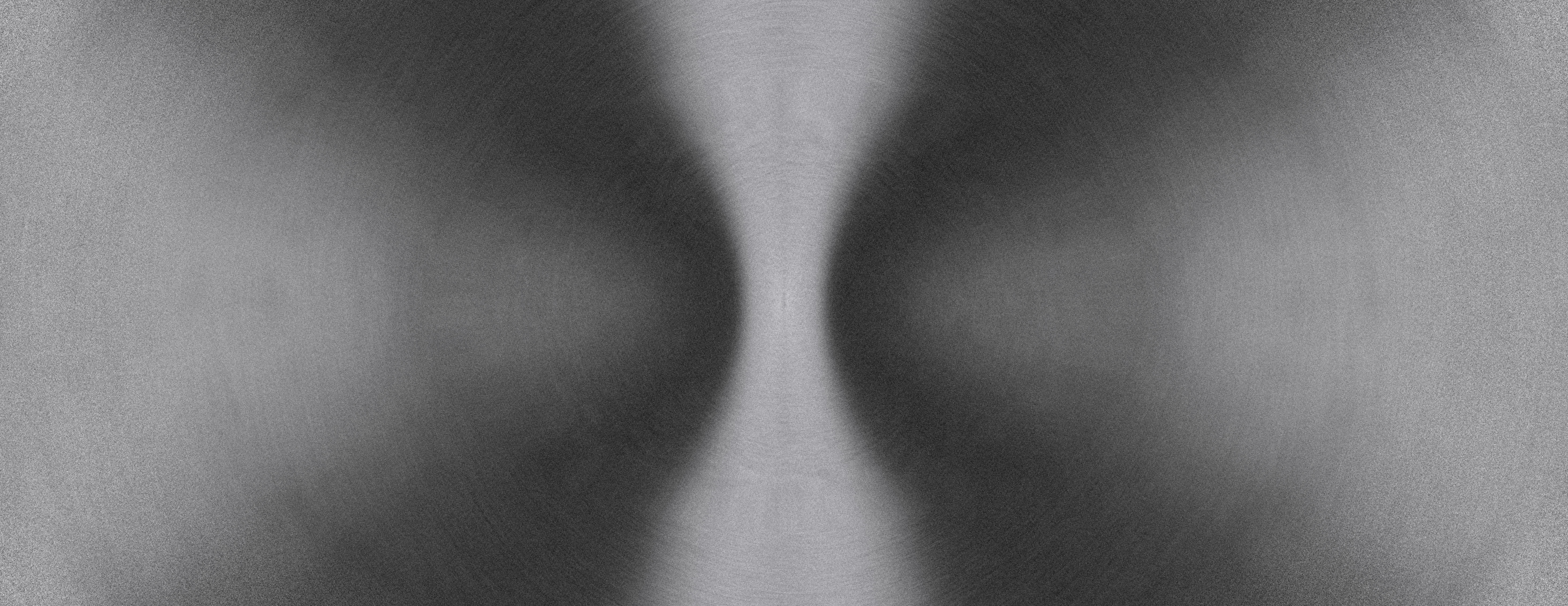


EXTRA CAUSAL

MONOLITH

edition
josh hittie



EXTRACAUSAL

A role-playing game of emergent mystery and darkness

By Josh Hittie

Gameplay elements have been inspired mechanics from *BALIKBAYAN* by Jamila R. Nedjadi and *Wanderhome* by Jay Dragon

Safety Section adapted from *BALIKBAYAN* by Jamila R. Nedjadi

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Extracausal has been thematically inspired by;

Control by Remedy Entertainment

The Magnus Archives by Jonathan Sims, directed by Alexander J. Newall, and produced by Rusty Quill

The *Southern Reach Trilogy* by Jeff Vandermeer

Fringe created by J. J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman, and Roberto Orci

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EXTRACASUAL

ex·tra- : prefix. beyond, outside

cau·sal·i·ty : noun. the relation between a cause and its effect or between regularly correlated events or phenomena

What is Extracausal?

Extracausal is emergent mystery and darkness. You will collaboratively create and discover strange mysteries in worlds, embody characters facing overwhelming darkness, and delve deep into stories.

Extracausal is a role-playing game. You and several others will be playing roles; characters, locations, and narrative aspects that all come together to create a story.

Extracausal is an emergent game. There are no pre-written stories in Extracausal; the story emerges from the narrative foundation all players build together.

Extracausal is a game of mystery and darkness. Extracausal is about large, overwhelming webs of secrets, dangers, mysteries, and darkness for all players to explore.

If you're unfamiliar with role-playing games the next few paragraphs may help orient you with what the above actually means.

If you're already familiar with role-playing games and common conventions used in more narrative-focused games, feel free to skip around the text.

What is a role-playing game?

In a role-playing game, all participants play different roles, both inside and outside of a story they are all creating together. Some players will take on the roles of specific and regular characters within the story, while others will take on roles as story elements within locations, strange beings, and other non-player characters. Sometimes a player may have to act as more of a director or conductor; helping frame scenes within the story and respond to different situations that other players are creating with their actions within the story.

Everything in **Extracausal** is grounded in the story being told. The growing and ongoing narrative forms the backbone of Extracausal. It is the foundation and context upon which all other decisions made during play spring from.

Every table you play at is going to be different, and the play that emerges at the table is far more important than a set definition of what a role-playing game might be. If you're reading this, **Extracausal** is yours now. It also belongs to you and everyone else at the table. The choices you all make as you play through your games will create an **Extracausal** that is different from anyone else's version.

Think of the narrative, the story you are all creating and telling together, as made up of threads. You can pull on threads and follow them to see where they take you. You can introduce new threads for someone else to pick up and tie into the narrative. You can decide to cut out threads, or just ignore them for the time being and maybe come back to them later. Everything you do in **Extracausal** has the potential for creating and modifying these narrative threads, but at the same time, you are never beholden to any of them.

Extracausal is anti-canon. There is no singular vision or design for **Extracausal**. Each player is equally responsible for bringing their and their table's vision to life. You can use this text as written, hack it, tweak it, iterate on it, or just ignore it. **Extracausal** is also anti-canon within *your* own game. Remember that the narrative threads you create can be picked up, pulled on, cut out, by everyone else at the table. Anyone can remix the story as you create it.

What is Monolith?

For those familiar with previous versions of **Extracausal**, the new **Monolith** update adds new tools for players to help build stories. **World Elements** and **Sets** are the largest new features.

HOW TO PLAY

In **Extracausal** you and a few friends will be creating and exploring a world made up of secrets and hidden plots, darkness and revelation. To do so, you will be having conversations, rolling some dice, and just making some things up. You'll need a few friends (3-4 works well, but you can go higher or lower if comfortable), things to write with, and some six (d6) and ten (d10) sided dice.

Extracausal is about creating and uncovering a dense web of the paranatural, the occult, conspiracies, and of things far beyond any of that. This is a game of encountering that which is *extracausal*. Imagine some of the characters found in media like *The Magnus Archives* or *Control*. All contain fictional groups that are involved with forces far greater than they could ever imagine, filled with individuals who piece together clues and secrets in the hopes of knowing the unknowable.

Most players will take on the roles of members of an Organization that is involved in the extracausal in some way. One of you, or perhaps all of you, will become a Facilitator.

In addition to playing one or several individuals, a Facilitator embodies different narrative forces. Both roles are important, but can be interchangeable.

Extracausal can be played with or without a Facilitator present. When a Facilitator is present, they will be primarily responsible for initially framing scenes and introducing new narrative elements; be those new locations, new characters, or new mysteries. The other players then take what the Facilitator has introduced and run with it, change it, modify it, and build off of it.

If the table decides to play with no singular Facilitator, *each* player essentially becomes a Facilitator. Everyone at the table shares the responsibility of framing scenes and building off of each newly introduced narrative element. Rather than being "GM-less" think of **Extracausal** with no set Facilitator as "GM-full".

It may be best to decide at the start of the game, or each session, if someone wants to take the role of a Facilitator. You can rotate the role, stick with it permanently, or weave in and out of having and lacking a singular Facilitator as you play. So long as everyone is on board.

The heart of this game lies in creating the many secrets, webs, and narrative threads to tug on, as you play. Think of every aspect and element to be introduced in the game as being in a quantum state; no one knows the total truth of that secret until it comes into play.

It is only through play will you uncover and create that dense web of mystery and strangeness. Everyone involved has equal responsibility and opportunity to share in this act of storytelling and creation. Remember though, this approach to playing is ultimately a suggestion. If you're reading this and plan to play, then hack, remove, change, warp, transform whatever aspect of this game you feel like. The only thing you are beholden to is the table and friends with which you play. Storytelling is collaborative, so always keep in mind, and respect, the rest of the players.

All of this creation and exploration happens during conversation. Rolling dice is only one small part of this conversation. The flow of the conversation usually starts with a Facilitator or other player framing a scene; they introduce the location, individuals, any exciting and relevant details, threats and dangers that are in this scene. Then someone else picks up one of those aspects of the scene and plays with it. They can explore the location, talk to an individual, overcome danger, discover secrets by narrating their actions. When a question is asked, the Facilitator or other player answers that question. When it seems like action needs to be taken, an Action Roll is made (for more on Action Rolls see page 16).

CHECKPOINTS

When you have a chance to take a short break mid-session, the table should take a few minutes to have a check-in.

Players should discuss what they've enjoyed so far and what they want to see more of. This gives any Facilitators an opportunity to calibrate future scenes, ensuring they can include those aspects the other players want to see happen or see more of.

DEBRIEFS

Following a session, take some time for a debrief. This is when the table comes together to discuss notes they may have taken, threads that were introduced, NPCs that appeared, and where some of these trails could lead next. Conducting a debrief helps make sure everyone is on the same page with the narrative, and provides ideas for where you might go next.

As a table, you may also assess if you missed any opportunities where you might have advanced the Apocalypse and Tenebrae tracks, or marked Insight.

During a short break, the table does a quick check-in. So far everyone is enjoying the corporate hellscape and spooky geometry the Facilitator has set up.

One player brings up that she'd like it if another character, Archie, begins to notice just how strange her own character Cordelia is. Archie's player says to let him know if there's a good moment for that scene to happen and he'll take the bait.

Rita's player also brings up that she'd like some moments for her to use some of Rita's more, enforcement related skills and abilities.

SAFETY

Horror and dread are likely to play a role in your game of Extracausal. These subject matters can involve heavy content. It is incredibly important to always keep in mind the other players with you.

Before beginning to play, take some time to establish what everyone may be comfortable with. If the players prefer, you can establish ways to do these steps anonymously, or substitute them with other safety tools.

Decide what topics everyone is comfortable with "on-screen" and would like to see in game and experience. These are **Green Topics**.

Decide what topics everyone would prefer to see a little of, perhaps "off-screen" or only mentioned in passing. These are **Yellow Topics**.

Decide what topics everyone does not want to see in the game. These topics will never appear in the game. These are **Red Topics**.

Have regular check-ins with the other players, and remind everyone that they can add and change the lists at any time. Always prioritize the other players, your friends, over any particular narrative. Just as you treat the web of canon as fake, if a scene isn't working for any reason, skip, rewind, remix, move-on. Whatever works

best for the table and players.

Conversation is the key to collaborative storytelling. Whenever you are unsure of how or what direction to proceed, bring it to the table and talk about it. This applies equally so for both narrative and safety. Be kind to each other.

TO NE + SETTING

Before play, work together to establish the tone of your game. Will it have strong elements of horror? Action? Comedy? Make sure everyone is on the same page and having fun. **Extracausal** makes few initial assumptions on the setting you choose to play in. The tone of the game can have as much in common with science fiction or cosmic horror as it does to more supernatural horrors. As you progress through your game, there will be a slow, creeping, unveiling of just how large and strange the world you are shaping actually is. Supernatural and paranatural elements fit in easily, but never be afraid to start getting extra weird.

Horror can frequently play a role in playing Extracausal. You will be dealing with strange and frequently spooky Things. However, Extracausal does not need to be a horror game. A lingering sense of slowly building dread as you approach the unknown is often more appropriate than full blown horror. But play to these elements as you see fit. It is equally feasible to frame **Extracausal** as a more adventure-based game if that suits the table's tastes.

FRAMEWORK + FOUNDATION

Remember that there is no set specific canon within **Extracausal**. Your table creates that canon as you play. Notably, there is not a set canon at the start of play either. Part of the initial session of play is creating the foundation or framework that you will build upon for future stories. On the following pages, you will find the procedure for creating an Organization and the different player Characters. The characters are all connected to the Organization, and that connection will help to establish the beginnings of the world that the table creates. Aspects, Cores, and Forces are further tools that help the table refine their world and story as they play. Cores and Aspects will help players create non-player characters and locations, and Forces act as strong narrative drives; prompting ever more questions and answers. All of this might sound like a lot, but at the heart, **Extracausal** is about making up interesting ideas and connecting the dots between those ideas to create a larger picture and story.

RETROACTIVE CANONIZATION

Throughout play, you will create secrets to uncover. You will link past occurrences together, in ways that were not evident previously to create a dense web of ideas. You will frequently be reexamining and reframing past events and information in light of new developments. Do not be afraid to "retcon". The past canon is fake, a facade, a mask; you have uncovered new truths that change and shift the truths of the game. You will always be finding new truths.

MYTHMAKING

Your story will come to have a sprawling mythology. Recurring individuals, items, strange beings beyond the mortal ken. Every player has the opportunity to add these elements to the story, and to shift, warp, and alter already introduced elements. Treat these shifts as exciting moments of discovery. No one at the table is competing with another, you should aim to craft an interesting and compelling story. Sometimes a compelling story involves failure, betrayal, and antagonists. These are elements that add tension and creeping horror.

THE BEYOND

There are greater forces at play in the world of your game. But what are those greater forces? *Rival organizations? Strange interdimensional beings? Rogue memetic concepts? Sentient fears granted life and horrible predatory instincts?*

Start with small ideas, individual facets and pieces that you think are interesting. And want to explore more Remember, in Extracausal you are always building toward something larger. But for now, you do not know what that something larger is. Not yet at least.

The world of **Extracausal** contains the occult, the supernatural, the strange and alien. Those elements are considered inherently *extracausal*.

When exploring this world, never stop at the surface. *How might that mysterious cult be connected to the individual with too-dark shades on? Why were faceless agents*

breaking into that private library? Who or what could possibly be pulling so many strings?

Not every detail needs to be connected every single time, but leave the space open for possibilities. You never know what might end up fitting together sometime in the future.

SHORT FORM

When playing one-shots or shorter games, feel free to have characters start with a single Tenebrae tag, or a partially filled out Tenebrae track.

Play faster with Insight and the Apocalypse and Tenebrae tracks. When your time is limited, ramp up the action and get to the weird and dangerous faster and with more escalation.

TERMINOLOGY

Extracausality: The extracausal is everything that is not causal. If something in your story seems to defy explanation, then it is extracausal. This text presents no definite explanation for what the extracausal is. The true nature, if any even exists, of the extracausal is explored during play at the table.

Conversation: The act of playing Extracausal revolves around the conversation. As a collaborative storytelling game, nearly everything is rooted in one or more conversations. Conversations are often rooted in an ongoing scene.

Narrative Threads: These are elements of the narrative created during play. Narrative threads can be secrets, new characters, new locations, new mysteries, vague ideas and suggestions, or nearly anything else that can be considered a piece of the ever evolving story. When a narrative thread or other aspect of the game is referred to as being brought into the scene, that means that element becomes “active” in the scene. It becomes something everyone else can interact with and explore.

Tags: Tags are descriptors with a narrative-mechanical effect. When something possesses a tag, that tag implies something about that object in the context of the world which can then be leveraged for mechanical effect.

Here’s an example of how a tag would function in the game;

Jesse (a player’s character) has the Trait (a type of tag) *agile*. Jesse’s player wants her (the character) to be able to spring across a hazardous room to avoid danger (this will involve an action roll, detailed on page 16).

Jesse’s player decides that *agile* should give Jesse a mechanical benefit in this situation involving running. The *agile* tag implies something narrative about Jesse; she’s fast and probably good at tasks involving speed.

The *agile* tag has no other descriptor outside of itself, but the player has chosen to explore what it might mean and apply the tag to an action roll which is a mechanical expression. Whenever a tag is used, remember it is brought into play, becoming active and expressed in the scene. Tags are also interpretive, and what they actually *do* is discovered and discussed the moment they are brought into play.

World Elements: World Elements function similarly to tags. They are attached to non-player elements of the world, and provide different prompts to help further the story and scene in which they are introduced.

Here’s a brief example of how a World Element might function in the game;

The Facilitator has introduced a new non-player character, and gives them the Aspect (a type of world element) *Secretive*. This aspect tells the rest of the table something concrete about this new character, and gives the Facilitator a short list of “moves” that a secretive character can perform to impact the story.

The Facilitator sees the *Secretive* move “hint at a previously unknown clue” and decides to use it. Narrating as this new NPC, the Facilitator shares with the rest of the players a new detail that adds a new narrative thread for the players to follow.

HOW TO BEGIN

When you are faced with an infinite array of potential secrets to create and unravel, how do you actually start playing? You start small. Start with the characters and the start with the Organization.

The Organization is the string that ties your characters together. If your organization is focused on collecting and cataloging rare and mysterious items, collect and catalog some rare and mysterious items. If your organization revolves around investigating mysterious phenomena, get out and investigate some mysterious phenomena. Create npcs when you need to. Create the fiction when you need to. The current and ongoing narrative always serves as a foundation.

If something new needs to be made, make it. If you didn’t make it, use it as a springboard for further exploration. “Yes and...”, “No, but...” are your friends. Revel in “oh, wouldn’t it be cool if...” moments. Storytelling is collaborative, work together to make something greater than the sum of its parts.

As a player, the main “power” you have is to make something up! Building up your narrative around the Organization is a great way to initially ground yourselves within the story. If you’ve decided that your Organization is focused on collecting and studying strange supernatural items, then starting with a team of players who are tasked with collecting one item in particular could be your first step into this world you’re creating. You never need to be exhaustive as you begin to build up this narrative. Leave blank spaces to fill in during play.

Let’s say at the end of a session (and we’re jumping ahead a bit with this example) the characters have safely neutralized a powerful artifact. One player asks about what the Organization actually does with these artifacts, and everyone realizes nothing has been established. Don’t panic, this is good! With this question we have a new facet of the world to explore.

Now the table can have a conversation that further fleshes out the Organization, and also gives people the opportunity to start playing with all those narrative threads.

Maybe one player suggests that on their return to the Organization, the artifact is taken from them and stored in a mysterious section of the base that none of the players have access to. Suddenly, we have potential.

Why is the Organization storing these artifacts? Why don’t the players have access to this section? Who could be studying these items?

You don’t have to answer all or any of these questions right now, but keep them in the collective back pocket to pull out later! That’s what it means to pull on a narrative thread; it’s bringing up the “Hey remember when we had this question? Well I think I have a cool answer we can explore together”.

GENESIS

THE ORGANIZATION

The Organization binds all the characters together. It is the first aspect of game and character creation.

You are members of a strange, shady, and secretive organization. Ostensibly, this organization exists for the betterment of humanity in some way or another, but in an organization like this there's all manner of secrets floating around. The only truth you know is that right now, you know very little. Before creating your characters, you must create your Organization.

Come up with a title or a name for your Organization, then decide on the following aspects;

What is the Visible Nature of your Organization?

- Private Institute
- Governmental Agency
- Secret Cabal

What is the Visible Reach of your Organization?

- Small, limited funding + resources
- Large, carries authority
- Sprawling, decentralized

What is the Visible Cause of your Organization?

- Collection of information
- Defense against extracausal forces
- Something mundane - a front for its true nature

What is the Visible Leader of your Organization?

- A singular director
- A board of trustees
- A mystery

What is the Visible Threat of your Organization?

- Individual forces of the paranatural
- A singular unknown phenomenon
- A scattered cult

Use the Organization options listed as is, or use them as inspiration for your own details. It is important to note the emphasis on **Visible** in the above aspects. This is the information your characters, and most other individuals present in the game's narrative, are guaranteed to know when beginning the game.

As you play, you will uncover the *Invisible*; the secrets, the webs, the conspiracies, and the truths of your Organization.

But right now, no one here has a solid grasp on that information. All these pieces of new information will come about during play when you decide to explore any of the above narrative threads.

THE CHARACTERS

Each character is composed of several parts;

- A **Background** that grants skills based on previous life experiences.
- **Traits** that represent intrinsic abilities.
- A **Domain** which grants general aptitude and knowledge in a broad category.

At the start of a new game, a character has *one* background, *two* traits, and *one* domain. Further skills, traits, and domains can be gained during play, along with *Items, Artifacts, Injuries, and the Tenebrose*, which will be explained later in character creation.

Each element of a character can be invoked when actions are taken and narrated to gain dice for action rolls. The results of these dice are what determine the extent and magnitude of any action's accomplishment. By invoking a character's element, be it an injury or a trait, you are calling that element into the current scene.

Characters have two tracks; **Tenebrose** and **Insight**.

Tenebrose tracks your exposure to the extracausality. Once you fill that track you gain a Tenebrose tag, representing a *permanent change that the extracausality left within or upon you*.

Insight tracks your exposure to the extracausality in a different light. Rather than changing who or what you are, filling the Insight track grants you an Insight die, which *you can use to temper yourself against the extracausality*.

Both Tenebrose and Insight each have six points on their track.

TENE BROSE

You always gain Tenebrose when the extracausal die is the highest result during an action roll. You may also find yourself gaining Tenebrose for encountering the extracausal forces in ways that change your character in body or mind. In the latter case, the table should work together to come to a consensus on whether Tenebrose is gained.

You may increase the Tenebrose track by utilizing or encountering the extracausality in meaningful ways. The easiest, and most common, way to increase your Tenebrose track is by invoking the extracausality when making an action roll.

INSIGHT

You increase the Insight track by uncovering new and rattling secrets and discoveries pertaining to the extracausality, the Organization, or yourself. Insight will generally increase at a slower rate than Tenebrose.

One way to gauge whether you should be gaining Insight is if you can make a direct cause and effect statement as a result of what you have discovered. If so, increase your Insight. Insight may be granted to individuals or groups, based on the situation within the narrative.

Insight represents your growing understanding and knowledge of the growing world. The more you understand, the more your mind is open to the impossible, and the easier it is to shake off the dread inducing nature of the extracausality.

To use Insight dice, roll a number of d6 equal to your current Insight level when you choose to resist the consequences of the extracausality and the strange.

Insight roll results;

- **On a 1-3**, the extracausality overwhelms you, you give into the extracausality, or the abyss was far deeper than you expected. Increase your Tenebrose track and describe what happens next.
- **On a 4-5**, you may choose to shunt off the extracausality elsewhere; to an ally, an item, an artifact, location, or something else. The extracausality will forever change this subject. Be prepared as you describe what happens next.
- **On a 6**, the extracausality breaks around you, you maintain control, or you gain an advantage. Describe what happens next.

The team has discovered that time is broken. That on its own is an important discovery for the investigation, but not enough for Insight. Later, they determine that time is being manipulated by a strange artifact. Now the players can make a direct cause and effect statement; The artifact has been causing the temporal anomalies they've been encountering throughout the mission.

In this case, the whole crew gains Insight. There may be cases where not everyone earns Insight at the same time. Those most directly involved in making and creating the discovery should be gaining the Insight.

ADVANCEMENT

Gaining items is the easiest way to gain new tags or abilities. If you have the narrative means to gain an item, you can gain it. If you lack the narrative means to gain an item, drive the narrative until you gain those means.

Skills and Domains should generally only be granted as a result of narrative effort. Study, training, or being trapped in dreamscapes could all potentially grant new Skills or Domains.

Like items, if you have attained the narrative means to gain a new Skill or Domain, then you can gain it. If you lack those means you must drive the narrative in directions that will grant those means.

EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

John - The Academic

- Skills - *research, artifacts, consulting*
- Traits - *perceptive, learned*
- Domain - *occult*
- Tenebrose - *Avatar*

Jesse - The Newcomer

- Skills - *defense, artifacts, will*
- Traits - *agile, tenacious*
- Domain - *bureaucracy*
- Artifact - *Service Weapon*

Lena - The Field Worker

- Skills - *strength, nature, defense*
- Traits - *forceful, stealthy*
- Domain - *biology*
- Tenebrose - *Far-Touched*

CHARACTER TABLES

2d6 Background Examples				
	1-3	Skills	4-6	Skills
1	The Academic	research, artifacts, consulting	The Agent	tactics, vigilance, security
2	The Unknown	stealth, will, experimentation	The Newcomer	defense, artifacts, will
3	The Experiment	brutality, obfuscation, observation	The Manifestation	strangeness, unnature, loopholes
4	The Lifetimer	procedure, secrets, authority	The Believer	secrets, ritual, strength
5	The Field Worker	strength, nature, defense	The Specialist	specialization, tactics, procedure
6	The Scientist	experimentation, extracausality, research	The [REDACTED]	????????????????

2d6 Trait Examples		
	1-3	4-6
1	crafty	tenacious
2	athletic	agile
3	perceptive	uncanny
4	learned	forceful
5	stealthy	naive
6	charming	artistic

Backgrounds each have three skills that are thematically related to the core identity and history of that background. Skills can be modified or swapped out during character creation to better fit a player's idea. Skills are a mix between the specific and the more ambiguous. The meaning of some skills are really only discovered as a player starts to use them during play; it's okay to have some mysteries to figure out.

Traits are a simple descriptor for a character. They might be related to some intrinsic ability, instinct, or personality. They might be characteristics that fall outside of the boundaries of a background's skills, maybe representing a character's history or ability before they "became" that background.

2d6 Domain Examples		
	1-3	4-6
1	echoes	academia
2	occult	sciences
3	bureaucracy	wetwork
4	craft	cryptics
5	data	depths
6	entities	[REDACTED]

2d6 Tenebrose Examples		
	1-3	4-6
1	Warped	Desolated
2	Fractaled	Deep-Touched
3	Afflicted	Oracular
4	Bethralled	Manifold
5	Occultated	Unwound
6	Untethered	Fragmented

2d6 Injury Examples		
	1-3	4-6
1	broken	wounded
2	infected	bleeding
3	rattled	concussed
4	scattered	blinded
5	shaken	entangled
6	maimed	stunned

Domains represent the most broadly applicable knowledge or ability base of a character. Domains are meant to be bent and twisted into an action. However, because of that broad flexibility, gaining a new Domain is likely more difficult than a skill or even a trait.

Tenebrose are the ways that the extracausal reshapes a character. Gaining a Tenebrose tag might reflect a new ability or terrible power the extracausal has granted a character. Or perhaps it shows a character's ever-growing connection to the extracausal.

Injuries are consequences that befall a character. A Facilitator might grant consequences as a result of a missed or mixed action roll. Remember that Injuries can be used to a player's advantage when preparing an action roll by granting a d6. However, any further misses or complications will make the downsides of that injury more apparent in the scene. Injuries can be healed as deemed appropriate, either by medical aid or between sessions if enough time has passed in the game world.

2d6 Common Items - After using an item, roll the depletion die.

	1-3	Depleted On	4-5	Depleted On
1	gun	d6/1	occult item	d10/1-3
2	rope	d6/1-2	extralitarian item	d10/1-3
3	specialist tool	d6/1	archaic item	d6/1
4	hazard gear	d6/1-2	technological item	d10/1-2
5	chemicals	d6/1-4	tactical armor	d6/1
6	explosives	d6/1-5	battery	d6/1-2

1d6 Artifact Examples


	Artifact	Tags
1	Ophanim Array	technological, symbolic
2	Service Weapon	sybiotic, shifting
3	The Journal of ██████████	occult, unpredictable
4	Item #38	astral, overbearing
5	The Ouroborus	serpentine, hungry
6	Memetic Fractal Agent	anamnestic, viral

Items that use a d10 as their depletion die tend to have some sort of connection to the extracausal, organization, or are out of the ordinary in some other way. See page 16 for more information on using items.

If the table is interested in more closely managing when and what gear characters have access to, they can use the following optional rule;

Each character has four "gear slots". When a player wants to gain a specific item, they may mark off one of the gear slots to have had that item. Gear slots refresh at the start of a new session.

Artifacts are rare. They function similarly to items, but without the risk of depletion. Artifacts are almost always connected to the extracausal in some way, and using them may carry a serious risk.



CHAOS

ACTION RESOLUTION

When you take action, and the table agrees that there will be *interesting consequences or complications* for fallout resulting from that action, follow the procedure below after you narrate your action;

Gain +d6 from a relevant Skill.

If you possess a Skill that applies to the current situation, you may bring it into play by invoking it.

Gain +d6 from a relevant Domain.

If you possess a Domain that applies to the current situation, you may bring it into play by invoking it.

Gain +d6 from invoking a tag; Trait, Injury, Item, or Artifact.

Invoking a tag calls that tag into the scene. If it is an item, the character might be using the item. If it is a trait, the character is using that trait.

Gain +d6 from involving a relevant World Element; Aspect or Core.

If one or more world element is involved in the scene and is relevant to the action at hand, gain one d6 for involving that world element actively in the scene.

A **Trait** tag can be invoked once before requiring a *refresh*. To trigger a refresh, you may have to wait for time to progress, accept a cost or loss, or through other narratively appropriate mechanisms. The nature of the refresh will depend on the nature of the trait. Traits may be invoked without a refresh if the situation calls for it, but that will always come with an upfront cost, such as an injury.

Invoking [athletic] helped you in your feat of strength, but now you need to rest before straining yourself. Perhaps you can take the Injury tag [exhausted] to use it again right now.

Injury tags can be always invoked for *free* and *do not require* a refresh. By invoking them, those injuries will emerge in the current scene. The Injury tags will never prevent accomplishments, they just make the action and the following scene more complicated.

Injuries are most commonly gained as a result of complications and consequences from previous actions.

Recovering from an Injury will remove that tag from your character. Recovering from an injury happens within the context of the narrative. Perhaps as a result of seeking medical attention, or even something stranger.

RESOLUTION

EXTRACAUSAL DICE

Gain +d10 from utilizing the extracausality.

The d10 is called the extracausal die.

The nature of the Tenebrose tag you gain is dependent on the scene where you mark your full Tenebrose track. Tenebrose tags cannot be removed under normal circumstances.

No matter the result of the roll, extracausality has taken hold and now things are far more complicated than you intended. This added extreme does not reduce the magnitude of any accomplishment; it is additive to the current scene.

You may continue adding extracausal die to your results if you are not happy with the roll. Each time a new extracausal die is the highest result, you continue to mark your Tenebrose track.

Once you gain a Tenebrose tag, you may invoke it as any other tag to gain +d6. When you do invoke it, this counts as utilizing the extracausality as if you were rolling an extracausal die. Meaning whenever a Tenebrose tag is invoked, the extracausal will manifest in the scene.

You may never roll more than four dice at a time.

Extracausal dice do not count against the above limit.

Utilizing the forces of the extracausal means inviting in the powers, forces, beings, strangeness, that swirl around this web of conspiracy, around the edges of perception, around the edges of reality.

When you choose to use the extracausality, work with the table to determine how it manifests in the scene. Because it does manifest, and things will never be the same here.

Whenever the extracausal manifests in a scene, consider the question: What may be the nature of the extracausality your game?

When you utilize extracausality (and it is always your choice to utilize it), the power fills the space of the scene; its influence is clear and overt. This is a perfect opportunity to use any world element Forces that may be in play.

If the extracausal die is ever the highest die rolled, you gain a Tenebrose level.

When you max out your Tenebrose track, gain a permanent Tenebrose tag and clear the track. There is no limit to how many Tenebrose tags you can have, but after a point, how much of you remains?

Items are treated as temporary tags, and can only be invoked a certain number of times before that item is used up. An item has an associated depletion die that tracks how frequently it can be used or if it has been depleted following use. Regain the use of an item when narratively appropriate.

Artifacts are unique items that have their own set of tags. These artifact tags can be invoked without needing a depletion die. Artifacts are powerful items or devices, however they may attract attention from the extracausality if utilized too frequently. Artifacts are as rare as they are powerful, and acquiring them should be momentous.

RESOLUTION

ROLL THE DICE

If the highest result is a 1-3;

Move the scene forward with full complications. The outcome is not as expected and the scene escalates, hurtling in some dangerous new direction. You will face dangerous consequences for their actions. Harm may befall you, your resources may be limited, or something stirs in the deep. You may not reach your hoped-for accomplishment, but new, strange, and dangerous opportunities are open to you. Beware.

If the highest result is a 4-5;

Accomplishment with complications. The outcome is partly as expected, but there are surprises around the corner. New elements may be brought into play, and the balance has shifted. You may end up in a dangerous new spot, or face consequences and harm. But only after, or as, your accomplishment is reached.

If the highest result is a 6;

Accomplishment as stated. The outcome is as expected, the balance continues to be in your favor. You face little to no losses or potential harm. Ride this cresting wave as far as it takes you into the deep unknown.

If the highest result is a 7+;

Accomplishment, but things go too far. The outcome is not quite as expected. Your action was too potent, it writhed from your complete control. You deal with powers you don't quite understand. The balance has shifted in a surprising way that favors something new. You may not face harm or consequences, but the scene has still shifted toward a dangerous direction in this new reality.

Failure and complication is always a meta-narrative option if the player believes it will create an interesting situation. In this case, you may choose to not make an action roll and accept the consequences of whatever happens next.

ASSISTS + TEAMWORK

Some actions may involve more than one player. When you take an action using the assistance of another, they volunteer one of their skills, traits, or tags they think best applies to your action.

If you accept their assistance you gain an assist die to add to your dice pool (the normal limit of four d6 still applies). However, by choosing to invoke their skills, traits, or other tags in the scene, they will become involved in any complications or consequences you may face following your action roll, to the extent that fits within the unfolding narrative.

If your ally chooses to invoke their Tenebrose tag or utilize the extracausal for their assist action, you will receive a d10 as if you were utilizing the extracausal yourself.

If the d10 assist die is the highest, Tenebrose will be marked as per the rules of the extracausal die. Who marks Tenebrose will depend on the current narrative context.

There are three possibilities; the player making the action roll only marks their Tenebrose, the player making the assist only marks their Tenebrose, or all players involved mark their Tenebrose.

Archie is attempting to construct a containment device for a clockwork temporal anomaly. He's using his [ritual] skill and [tenacity] trait giving him 2d6. Cordelia's player offers to assist and decides she is invoking her Tenebrose tag [Paracusia], which gives Archie an additional d10 to the pool.

Archie's player decides that those three dice are enough for the roll. He rolls a 2, 4, on the d6 and a 6 on the d10. The action is a success, but the extracausal die was the highest result so Tenebrose is going to be marked. The table briefly discusses the situation and both players decide that due to the involved nature of the ritual being conducted, both characters will mark Tenebrose.

THE SCENE

Jesse is scouting through the shifting corridors of the Bureau while the rest of her team sets up a base of operations. She had received reports that groups of afflicted-agents were moving on the few safe pockets of stable reality within the Bureau.

As she carefully rounds a corner, the Facilitator sets the scene and relays the potential consequences Jesse and her player face;

Before you, what was once an office space and hallway leading toward another section of the Bureau, has warped into an impossible spiraling tunnel. It is massive. Desks and other office items float suspended. Geometric shapes jut out from the walls at hazardous angles.

The light is low and red. You spot a few clouds of hostile thoughtforms, buzzing angrily and floating through the tunnel. You might be able to sneak past them if you're careful. But if you're caught, the thoughtforms will attack, and some of them may go looking for reinforcements or your allies. Now, what do you do?

THE CONVERSATION

Jesse's player thinks for a moment before responding; "I don't want any of the thoughtforms to go after the rest of the party back at the base, so I'm thinking I want to draw their attention toward me and pull them further down the tunnel. I'm pretty sure I can lose them deeper in the Bureau."

She turns to the rest of the table; "What do you all think of that?"

John's player raises a point that if Jesse gets into severe trouble, the rest of the party might not be in a position to help her. Jesse's player agrees and modifies her earlier idea to focus on sneaking past the thoughtforms without alerting them instead, making it easier for her to rejoin the rest of the party later on.

Everyone agrees that this action will need a roll as there's plenty of potential consequences and complications should the scene take a turn for Jesse.

THE RESPONSE

Jesse's player now sets up her dice pool for the action roll. They grab one d6 from Jesse's agile trait, and then asks if the domain *bureaucracy* might apply here since Jesse will be navigating in the Bureau. The table agrees it fits enough for the roll as *domains are meant to be broadly applied categories*.

Jesse's player looks at her available skills and doesn't think any of them particularly fit in this scene and instead chooses to utilize the extracausality for one more die.

To show how the extracausal forces enter the scene, she narrates that Jesse taps into the Bureau's resonance field and causes some of the floating objects to align in a way that will provide cover.

Another player suggests that the way the extracausality pervades the rest of the scene is that the space continues to shift and warp extremely, spreading beyond just that area, creating future elements to play off of in future scenes.

THE RESOLUTION

Jesse's player now rolls the assembled dice pool; 2d6 and 1d10. They roll a 2, 4, and 7. The extracausality die was the highest result meaning Jesse gets a mark on her Tenebrose track, and she rolled a 7+ meaning Jesse accomplishes what she set out to do, but somehow goes too far.

Jesse will be able to advance through the space without detection, but now the table considers how the situation escalates further.

Jesse's player suggests that maybe when she used the extracausality, not only did it cause this environment to spread its warp past the threshold, but it also accelerates the process and if it's not somehow stopped soon it will cascade out of control.

Another player suggests that the warped zone has actually reached the base where the rest of the party is located. The spreading warp gives the other players something to act on in future scenes. And now, the scene proceeds as another player begins the conversation anew.

HOW TO END

There are two tracks that apply to the world's narrative; **Apocalypsis** and **Tenebrae** - *revelation and darkness*.

The two tracks move your story toward two possible end states that reflect gaining revelation or reaching darkness. Each track is shifted during play.

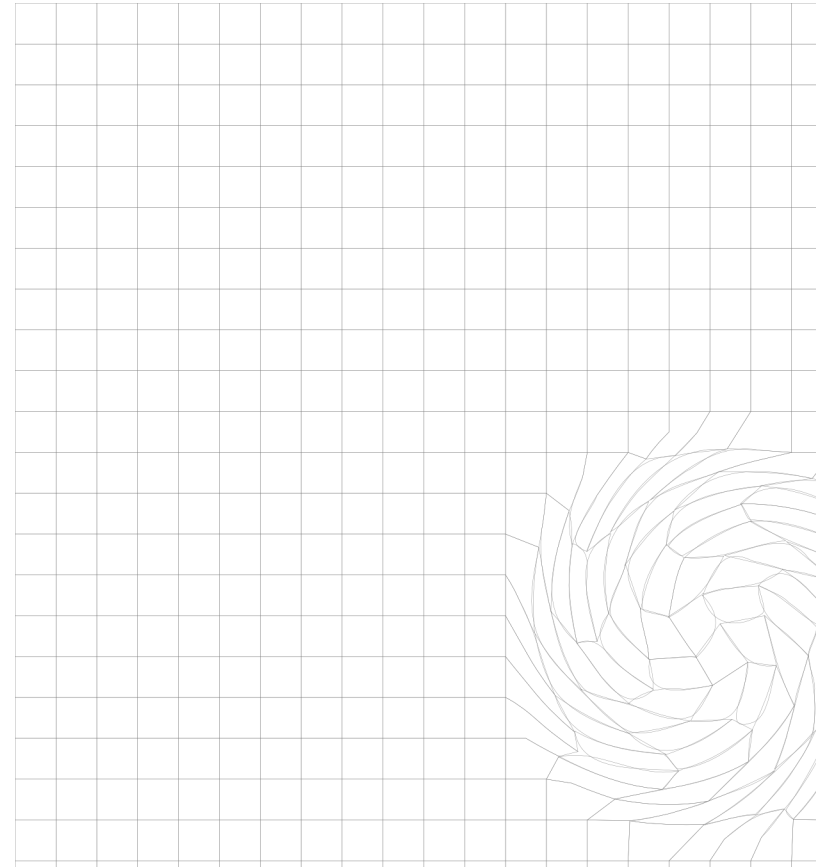
A Facilitator marks one or both tracks when something *impactful* within the narrative occurs. If no Facilitator is present, players should reach a consensus when someone thinks a track should be shifted. The nature of what "*something impactful within the narrative occurs*" will entirely depend on your table's current narrative. Usually, it will end up being the resolution of some conflict that has resulted in changes to the current status quo of the world's narrative.

If the forces of extracausality have made major advancements it might be appropriate to shift the Tenebrae track forward. If the characters (or players) have made a major discovery or achieved greater understanding of the extracausal, that might call for shifting the Apocalypsis track forward.

Apocalypsis and Tenebrae are shifted independently from each other, and can only be shifted forward. Once one track has been filled the table reaches the *end state* of the current arc of the game. At the end of that session, the table will wrap that arc of the game by following the epilogue procedure of the triggered end state.

When **five marks are filled in either track**, the end state, either Apocalypsis *or* Tenebrae, is reached and you move into the epilogue. The epilogue does not mean the end of the entire game, merely the closing of the current chapter.

The epilogue is meant to provide new starting points for future stories. Reaching an end state means that the world has changed as a result of all of your actions. You the players may not have known the answers to these questions before reaching the epilogue.



APOCALYPSIS TENEBRAE

The Organization continues to maintain their hold against the forces of the extracausality. However, deeper truths about the nature of the Organization *and* the Extracausality have both been learned. Answer the following questions as part of this epilogue;

- Which ally now secretly works against the Organization?
- What remnant of the extracausality now lurks hidden, dormant, waiting?
- How has the Organization grown and shaped the world?

The forces of the extracausality have irreparably reshaped reality. That which is extracausal now spreads further than ever before. Like a creeping mold, it seeps subtly into every aspect of existence. Answer the following questions as part of this epilogue;

- Which ally was revealed as an aspect of the extracausality this whole time?
- What terrible price has the world paid?
- Who surprisingly continues the fight against the extracausality?

G N O S I S

WORLD ELEMENTS

World Elements are building blocks for creating the table's game world. They are tools to spark and drive the story that you all create together.

World Elements are similar to a character's traits and tags, only instead applied to the game world and any non-player characters, beings, concepts, locations, or even stranger things that the table might encounter.

Each World Element acts as a descriptor for whatever it is applied to, and informs what can happen in any scene that includes them.

World Elements are tools to help players build up their world and narrative. World Elements function largely the same way; they give a list of whatever it is attached to can always do. These "moves" are meant to help shift the narrative in new directions.

There are three categories of World Elements.

- Aspects
- Cores
- Forces

Aspects are used when new characters or other smaller pieces of the story are introduced.

For example, if a player introduces a new NPC, assign them 1-2 aspects. Aspects have three things they can always do.

Cores define locations that players visit.

When a new location is introduced to the story, it gets 1-2 cores.

Aspects and cores can be randomly assigned, which creates new twists in the story that get to be interpreted and untangled at the table, or they can be picked by a player or table together. It's okay to spend some time selecting aspects and cores, as through that process the table is still actively creating and telling the narrative.

Aspects and cores can be used to gain extra dice when setting up an action roll. If a piece of the aspect or core is relevant to the action at hand, the player can **gain +1d6** to the roll. Should that happen, make sure to have whatever world elements the aspects or cores are attached to be present and active in that scene as the action unfolds.

Forces embody the sweeping presences of the extracausal. They are brought into play to drive the narrative forward in new and unexpected directions. Forces come with a list of things they can always do, like aspects and cores, but they also include a list of questions to be asked when these forces manifest. Forces are the most impactful kind of world element; they are almost player characters in their own right and can be used as such. Forces can be brought into play at any point during play as a player "picks it up" to utilize its narrative forces to create new twists in the story.

If the table is unsure of how or when to introduce a Force during play, you might want to try deciding on one Force to use at the start of the session. The Facilitator might focus on being the main player to pick up the Force during that session, or a different player can volunteer to "play" as that Force for the session.

WORLD ELEMENTS

Aspects

When introducing a new NPC, choose or determine randomly 1-2 Aspects that character possesses.

1. Secretive
2. Hiding
3. Ambitious
4. Empty
5. Trusting
6. Knowing
7. Weathered
8. Twisted
9. Darkened
10. Apostate
11. Monstrous
12. Defiant
13. Effigy
14. Wanted
15. Dangerous
16. Clinging
17. Between
18. Hungry
19. Fallen
20. Echoed

Cores

When introducing a new location, choose or determine randomly 1-2 Cores that location possesses.

1. Liminal
2. Abandoned
3. Kaleidoscoping
4. Ruined
5. Crowded
6. Corporate
7. Brutalist
8. Isolated
9. Beyond
10. Twisting
11. Industrial
12. Deep

Forces

Introducing a Force is a deliberate action. Forces bring with them a narrative storm. Choose a Force that feels exciting in the current moment.

- **The Vine**
- **The Sinkhole**
- **The Cornerstone**
- **The Pawns**
- **The Shadow**
- **The Fractal**

See page 31 for further information on how to use Forces.

Aspects provide three moves that a character with that aspect can perform. How those moves might be interpreted will vary table to table, and scene to scene. An aspect's move need not be immediate, and any player or Facilitator can choose to make that move when most appropriate in the current scene. The Facilitator who introduced the character can also use the move as inspiration to help flesh out that character, returning to the moves to determine an NPC's goals and motivations.

Cores provide a set of moves similar to those of aspects. However, the moves of a core center the player characters rather than NPCs. A player can use a location's move to uncover secrets or make new discoveries within that location. A Facilitator can use a core's move to prompt another player to action, introducing new complications and twists to the story. Cores also have a list of moods which serve as aesthetic inspiration for the locations.

ASPECTS

Secretive: They know things, things that are wrong, things that you need. Those who are Secretive can always;

- Act suspiciously around others
- Hint at a previously unknown clue
- Hide away the needed answer

Hidden: They hide for a reason. There are things out there in the dark that would have them. Those who are Hidden can always;

- Be on the run
- Reveal hunters in pursuit
- Offer a place to hide

Ambitious: They are driven, standing at the edge of a cliff, surveying their destiny. Those who are Ambitious can always;

- Advance their plans at any cost
- Cling and claw their way up
- Leave others in the dust

Empty: Something took them, and hollowed them out. Those who are Empty can always;

- Act as a vessel
- Become a reminder of the dark past
- Draw in danger

Trusting: Naive, earnest, faithful. A small beacon in the dark. Those who are Trusting can always;

- Follow others blindly
- Be drawn to the flame
- Believe

Knowing: They know things, things that are wrong, things that you need. Those who are Secretive can always;

- Provide a dangerous answer
- Reveal a key source
- Spread an idea

Weathered: This is not their first time at this, and it likely will not be their last. Those who are Weathered can always;

- Recall the forbidden past
- Reveal the heavy cost
- See this through to the end

Twisted: They have already given in, embracing the thorns that prick away at reality. Those who are Twisted can always;

- Creep and crawl
- Feast on misfortune
- Create cracks in the foundation

Darkened: Shades of the strange shadow their brow. They have seen what lies waiting. Those who are Darkened can always;

- Obscure the way forward
- Unlock a doorway
- Share a warning

Apostate: They are Judas. They are chaos. They have become the profane. Those who are Apostate can always;

- Slip a dagger between the ribs
- Turn their back
- Reveal a trap

Monstrous: They are changed forever by the extracausal. Their true nature lies beneath. Those who are Monstrous can always;

- Wreak havoc
- Reveal a plan
- Roar

Defiant: They refuse to give up. They stand facing the oncoming wave. Those who are Defiant can always;

- Fight forever on
- Wipe away the blood
- Stand alone

Effigy: They are a puppet, a construct, a mask. Their skin writhes. Those who are an Effigy can always;

- Embrace the uncanny
- Act as a subtle warning of danger
- Reveal their true nature

Wanted: They hide for a reason. There are things out there in the dark that want them. Those who are Hidden can always;

- Be on the run
- Reveal hunters in pursuit
- Offer a place to hide

Dangerous: They have a cutting edge that makes others bleed. Those are Dangerous can always;

- Force another to make the sacrifice
- Reveal a weapon
- Threaten and intimidate

Clinging: They are an unraveling thread. They grasp at others with desperation. Those who are Clinging can always;

- Weigh someone down
- Fall in with the wrong crowd
- Thrash and struggle

Between: They stand in two worlds. They have a special connection to the extracausal. Those who are Between can always;

- Prepare a threshold
- Act as a conduit
- Reveal a bridge

Hungry: They have a hunger that must be fed. It is insatiable and gnashing. Those who are Hungry can always;

- Have their vision clouded
- Accept a dangerous bargain
- Feed on what they most desire

Fallen: They once faced a wall of darkness and shadow. They never fully recovered. Those who are Fallen can always;

- Share their tainted soul
- Play both sides
- Expose catastrophic flaws in well made plans

Echoed: They are a mirror, a double, one truth and one lie. Those who are Echoed can always;

- Feel dangerously familiar
- Be in two places at once
- Resemble the past and future

CORES

LIMINAL

A Liminal place is between two spaces. It bleeds into everything that it touches.

While in a Liminal place;

- See beyond the threshold
- Transfer ideas and emotions
- Blur the lines between truths

Moods

- *Rain-slicked empty highways*
- *Neon lights streaking into infinity*
- *The fluttering of moth wings*

ABANDONED

An Abandoned place is a skeleton. A haunted vestige of the past.

While in an Abandoned place;

- Stir up the ghosts of the past
- Discover buried secrets
- Run into what was forgotten

Moods

- *Wind rushing through a hallway*
- *Scrabbling of debris from behind*
- *Steel bones and concrete skin*

KALEIDOSCOPIING

A Kaleidoscoping place is sharp and bright. A window to somewhere else.

While in a Kaleidoscoping place;

- Experience the extracausal
- Warp perspectives and perceptions
- Be transformed

Moods

- *Staring up at the surface of a lake*
- *Words that split and fractal*
- *Endless and dizzying spinning*

RUINED

A Ruined place is a derelict. A hulking corpse of a once grand past.

While in a Ruined place;

- Become lost in past mistakes
- Reveal an old catastrophe
- Awaken what was once dead

Moods

- *The sense of past desecration*
- *Stone that clings to old truths*
- *A miasma of incense*

CROWDED

A Crowded place is overwhelming, it is dense. Secrets hide within the masses.

While in a Crowded place;

- Get swallowed up by the swarm
- Lose a face in a crowd
- Feel the walls closing in

Moods

- *A faceless grin at the periphery*
- *Soft murmurs that grow to a roar*
- *Mirrors reflected onto each other*

CORPORATE

A Corporate place is sterile. It is malicious, and leeches away color.

While in a Corporate place;

- Steal important information
- Become trapped by convention
- Sign on the dotted line

Moods

- *Stale air, forever circulated*
- *Blank stares and bared teeth*
- *A stark white maze*

BRUTALIST

A Brutalist place is looming. It is a slab, unfeeling and unforgiving.

While in a Brutalist place;

- Realize just how small you are
- Face cold, hard, unfortunate facts
- Lose your sense of self

Moods

- *A door that opens to darkness*
- *A room with no windows*
- *A winter rainstorm*

ISOLATED

An Isolated place is lonely. It stands apart and filled with half-real shadows.

While in an Isolated place;

- Find truth in solitude
- Amplify the whispers
- Catch of glimpse the hidden

Moods

- *A lone tree atop an ancient hill*
- *A point of light from a keyhole*
- *The windswept and eroded*

BEYOND

A Beyond place is alien. It follows different rules, touched by the extracausal.

While in a Beyond place;

- Meet the extracausal
- Steal new perspectives on the old
- Become untethered

Moods

- *The sensation of floating*
- *Many eyes watching from above*
- *A never ending pathway*

TWISTING

A Twisting place is a circus. A place of darkness, where the shadows have won.

While in a Twisting place;

- Lose yourself completely
- Grasp at what slips away
- Face the extracausal

Moods

- *A forest of finger-like spindly trees*
- *The red light of a laughing moon*
- *A trail of too-vibrant blood*

INDUSTRIAL

An Industrial place is loud and metallic. A place of artifice and smoke.

While in an Industrial place;

- Gain a machined resource
- Lose something natural
- Begin construction

Moods

- *White clouds of acrid smog*
- *The noise of metal on metal*
- *Pooling oil and goutts of flame*

DEEP

A Deep place is a distant reflection. It fills the lungs and eyes like dark waters.

While in a Deep place;

- Commune with the depths
- Open your eyes, at a cost
- Witness the purposefully forgotten

Moods

- *The stars blink out one by one*
- *Stairs that spiral into the darkness*
- *The lost depths of the ocean*

FORCES

Forces are the abstracted powers and beings of the extracausal.

Each Force might represent one or more mysterious, creeping, and likely antagonistic element of the table's story. The table may eventually give them more concrete identities, discovered through play, but at the start these forces are nebulous, nameless, and vague.

Forces will almost always shift the world state in one or more directions. When a Force is played, whoever is playing it has free reign to perform its moves and prompt its questions to other players. These questions must be answered.


To use a Force, one or more player picks them up, essentially treating them as a player character. They might focus on only playing the Force, setting their character aside for a moment, or play both at the same time. When a Facilitator is playing a Force, they might use them as they would other NPCs, with the major caveat that Forces are much more powerful within the narrative than the average NPC. When someone plays a Force, the first thing to establish is what exactly in the current scene is related to that Force. This might take the form of;

- A character, now revealed as being an emissary of the extracausal.
- An idea, now revealed as having been implanted by the extracausal.
- A location, now being central to the emergence of the extracausal.

Once those details have been figured out, whoever has played the Force gets to use that Force's moves and ask its questions.

A Force's moves allow that player to create hard truths for the story. These moves introduce ever deepening rabbit holes of mystery and doubt. They reveal new secrets or change the context of old information. They upend the status quo. Many of these moves are interpretive and metaphorical. What exactly they do will be up to each table, and depend entirely on the context of the current scene. Whoever is making the Force's move can always ask the rest of the table for help if they are unsure as to what they want to actually do with a move. It is more than okay to pick out a move that sounds cool, and then figure out the following scenes from there. Let your gut make the first move.

The questions listed on each Force must be answered once they are prompted. Whoever is playing the Force might prompt a question to another individual player, or to the table as a whole. These questions often put characters into tough spots, asking them to reconsider truths they previously held to be true. Much like the moves, answering the Force's questions can be collaborative. If a player is stuck, the rest of the table should help. The given answer doesn't have to cover every small detail either. Painting in broad strokes leaves room for finer details to be established later on.



TIDES

THE VINE

I am subtle and sinewy.

I am the unseen interloper.

I coil at the edges of perception.

I prick at reality with my thorns.

My work remains unseen until it is too late and my tendrils choke everything.

When you embody the Vine you may;

- Introduce subtle plans and secret works.
- Reveal that events were connected the whole time, part of a larger web.
- Show the small details of the weird, of the uncanny valley.
- Create small dangers, death by a thousand cuts.
- Advance plans the characters cannot yet comprehend.
- Insert whispers and secrets.

Ask of the other players;

- What truth that you held close do you now begin to doubt?
- What past event do you now view in a revealing new light?
- What small detail now seems much more important?
- What invisible connections now gleam darkly?



THE CORNERSTONE

I am constructed.

I am the unseen origin.

I am older than everything before.

I have been covered and obscured but I still rest within the heart.

I have seen everything topple and burn before, and I will see it happen again.

When you embody the Cornerstone you may;

- Hold steady against the rising tide.
- Reveal a secret layer that has always been beneath everything.
- Unveil a surviving fragment after it's all been burned to the ground.
- Advance the plans of a lone power.
- Create dangerous, formerly hidden, leaders and figureheads.
- Introduce the constructed, created, purposefully formed.

Ask of the other players;

- How does this secret fortify you against your doubts?
- Why does this element seemingly support you, for now?
- Why do you have the feeling that this thread leads to the apex of the pyramid?
- Who do you suspect as being far more important than previously imagined?

THE SINKHOLE

I am the sudden and catastrophic change that is oh so obvious in hindsight.

I am underneath what you thought was sturdy and sure.

I am the steady drip that turns into a cascade.

I am steadily, secretly, growing larger.

When you embody the Sinkhole you may;

- Lead well laid plans to suddenly collapse.
- Consume disparate secrets to increase your amalgamated mass.
- Reveal the cracks in the dam that are ready to burst.
- Hint that the disaster you see now is only a small facet of a larger whole.
- Turn the status quo completely on its head.
- Refuse to be filled in; swallow the efforts of the desperate.

Ask of the the other players;

- What flood do you fear is approaching?
- How is the once steady ground beneath your feet crumbling?
- Why are you desperately fighting against the inevitable?
- How has your understanding been completely inverted?

THE SHADOW

I slide over your eyes, redirecting, obfuscating, hiding both truths and falsehoods in equal measure.

I am all that smothers and wraps around the light with soft whispers of misdirection.

I am the veil between places, the darkness that looms at the end of the hall.

I exist only in a state of contrast; one side of a strange coin.

I am waiting.

When you embody the Shadow you may;

- Work to hide the light from others.
- Redirect seekers down a more harrowing path.
- Open a door to the darkest of places, letting in something new.
- Reveal your counterpart; the brightness to your darkness, yet equally as dangerous.
- Drop a smokescreen, making truth and lies equally obfuscated.
- Shrink away to the umbra, hidden from those that would flood you with light.

Ask of the other players;

- What truth here sputters like a dying candle?
- How have you been unwittingly working toward my goal?
- What whispers in the dark have I sent to you in the past?
- Which of your fears emerges from the darkness?

THE PAWNS

A handprint is cast in the sand, with a shadow of a hand above it, suggesting a larger, unseen hand. The background is a textured, light-colored surface, possibly sand or a similar material.

I lack the vision and blueprints but I am undaunted.

I am the individual fingers of the larger hand.

I am the gnashing teeth that fill the mouth.

I cannot be stopped.

I am many.

When you embody the Pawns you may;

- Introduce the small playthings of higher powers.
- Create rivaling antagonistic forces.
- Hint that these forces may not be as singular as believed.
- Reveal higher levels of secret hierarchies.
- Move the chess pieces in ways that will only make sense in the endgame.
- Gnash and tear; work as one to crush what stands in the way.

Ask of the other players;

- What offer can I make to tempt you to my side?
- Who do you know that I have now revealed is one piece of the legion?
- Why does this puzzle piece only pose a threat when there are many?
- What small elements have been following, stalking, watching you?

THE FRACTAL

I am the never ending, the always branching, the cyclically infinite.

I am ever churning, ever spiraling; a maelstrom and an event horizon.

I am the hydra, forever sprouting new heads and new teeth.

I am the beginning and I am the end, the smallest piece yet the total whole.

I spiral out from the heart.

When you embody the Fractal you may;

- Writhe and twist, coiling your body like a snake.
- Form plans within plans within plans within plans.
- Show how this has all happened before, and will happen again and again.
- Reveal that a threat once defeated, has reemerged stronger than before.
- Describe how the path toward the goal has only grown more perilous.
- Link together separate patterns that now fit tightly together.

Ask of the other players;

- Which of your past mistakes suddenly strikes from the dark?
- What must you do to escape the pull of the extracausal?
- What small victory twists into a new challenge?
- What do you think lies at the center of this horrible pattern?

SETS

Sets are a shortcut to launching a game. They package together tailored backgrounds, items, aspects, cores, and more to make starting a game from absolute zero easier. They can also be further modified or used as inspiration for the table's emerging setting.

There are four Sets included here;

- **The Bureau:** a contemporary setting of underfunded misfits digging their way to the center of a shadowy conspiracy.
- **Fine Old Bones:** an isolated town still steeped in old ways, and slowly being engulfed by far older creeping evil.
- **Gaslit Ambergris:** a period setting centered on an old port town and slumbering, ancient entities of the deep.
- **Oneiroscape:** a setting of secret agencies, collective dreamscapes, and the nightmares that creep into the waking world.

Sets are not the end all be all of what one can create within *Extracausal* and instead sketch out some rough ideas. Each set presents alternate character options and setting elements to show how a table might modify and iterate on the preexisting options.

THE BUREAU

TOUCHSTONES

X-Files, Fringe, Person of Interest

conspiracy, paranatural, monster of the week

The Bureau takes place in a contemporary setting close to the real world. The paranatural exists at the fringes of this world, and beyond even those fringes are groups and individuals making moves from the shadows. Each new encounter sheds a small pinprick of light into those shadows, revealing just how deeply they stretch. Little by little, connections between these strange events become visible. The question is who might be pulling on all those strings? The Bureau itself is not beyond suspicion as players aim to uncover just how deep the growing conspiracy is rooted.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Organization is a division within the governmental body the Bureau, that focuses on investigating unexplained phenomena. It is constantly underfunded and frequently dismissed by the higher ups. Player characters are frequently in over their heads, lacking key resources and information and pushed aside by those with greater authority.

BACKGROUNDS

- The Hacker: *computers, slick, drive*
- The Spy: *infiltration, intel, deception*

- The Burnout: *invention, unpredictable, luck*
- The Suit: *secrets, authority, defense*
- The Cipher: *intrigue, destiny, planning*
- The Arrival: *empathy, connections, strange*

ASPECTS

Infected: *They were touched by the conspiracy. Those who are Infected can always;*

- *Reveal a parasite*
- *Spread their corruption*
- *Inform the web*

Inquisitive: *They are always pushing, always asking questions. Those who are Inquisitive can always;*

- *Attract the wrong attention*
- *Pose an important question*
- *Show up unexpectedly*

Elliptic: *They are obscuring, cryptic, secretive, and key to everything. Those who are Elliptic can always;*

- *Hint at coming danger*
- *Watch from the shadows*
- *Share a coded message*

CORES

An **Alien** place is impossible but tangible. It is just beyond what is knowable.

While in an Alien place;

- Stumble upon something key
- Face the incomprehensible
- Open yourself to the extracausal

Moods

- *The smell of ozone*
- *Overly sterile halls*
- *Sharp and clean lines*

A **Constructed** place is purposeful and new. It has a function that waits to be discovered.

While in a Constructed place;

- Learn a new methodology
- Prepare for the future
- Replace a piece of yourself

Moods

- *Buzzing incandescent lights*
- *Footsteps echoing on metal*
- *The heat of an old monitor*

ONEIROSCAPE

TOUCHSTONES

Silent Hill, Evil Within, Inception

Dreams, horror, monsters

The countless sleeping minds gave rise to the oneiroscape; a collective psychic realm. This dream world shifts and churns, and can bleed into the waking world. Nightmares emerge from the shadows and swallow up hapless victims. Within the oneiroscape, nightmares hold sway over twisted realms shaped by the collective fears of dreamers.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Organization is a group dedicated to studying and charting the oneiroscape, and fighting the nightmares that leak out into the waking world. This Organization is secretive, keeping hidden from the world. The Organization has mysterious connections to deep pockets, assuring a level of consistent resources. For now. Player characters have access to special methods that allow them to travel to the oneiroscape, but just because they are within dreams, does not mean the danger is any less real.

BACKGROUNDS

- The Dreamer: *wonder, charisma, intuition*
- The Hunter: *tactics, resolve, pursuit*

- The Navigator: *cartography, precision, resistance*
- The Awoken: *psychic, fate, cold*
- The Captain: *grit, command, loyalty*
- The Conduit: *channeling, mystery, vision*

FORCE

*I am ephemeral. I am a storm. I slink along the edges yet I can fill the sky like a cloud. I am impossibly and ever changing. I am **The Dream**.*

- Curl a finger of the monkey's paw.
- Bring the distant past back to life.
- Demand a sacrifice, a great cost, blood and bones.
- *How have you played your part exactly to my design?*
- *What must you give up here?*
- *Who were you least suspecting?*

ITEMS + ARTIFACTS

- SHRIKE rifle: *d10/1-3*
- dream disruptor: *d6/1-4*
- Dream Blood: *oneiric, volatile*
- COMPASS System: *interface, fungal*

CORES

A **Misty** place is constantly shifting and clouded. It is shaped by strong wills.

While in a Misty place;

- Shape the dreamstuff
- Receive a faded vision
- Get lost in a fantasy, a memory

Moods

- *The smell of fine, gray, rain*
- *A soft voiceless murmuring*
- *A gentle breeze, a distant warning*

A **Scarred** place is broken and angry. It is nightmare made manifest, ruled by hungry monsters.

While in a Scarred place;

- Flee from your personal nightmares
- Lose your hope
- Strike at the extracausal

Moods

- *The screech of rusty metal*
- *Flesh given horrible, twisted form*
- *A thousand glaring, bloodshot eyes*

FINE OLD BONES

TOUCHSTONES

Twin Peaks, Midnight Mass, Noroi: The Curse

folk horror, deep time, surrealism

Fine Old Bones takes place in a small, isolated town. Perhaps in the mountains, or surrounded by dense woods, or maybe on a small coastal island. Travel to and from the town is fragile. Time has a way of sticking here, clinging to your bones. There is an old darkness here, something that predates the town and its people. It ebbs and flows, but has slowly been growing and creeping into people and locations.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Organization begins much more loosely in this set, more of a collection of like-minded individuals slowly becoming aware of the dangers all around them. Connections to the Organization are going to be interpersonal connections between characters. Estranged family, childhood friends, old mentors. Like the theme of the set, player characters are likely to be a mix of the old and new.

BACKGROUNDS

- The Outsider: *perspective, conspicuous, investigation*
- The Priest: *faith, ritual, fear*
- The Regular: *steady, local, tough*

- The Prodigal: *history, connections, secrets*
- The Elder: *tradition, wisdom, patience*
- The Beast: *blood, darkness, anger*

DOMAINS+TENE BROSE

- *time*
- *community*
- *old ways*
- *Inducted*
- *Trapped*

ASPECTS

Cursed: *They are trapped within the eternal cycle. They strain at their chains. Those who are Cursed can always;*

- *Pull the crowd to themself*
- *Unveil the past and future*
- *Become a sacrifice*

Blinded: *Their eyes are closed to what happens around them. They cling to their comfort. Those who are Blinded can always;*

- *Ignore the unexplainable*
- *Slam shut the way forward*
- *Become an instrument of the dark*

CORES

An **Ancient** place is waiting. It thirsts and hungers.

While in an Ancient place;

- Witness echoes of the bloody past
- Unearth ancient secrets
- Disturb old plans in new motion

Moods

- *Wind howling through hollow stone*
- *Distant footsteps on pounded earth*
- *The sense of ages passing in a moment*

FORCE

*I am purposeful and methodical. I am worn smooth by countless hands. I hunger and I will be fed. I am **The Ritual**.*

- March undaunted, ever forward.
- Bring the distant past back to life.
- Demand a sacrifice, a great cost, blood and bones.
- *How have you played your part exactly to my design?*
- *What must you give up here?*
- *Who were you least suspecting?*

GASLIT AMBERGRIS

TOUCHSTONES

Penny Dreadful, Lovecraftian, Sherlock Holmes

cults, crimes, and old gods

Leviathan Landing is an antiquated port town, just past a historic heyday fueled by the bloody whaling industry. Shrouded in mists and smog that linger late into the evening, the streets of Leviathan Landing are host to all manner of strange and dangerous things. Deep out past the bay, even stranger, far more ancient things stir in those pitch black waters. Recently a string of grisly murders has wracked the streets of Leviathan Landing, making the mist-filled nights even more dangerous. At the same time, strange, unidentifiable, dead sea creatures wash up on the shores of the beaches, and people spread rumors of hooded figures glimpsed in darkened windows. Ancient powers begin to stir from their eternal slumber. The clock is ticking for Leviathan Landing.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Organization is a secretive club that gathers all manner of eclectic members from among the peoples of Leviathan Landing. The founder of the club is a mysterious and eccentric individual, supposedly currently traveling abroad. Yet each day there is a new missive from the founder instructing members to discover what lies beneath the smog of the darkened streets before it is too late.

BACKGROUNDS

- The Investigator: *investigation, contacts, defense*
- The Dockworker: *crime, rough, stalwart*
- The Cultist: *ritual, secrets, artifacts*
- The Adrift: *wealth, detached, incognito*
- The Informed: *archives, resources, clues*
- The Monster: *violence, mystery, hidden*

ASPECTS

Haunted: *They have ghosts clinging to them. Real or otherwise. Those who are Haunted can always;*

- *Reveal the ghosts around them*
- *Channel strange forces*
- *Be unphased*

Suspicious: *They are clearly a piece to the puzzle. Aren't they? Those who are Suspicious can always;*

- *Become a red herring*
- *Let slip a secret*
- *Dodge the questions*

CORE

A **Bloody** place is stained. It has seen tragedy and ritual in equal parts.

While in a Bloody place;

- Attune to ancient forces
- Uncover a grisly clue
- Fall prey to the shadows

Moods

- *Flickering gas lamps*
- *Cobbled streets and pouring rain*
- *A sea cave, revealed at low tide*

ITEMS+ARTIFACTS

- cane sword: *d6/1*
- revolver: *d6/1-2*
- masquerade mask: *d6/1*
- old key: *d6/1-3*
- ritual knife: *d10/1-2*
- surgical equipment: *d6/1-2*
- Personal Library: *occult, extensive*
- Old Grimoire: *ancient, sleeping*
- Unknowable Statue: *touched, alive*



ESCHATOON

PLAY EXAMPLES

FIRST SESSION

The table has just set down to play their first session of *Extracausal*. They know the first session will be mostly exploring the tone and setting they want to play in, creating their Organization, and creating their characters.

The table decides that they want to play with one central Facilitator, but leave it open to potentially rotating that role in the future once they feel more comfortable with playing. One player in particular expresses an interest in being the initial Facilitator. After making that decision, the table spends some time discussing the overall tone they want from the game. A few players list off some pieces of media they enjoy and think of as inspiration.

After a bit of conversation the table settles on a generally serious tone, but with some room for levity, and everyone agrees that their world should feel steeped in the supernatural, but with a weird fiction bent. Now that everyone is on the same page, the table moves onto creating their Organization and player characters.

The table looks at the starting questions for establishing their Organization beginning with “*What is the Visible Nature of your Organization?*”. The table had also taken a look at some of the Sets, and drawing inspiration from *The Bureau* and *Onerioscape*, deciding that their Organization is a privately funded group dedicated to uncovering the nature of the supernatural. They continue through the list of questions, gradually shaping the Organization into something compelling and full of mystery.

After taking a short break, the table reconvenes and sets about making player characters. The Facilitator joins in, creating a character for when they shift to being a regular player and have the idea that their character will mostly be an NPC until someone else rotates into being the Facilitator.

Player 1 decides to roll on the tables to see who their character will be, shaping the character’s personality around the results. Player 2 bases their character on someone from a show they just started watching, looking over the options from the tables and deciding that *The Agent* is pretty close. They do swap out *tactics* with *improvisation* which more closely matches the idea they have in their head. Player 3 decides to make up a whole new background entirely. The players then pick out traits and domains, and also decide on some common items characters would have easy access too.

Once all the characters are created, each player goes around and introduces their characters. Player 2 has already come up with a pretty thorough backstory, full of cool potential story hooks, while Player 1 hasn’t quite figured out who their character is, but is excited to find out through playing them. Between the earlier conversations about the Organization, plus all this new character information, the Facilitator has some ideas on what to present to the players for the next session, but as the table wraps up, everyone goes around and lists a few things they hope to see happen in the coming sessions. Giving the Facilitator and other players even more fuel.

INSIGHT

The table is a few sessions into their game. Player 1 had in the previous session filled up their character's Insight track, earning them one Insight die. In the current session they had *just* rolled a miss on their action; attempting to spy on some strange figures in suits and masks. The Facilitator narrates how the heads of the masked figures snap toward Player 1's hiding place, with two of the figures suddenly vanishing - the intent being that they are going to capture Player 1's character.

Player 1 wants to try and prevent this from happening and uses their Insight to try and change the situation. The masked figures are definitely some element of the extracausal, so attempting to make an Insight roll is more than appropriate. Player 1 only has one point of Insight, so they roll 1d6 and get a 4; a mixed success, meaning that something in the scene is forever changed by the extracausal.

Player 1 takes a moment to think before narrating that the radios the party had been using to communicate has somehow attuned to a new ghost frequency. They all can hear some sort of strange code that seems to get stuck in their heads. At the same time, the sudden feedback blare of this frequency makes the masked figures double over in pain, allowing Player 1 to make a hasty retreat.

This mysterious radio frequency is a new narrative thread for the whole table to now play with. There's something that might lead to danger - why is it getting stuck in the character's heads - and it might be used against the forces of the extracausal - it stunned the masked figures - assuming the table can learn enough about how to safely use it. Which could be an entire session down the road. The Facilitator makes a few quick notes about all this and the scene continues with another player who decides to pivot to investigating the nature of this strange radio frequency.

TENE BROSE

Player 2 has just finished making a roll that used the extracausal die, which ended up being the highest result. After the roll and action has been resolved, Player 2 realizes that this causes them to also fill in the last mark on their character's Tenebrose track. Their character gains their first Tenebrose tag and they also clear the track. The Facilitator doesn't immediately have something in mind for this Tenebrose tag so they turn to the rest of the table for ideas.

Player 3 suggests *Deharmonized*. The players had up to this point been exploring the mysterious radio frequency, and proposes that Player 2's character had somehow been "pushed" a little out of sync with reality's normal frequency. Player 2 agrees, thinking that this a cool development and writes down the tag on their character notes.

ASPECTS

The Facilitator has just introduced a new NPC to the table and they quickly glance at the list of Aspects, choosing *Knowing* and *Ambitious*. Put together, these two Aspects suggest a character who is driven, perhaps recklessly, toward their goals and also has the information to back that up.

The Facilitator looks at the moves this character can perform based on those Aspects, and sees that based on the *Knowing* aspect, they can "provide a dangerous answer". The Facilitator tells the table that this NPC has key information relating to the mysterious frequency but this information will lead to a dangerous situation, asking the table what that danger might be.

Player 2 offers that the source of this frequency is located in an abandoned research facility, and there have been confirmed sightings of those strange masked figures in the area.

Based on that idea, it seems like the masked figures are trying to get to the source before the players which becomes the "dangerous" part of the "dangerous answer". By using this move, the Facilitator has prompted a new narrative thread for the table to explore; the abandoned research facility, the source of the radio frequency, and the motivations of the dangerous masked figures.

CORES

The characters have just arrived at the new location: the abandoned research facility. The Facilitator didn't have this location in mind when the session began so they glance at the list of Cores. They pick out *Abandoned* and *Industrial* to apply to this location. Using the example moods, the Facilitator describes the facility as a skeletal building, the inner steel structures having been partly exposed and eroded by the elements, and a lingering smell of chemicals and rusty metal surrounds the whole area.

The players begin exploring the facility, hoping to discover the source of the strange frequency while avoiding the masked figures. Player 1 narrates how their character is trying to figure out the layout of the building, figuring that anything important would be sequestered away in secret sublevels of the building. They describe how their character begins poking around searching for access to these secret sublevels. The Facilitator decides to call for an action roll as there's enough risk of stumbling upon something dangerous or even alerting the masked figures who the table knows are also investigating the facility.

Player 1 ends up getting a 5; a mixed success. They are going to be able to find access to the secret sublevels of the facility, but there is a complication. The Facilitator looks at the moves available in this location and decides that "run into what was forgotten". The Facilitator describes how Player 1's character clears some rubble, find the access they were looking for, but also hears low rumbling coming from below. Something had been locked away within this facility and is now free.

FORCES

The table is in danger on two different sides. The masked figures are closing in, and the freshly freed old experiment also stalks the characters through the abandoned research facility. Things are getting intense and the players take a moment to discuss whether they should keep trying to locate the frequency's source or try to escape the research facility before all the exits are cut off.

As this discussion is happening, Player 3 decides to pick up a Force. They'd been wanting to try using one for a couple sessions now, and thinks that introducing some further interesting wrinkles to the story would be fun. They announce to the table that they are going to pick up *The Cornerstone* and the rest of the table pauses the previous discussion, excited to see where this Force might push the narrative. Player 3 ties the mysterious experiment that has been hunting the players through the facility to this Force. It's an old secret that has been there the whole time, and by connecting it to a Force Player 3 has signaled that this experiment is even more important than previously thought.

Looking at the available moves first, Player 3 picks "advance the plans of a lone power". They decide that this experiment is more keen on escaping the facility than it is hunting the player characters, at least for now, and it begins to make its own exit. The experiment has been elevated to a key player in the ongoing mysteries and the Facilitator jots some notes down since whatever this monster is, it will definitely be showing up in the future.

Player 3 then looks at the questions and picks "who do you suspect as being far more important than previously imagined?", choosing to ask it to the whole table. Player 1 suggests that the NPC that led them to this research facility as the answer, and the Facilitator builds off that saying that they *must* have known about this experiment the whole time, painting them in a much more suspicious light.

END STATES

The session is starting to wind down, so the Facilitator decides to check in on the status of Apocalypse and Tenebrae. They tell the table that the introduction of this mysterious escaped experiment feels like growth in the forces of the extracausal, so they're going to fill in one mark on the Tenebrae track; darkness continues to grow.

The Facilitator asks the table if they think anything that has happened the previous session might add to the Apocalypse track. Player 1 thinks that the discovery of the strange radio frequency might, but then remembers that the characters still have to uncover the source. Once they accomplish this, *then* the table can mark Apocalypse. The rest of the table agrees, and put the discovery of the source of the frequency as one of their goals for the next session.

Neither end state has been reached, but the table is growing slightly closer to triggering the Tenebrae ending, something the Facilitator keeps in mind.

SESSION END

With the end states addressed, the session is drawing to a close. The table briefly summarizes the session, double checking if there were any points for characters to have gained more Insight, and highlighting what each player thinks was an important event from the session.

After finishing that part of the debrief, each player also takes a moment to describe something from the session they thought was cool and fun. Whether that was a particular description of an action, a suggestion for a complication, or use of a game mechanic. They also note what they hope to see happen in the next session. What narrative threads they might want to follow, or what elements of the setting's themes they want to see more readily in play.

