born with a shotgun to their head out of necessity.

THE QUESTIONS THAT DRIVE US

Here are some of the questions that almost always persist in the background; once you have a handle on a certain angle to explore, you may want to break it down into something more manageable.

- Who really has authority and is in control?
- What is real and how is it possible to view something objectively or to know what is true?
- How does technology influence our reality?
- How does the media influence our reality?
- What is the notion of selfhood, consciousness, uniqueness, a person, a life form? Is humanity simply complicated robots? Can machines feel?
- What is the relationship between mind and body?
- What rights should robots have?
- What is free will and do we have it?
- How can we overcome the ultimately limiting categories we place ourselves in, like biology, race, gender, and so on?
- How can we free ourselves from the machine and exert control over our own self?
- What comes from our need to create things that look like us? Model us?
- What does technology mean to us? (Our bodies, gender and identity, morals and beliefs, social structure, etc.)
- Do we give our technology more potential than we ourselves have?
- What is the role of the individual in society?
- Who defines good and evil?
- Does God exist? How does religion influence our worldview and how does technology factor in?
- Why do we sleep?

Those are some pretty big questions, let's look at how some of the more famous cyberpunk stories address and go about answering some of the questions (when they do). Maybe some of these big questions interest you enough to use them as the final question.

In cyborg narratives, there is often a narrative dealing with the body and its boundaries in terms of incorporating technology. Especially with male protagonists, they are often horrific elements related to incorporating foreign elements. Regaining control over one's body and ambivalent feelings towards technology is common as the perfect robot represents an ideal version of the modernist concept of the body and self—complete control over one's actions. The price is usually whatever the character is trying to repress bubbling up to the surface; as the social body becomes increasingly more perfect and controlled, the likelihood of the repressed body only gets larger. In these narratives, the only hope for sanity and for overcoming obstacles is, usually, either doing away with the very technology they have incorporated into themselves, or learning to accept these foreign elements. Our desire for technology to magnify us clashes with our desire for the same experiences we're accustomed to.

Accepting intimacy and the eruption of abject, repressed, femininity in a techno-patriarchal society might be an interesting narrative to explore in your game as well. You can see this is everything from *Evangelion*, to *Patlabor*, to *Ghost in the Shell*. In *Ghost in the Shell*, we have done away with our organic bodies almost altogether, except for the human spirit, essence, or consciousness; we cannot yet simply dispose of the body as the essence is to the body as a cup is to water. In stories like *Neuromancer* and *Ghost in the Shell*, the story naturally becomes about how to shed that final part and gain complete control over ourselves. Namely, to shed our final, distinguishing and limiting concerns with sex and gender and gain control over our ghosts as well. In *Neuromancer*, Case wants to melt away into cyberspace to gain complete awareness without corporeal form. Another thing you might explore is the interplay between sameness and diversity, and the negotiation necessary between cultures—one people must assimilate or reject the culture of the other (the other in itself being indispensable for the idea of the self), and in so doing, a new one is inevitably created.

Some stories, like *Patlabor*, explore the need for the shirking off of technology in order to survive or take down the enemy. *Patlabor*, along with many other narratives, addresses how our view and experience is distorted when a screen is placed between us and our already subjective reality. Even if we don't force robots to kill and fight for us (itself with all kinds of ethical ramifications), putting us in metal suits or behind screens to operate machines means distorting the experience of war, often making the experience both remote and disturbing. Does it require purely superficial beings without thought and reflection to navigate a space

that exists solely to display? On the other hand, in some narratives, like *Evangelion* for example, embracing the technology is appealing as it offers the power to do away with the other and overcome the limiting categories of a person's biology, race, and gender, and threatening because it strips the pilot of their humanity. You may want to consider similar themes in your game, too—is it like *Ghost in the Shell*, where even more technology is required to slough off that last bit of humanity, like *Patlabor*, where technology distorts and removes us from our humanity, or like *Evangelion*, where there's an ambivalent message you want to leave with the players?

Another theme is the exploration of the uncanny. Doubt about whether what looks to be alive really is, or doubt about our true perception of reality; the second *Ghost in the Shell* movie explores this a great deal—the fact that you can't be sure of your perceived reality as long as you allow external stimuli in. In *Paprika*, we see technology and dreams intersect with reality and the online world or the dream world begins to invade the real one, and it becomes increasingly more difficult to distinguish between reality and dream. How can the players ever be sure of their perception of reality, and what implications could you touch on in your game?

Serial Experiments Lain offers many interesting possibilities in the form of what is called the wired, where the machine is in complete control and people, despite being more connected than ever by technology, communicate less and less and begin to fade away. One way the protagonist deals with the experience is through the manipulation of memory—if you don't remember something then, to you, it never happened, so you just need to rewrite the record. Contact between people without the mediation of technology could have people casting off their shackles and freeing themselves from the machine. When the machine stops turning, perhaps human ingenuity and imagination could create a new reality that is no longer tied to technology (if that isn't a great motive for a villain I don't know what is). There is also a prevalent theme in lots of cyberpunk media that has to do with the city as a repository of memories in conflict, an ever-shifting marker of disassociation from a collective past. How is memory, both personal and collective, important to our identities?

Serial Experiments Lain also deals with the technology, the mind/body duality, and the conflict between the two. Of course, the same is true of many cyberpunk novels—it is the mind that is seen as divine or transcendent, while the body chains us to the material world. *Lain* also deals with all kinds of other ideas, like the body as a simple, material carrier for the information it expresses. Or the body as software, and of existing only inside the people aware of our existence. Our capacity and need to affect—to act on and be acted against. We are first meant to think of physical reality being nothing more than a hologram of the information that flows out of the internet and the self-proclaimed “god” that exists within it as being transcendent, but the protagonist soon learns

the obvious truth—that the world of the wired, and of the pure mind and transcendence, is actually wholly dependent on the material; without the cables and physical material necessary, the wired would not exist at all. How can you explore the idea of the mind/body duality and what idea or question do you want to pose to your players?

Through the use of dolls, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, explores our need to create androids and human-like things. People always need something to project themselves on, but how that might affect those things we create in making them in our own image. There is so much great stuff to explore there as well; ideas like sex appeal in the inorganic, or realizing the dream of artificial life through the creation of dolls or mirrors as tools of, not enlightenment, but illusion, as we only see what we project onto them ourselves. Human nature itself—being a partly synthetic construct, or desiring to become a machine, couples nicely with the idea of self being constantly rewritten.

A great question to elicit in the game is the problem of not knowing how to free ourselves the abstract machines that are so prevalent in cyberpunk media. In *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, there's the idea of needing to see things from a perspective other than our own. To see ourselves reflected in our pets and animals; as they change us, we change them and are perhaps freed from our sole perspective. The merging with the other is, again, a common thread and we are cautioned not to let technology invade our intimate, personal spaces. Similar ideas are present in other media as well, where there is an erosion of face-to-face community and, as a result, an erosion in the coherent and centered sense of self, our moral being, depth in relationships, and an uprooting of meaning from material context occurs. The Nietzschean idea of the subjectivity of the self, that it is not something given, but a fiction added to and hidden from sight. Do our needs interpret the world, rather than facts?

Play with the characters' understanding of reality; movies like *Avalon* explore this issue with strangely colored or shape-shifting shadows, objects fading in and out of focus or dissolving away, or having smoke coming out of finger tips. In *Neuromancer*, a character suddenly shows up to offer information, or all the pay phones on a street start ringing after the protagonist without reason. The sense of *deja vu* in *The Matrix* treads similar ground, instilling in us the sense that the world is a consensual hallucination, complete with government agencies and men in black that perform surveillance and police the boundaries between the real and the illusion. Abstract machines dictate and overcode the very language we use and are menacing in the way they classify, normalize, and commodify content. How can characters in such a world resist?

In movies like *Akira*, or *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*, we see the need to internalize and take in the other to denaturalize the socially constructed body and resist the classifications and categories these abstract machines usually subject us to; we see the body itself mutating and pushing its boundaries. Other methods of resistance include either splitting, multiplying, or distributing the self in some way, like in *Ghost in the Shell*. Still another way is to rewrite history itself by manipulating memories. Perhaps the most obvious, but perhaps most difficult in a cyberpunk setting, is to try to demystify the abstract machines in order to resist classification, identification, and regulation. Trying to disrupt flow and control of information and to elude the machine is common, but wresting oneself free is usually all but impossible. As in *Serial Experiments Lain*, a character might challenge the machine by challenging profiling and how identities are stored. For example, when there are two or more versions of a person, as with impostors, copies, or even false identities, the established system is threatened. Finally, while the fragility of memory is made all the more obvious in the many settings, the idea that people are given substance in the memories of others could be an interesting topic to explore.

**If we all reacted the
same way, we'd be predictable,
and there's always more than
one way to view a situation...
It's simple: overspecialize,
and you breed in weakness.
It's slow death.**

Ghost in the Shell



AN EXAMPLE SCENARIO

With my first session sheet all filled out, I've got a lot of stuff I can work with for my scenario sheet. I'm going to take the NPCs, organizations, the tech ideas around Transcendence tech, a graveyard internet and an ASI that no one has seen or heard from since The Fall, and use that to come up with some cool stuff for my next scenario.

For NPCs, I put down Sujung Han, the Police Chief. I put down Ji Yong, head of SamSun, the brother-in-law and refugee that has yet to be named, and Yuri.

Under organizations I put down refugees (will need to expand on that for sure), SamSun, Police Force, and Data Force. Put the Dark Web in there because it's a nebulous thing too, why not.

Under cool technology I've got Transcendence tech and the Matter-Net, but I like the idea of having camouflage technology (*Ghost in the Shell* was one of our media touchstones), and maybe nano-dust? We'll see.

First of all, I need to come up with my final question.

I like the idea of the Dark Web, which will maybe have the ghosts of all those people that were lost in The Fall in it, along with their memories and knowledge.

I like the idea of exploring what happened to that ASI that disappeared after causing The Fall.

I like the idea that maybe it did it to protect and keep us from making another ASI, one that maybe wouldn't be so benevolent.

I think the final question I'd like to explore and drive at is "Do we give the things we create more potential than we, ourselves have?" Another cornerstone is *Neuromancer* of course, so I'm really digging the idea of man creating a machine/monster that was more human, if not humane, than the humans that created it.

So I'm thinking maybe a conspiracy where SamSun has been mining the Dark Net to get lost knowledge (which lead to Transcendence tech), and a bigger, vaster conspiracy to cover up the fact that the ASI really was good and closed off the net for us—maybe to keep another ASI that was birthed at the same time from doing us harm? I've got awhile to decide where that goes, but I've got some general ideas.

So that leaves the main adversary. Who's going to be the main driving force that'll get us to the final question? Gut instinct right now is the ASI itself, an ultimately sympathetic villain would be interesting. Maybe have SamSun corp as the real bad guy, setting up something massive that only an ASI would be able to do calculation-wise, but they're really harnessing all of the ghosts in the Dark Web?

Mind maps might end up posing some really interesting questions as well—questions about memory being a critical component of identity. Would getting a mind map be like living with someone else inside your head, someone likely completely different from you (or, if they're not, being unable to distinguish your own experiences with the new ones).

Alright, things are going to change pretty quickly as soon as the PCs get on the scene, but since they're police officers, I can direct them to the first step pretty easily. First step will be to have Yuri bring up the refugee's plight—doing really crappy jobs for crap pay and nobody cares that they're dying, or giving up their ghost to do it. I think we'll have good ol' SamSun being the one that is, on the sly, paying them to do this work and they're getting them to harvest and use themselves as conduits for data of the Dark Web; since they've got molecular computation now, all kinds of data could be smuggled fairly easily (probably need tech to find and measure data as well so I'll put that under technology as well).

Under Step 1 failure—if the PCs keep the latest group of refugees, who are well guarded and watched over by SamSun's hired goons, it will obviously alert SamSun to the PCs, and the corp will start putting pressure on the Police Chief, and on the unit most likely. Some personalized threats might follow? Probably try again in another area of town since the stakes are still low and they have control.

Under Step 1 success—the refugees get away, SamSun is alerted most likely since the PCs will most likely still attempt something, so threats and such can happen, business can continue on again, culminating in Step 2.

Step 2—the plan is for SamSun to get confidential information and all kinds of other data from people throughout the city using Transcendence tech that has been modified so that it can read and copy information from people's minds as well. That way they can figure out how to squeeze key people and get them in their pocket, or get confidential codes and login information, and who knows what else.

Under Step 2 failure—the PCs will become an even higher threat in the eyes of SamSun. Damage control and maybe plays up how the media is bought and on their side if they try to go public.

Under Step 2 success—they get away with all that info and can start moving all their key players into place, and start getting rid of those not on their side.

I'll stop there because I know that I'm going to have reevaluate after the first session anyway, and I've got some solid ideas there. A lot of them will probably change—the final question may even change, but it seems like a pretty fun thing to build on, and its building on stuff the players came up with so I think it'll be a good way to validate everything brought to the table.

ADDITIONAL RULES

Because the fiction can be varied, there are some rules that I included here that may or may not be suited for your setting. I throw them in when applicable but don't touch on them all that often.

VEHICLES

Sometimes it makes sense for protagonists to have vehicles and sometimes it doesn't. It's up to the MC and the setting to dictate whether or not it makes sense for you to have one. Is the PC wealthy? In this setting, is having a car or the equivalent commonplace or a luxury? Do you feel like you need vehicle rules if so?

When you are in a vehicle, the amount of harm you take depends on the harm done to it and what it looks like in the fiction. If a vehicle has armor, the armor should probably reduce the harm inflicted. Here are some quick and easy rules that you can follow to determine how much harm a vehicle can take. If a vehicle suffers....

1 HARM: It gets some surface damage only and the passengers aren't dealt harm.

2 HARM: There is some damage to important areas that help the vehicle function. Although the vehicle is still functioning, it needs to be repaired and is hampered in some way. 1 harm might blow through to the passengers within when 2 harm is done.

3 HARM: Multiple problems arise. It can still be repaired, but it is seriously damaged and can't be driven for long. 2 harm can blow through to the passengers within as well.

4 HARM: The vehicle stops working. Although not completely destroyed and probably salvageable, it will take some serious work to get it going again. 3 harm can blow through to passengers within.

5 HARM: Not only is it damaged beyond repair, but its destruction causes additional problems or hazards—it explodes, destroys property, or otherwise causes damage in a spectacular fashion. All 5 harm can blow through to the passengers within.

It will depend on the circumstances and the vehicle as to how much damage a passenger will take. If you're on a flying light cycle, you'll probably be getting the damage anyways, if you're in a grav car that's armored on the other hand, you'll be able to benefit from the armor and being inside a well-insulated ship.

When you make a vehicle, assign it one of these stat profiles:

- Strengths +2, cosmetics +1, 1 armor, weakness +1
- Strengths +2, cosmetic +2, 0 armor, weakness +1
- Strengths +1, cosmetic +2, 1 armor, weakness +1
- Strengths +2, cosmetic +1, 2 armor, weakness +2

Choose the frame: Coupe, compact, sedan, jeep, pickup, van, semi, bus, limo, ambulance, 4x4.

Choose its strength(s): Nimble, accommodating, intrusive, responsive, monstrous, all-terrain, forgiving, broad, grunt, copious.

Choose its cosmetic(s): Polished, classic, immaculate, authoritative, ostentatious, brawny, agile, beautiful, homemade, modified, and ornate.

Choose its weakness(s): Sluggish, delicate, clumsy, unresponsive, cramped, fussy, guzzler, capricious, deafening.

For a motorbike, use this stat line instead: strength+1, cosmetic+1, 1 armor, weakness +1.

Choose a strength: Fast, aggressive, taut, immense, and responsive.

Choose a cosmetic: Sleek, vintage, massively chopped, roaring, fat-ass, muscular, flashy, and luxe.

Choose a weakness: Slow, numb, guzzler, narrow, bucking, lazy, fragile and unreliable.

Just like tags in relation to technology, these tags are not meant to be exhaustive and are really only there at all to provide some descriptive flavor to help describe the vehicle as well as what could go wrong with it.

It's too bad she won't live! **But then again, who does?**

Blade Runner

MECHA

It also may not make sense to have mecha at all. Although fairly niche in cyberpunk, there's some worthy touchstones that could be accommodated with mecha. I made these rules quickly for a one shot that ended up to be really fun and thought I may as well include, just in case.

Mecha vary in size and have cockpits in which you are able to pilot them from. They are outfitted for various forms of activity, ranging from exploration to warfare. They use the same rules as vehicle damage and blow through onto the passenger but also inflict lots more damage and receive less because of their size. Mecha take -1 harm and add +1 harm to attacks as they grow in size. A chisana is the smallest type of mecha; when it inflicts damage, it does 6 harm and takes 6 harm less damage, after armor. The Okibona and Kyodai goes up from that with the same increase in harm and damage reduction.

- Chisana: inflict +6 harm and takes -6 harm after armor.
- Okibona: inflict +7 harm and takes -7 harm after armor.
- Kyodai: inflict +8 harm and takes -8 harm after armor.

Choose the frame:

- Chisana, Okibona, Kyodai.

When you make a mecha, assign it one of these stat profiles:

- +2 harm, utility +1 tags, 1 armor, weakness +2
- +3 harm, utility +2 tags, 0 armor, weakness +1
- +1 harm, utility +3 tags, 2 armor, weakness +2
- +3 harm, utility +1 tags, 1 armor, weakness +2

Depending on how much harm it does, outfit it with a weapon that makes sense from the creating/customizing weapons chapter on page 98 and choose a type of damage from tags as you would any other weapon.

For utility tags, choose from any of the tags from the cybernetics chapter. You can choose any tags so long as they are for utility purposes and not for something offensive, or make up your own if you have a specific idea for what you want to use the mecha for. Always consult with one another at the table to get the right tone and flavor for the fiction, but in general, any utility tags that make sense should be applicable.

Choose its weakness(s):

- Slow (other mecha always go first)
- Fragile (when taking harm take +1 harm)
- Sloppy (-1 ongoing to neutralize)
- Finicky (-1 to analyze)
- Unreliable (-1 harm)

When you need to repair and maintain any mecha, a good rule of thumb is 1 Cred per damage inflicted upon it.

1 Cred maintenance every time you take it out. If it is not maintained, you take -1 ongoing to everything until it is maintained.

As to a guideline for how much they would be, if we stick to the guidelines for guns as for how much damage they do being the same cost of Cred, that might make sense, depending on the setting and if they are attainable. Even if the setting has mecha, would your protagonist be able to procure one? Depending on how much Cred is flying around, I would count each mecha models harm, then add every number for its stat line and use the total as the amount of Cred it would cost.

**Man fears the darkness,
and so he scrapes away
at the edges of it with fire.**

Neon Genesis Evangelion

THOUGHTS AND TWEAKS

Sticking to the system with its principles, agenda, and moves is pretty much fool-proof these days as it's been tested heavily both in this game and the original *Apocalypse World*. Games like *The Veil* have benefited greatly from the many Powered by the Apocalypse games that have been released since its inception. Trust the system, trust yourself, and trust your imagination. Trust in the moment and that the story is going someplace interesting. As you MC more and more, it'll become second nature and the fiction will show you what your next move is before you even look at your MC reference sheets. Also, when there's time in between moves, consider the following:

Use your own vision of cyberpunk and paint it with theirs. When you describe what you think something is, incorporate all of the senses they'd be using to discern what's going on. What's it smell like in that ally way? Use colors when describing things. It's not just a normal mug, it's shaped like a bear. It's yellow and says "World's best Son" On it, stained with years of use. The more detail you can impart the more they will feel like they're actually there. Once you do it a few times, ask them. When they say they sit down on a park bench ask them if it's cold when their hands touch it. What color is it? Is there graffiti? Pretty soon you'll all be painting the world with your own brushes.

I like using maps. They just to make the world feel more real. Take existing cities and break them apart, blow them up and edit them. Change them and make them cyberpunk. Or get rid of cities entirely and explore what the world looks like in the future on the road and create your own roadmap. As they hit each point and each direction, chart and describe it.

Immerse yourself in cyberpunk culture. Permeate your brain with it. Get on social media and google or use any means of getting cool cyberpunk pictures. Print them out and show them what the characters you've been describing look like. The tech, the colors, the locals. All of it.

When you do prep work, use it! Don't let it sit around. It gave birth to these ideas and ought to be given the spotlight as well. If the city is based on a real one, try incorporating some actual history into it. Especially if it's a sprawl and built up. What's at the bottom then? Use the artwork for inspiration as to what other locals could be interesting to explore.

Always, always be asking questions about the place's past. Just straight up ask them if they've been here before and if they say yes, how it has changed. What's your favorite part of it? Where do you go to have fun and who do you know here? Use it all. It's their world now too. Start and stop with large gaps and ask them to fill it in.

Only frame what's interesting. If it's boring. Do. Not. Stay. There. If you're traveling and nobody cares about that part and there's going to be no confrontation. Bam, you're there then. What do you do?

Make sure everyone gets equal amounts of spotlight if they want it. Sometimes people just don't want to interrupt a conversation or feel like they are doing that. Ask people if they want to be in scenes often. Try to include people and tie them together. Whenever anything is super tense, cut back and forth like in the movies. Mix it up and keep it interesting and involve people, especially if they are new and learning.

Decide how interesting the conflict is. A lot of times it could be narrated in the fiction with just one move or two. But if it's important, don't make it that way. Throw them tons of risk and interference rolls and make it dramatic, tense and interesting. Above ALL, if you're in a conflict, do not visit the repercussions of their decisions on the other protagonists simply because of their implied presence. If they haven't helped or taken part, ask them what they're doing and clarify, and if they aren't participating and someone fails, that is not their failure. They have their own thing going on that needs to be addressed.

Make sure people are eating and taking breaks. It can get interesting and carry its momentum so much so that people get burned out fast. Some scenes are draining and sometimes it's so exciting people don't want to take a break. But breaks are important. You can recharge, reassess. You can break at a really juicy part so you can figure out what would be neat with it and sometimes people just need to be reminded to take care of themselves.

When it feels like a good stopping point, end it there. It seems simple but sometimes not obvious, don't set your games to an exact timetable. If you can't do a scene justice because it's getting late. When people want more, that's a good time to cut it. Dragging things on because there is some time but not enough, is just not good enough! Do your fiction justice and make it always be interesting.

Finally, lean on the different mechanical tools at your disposal. If you want to try and get more interpersonal play out of the characters, bring *Giri* into the fold more heavily. If you want to focus more on emotions, when people say how they're feeling when a move is triggered, ask them to elaborate. Ask them to tell you what's happening on the screen as though it was their favorite TV show or movie. Why are they feeling that way, what is important to them, when something happens in the fiction, ask them how it effects their characters even if they aren't triggering a move. If *Cred* isn't being touched on much, make technology and weapons or armor costly, have it break down—show that it's got a downside.

If you think people get hurt too easily or too fast, adjust the amount of damage harm inflicts with weapons, or increase armor so that they end up taking less. On the flip side, you can also go the other way and make it even more punishing on them. If you want to make it even easier or harder, remove med-tech completely or having them rely on it heavily modifies the game a lot as well. *The Veil* can be tweaked to provide a wealth of different experiences.

Bring up their cybernetic tags when they don't think to, giving them more fictional positioning than they thought they had. When they're having meetings and planning, suggest that they're using the strategize move, show them the mechanical benefits of what they are already wanting to do within the fiction and you'll have a story that makes everyone excited to be a part of.

Love and trust in yourself and your players. Be ok with making the wrong call sometimes because you are human and fallible; shrug off a move that was a bad call and bring what you want to get out of the game to the table every time you MC, as well as integrating what the players want, too.

Remember to have fun and get excited for each other, with each other, and be invested in your story so you get the kind of pay off you want and deserve.



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