



# DISPARATEUM

BY RATHAYIBACTER

*For posterity:  
Today I made a discovery. Possibly the most  
important discovery of all time; even my previous  
accomplishments pale in the face of it. Today I  
confirmed what I'd long suspected, what I'd  
always hoped but could never put into words.*

*This is a perfect world. Born from nothing,  
shaped by the all-knowing, and set into motion  
with divine purpose.*

*I am to be this world's guardian. I know this now.  
All my life, the signs have pointed to this.  
I leave my words here so that the inheritor  
of this book can carry on my mission, and the  
Disparateum will be preserved forever.*

*~ Alexander*

**IF IT'S INTERESTING,  
YOU CAN DO IT**

**IF YOU FORGET ABOUT IT,  
IGNORE IT**

**THE CITY IS WIDE ENOUGH  
FOR ALL OF US**

**DISPARATEUM**  
**A GAME FOR A KNIGHT,  
A THIEF, A SEER,  
AND A TOWER**

# RITUAL OF BEGINNING

## FOR USHERING IN A NEW AGE OF STORIES

It's early morning when the Knight arrives in the Named City. They've traveled far to get here, and are in need of rest.

**[To THE KNIGHT:]** In a word, why have you come?

The Knight walks the City's streets, taking in the sights. They bump into a stranger, and take a moment to apologize and explain that they're not from around here. The stranger laughs and forgives them.

**[To THE THIEF:]** During your conversation, what precious thing did you steal from the Knight?

The Knight quickly realizes what happened, and tracks the Thief across the City. They find them at a market stand, trying to sell their ill-gotten goods to a student of mysteries.

**[To THE SEER:]** The moment you see the Knight, what vision of their future consumes you?

Gradually, with the Seer's help, the Knight and Thief come to a mutual understanding.

**[To THE SEER:]** What hidden side of the Thief do you bring to light?

**[To THE THIEF:]** What promise do you make to the Knight?

**[To THE KNIGHT:]** What guidance or advice do you receive from the Seer?

## DISPARATEUM

Welcome! Whether it's a slim, neatly-printed volume, a crackling leather-bound tome, or a stack of disorganized papers stolen from a dying man, the book in your hands is special. Every other book contains a world, beautifully preserved between its pages like a pressed flower. This book, on the other hand, contains everything that's ever been, that ever was, and that ever could be.

Well, most of it. It's got the important parts, at least.

### DISPARATEUM, THE WORLDSCAPE

Our world is but one among many. We exist in a single paper-sharp slice of reality, pressed between the past and future, adjacent to the imaginary and unimaginable, above death and beneath eternity. Each layer of reality exists in relation to all the rest, and the paths we chart between them are often tangled to the point of absurdity. These worlds, the relationships between them, and the paths that wind between, are collectively known as the Disparateum.

The Named City isn't the source of the Disparateum, nor does it have any control over it. Instead, it's a point of convergence. The City's streets play host to impossibilities from many worlds, and there's a doorway to another world tucked around every corner. If you imagine the Disparateum as the full spectrum of light, then the City is a prism.

### DISPARATEUM, THE GAME

This book isn't merely a well-researched guide to the Disparateum, it's also a tabletop role-playing game. For those of us who can't make the trip to the Named City, this book will give you the tools and information needed to step into the role of a trailblazer through the Disparateum.

To play, you'll need pens and pencils, sheets of paper, tokens, paperclips, staples, and scissors, or suitable replacements. The sheets should be split into a 4x2 grid, which I tend to do by folding it three times (see Figure 1). I also recommend cutting some of the sheets in half to make pairs of 2x2 sheets, as they're useful for Layers and NPCs.

### SAFETY

When we play games, we create a space to explore and express ourselves, free from the limitations and consequences of the outside world. Or at least, that's the goal, but ultimately we'll never fully free ourselves from the context we're in. We always bring some part of us into the game space, and if we do that frequently enough it's inevitable that we'll get hurt. That's not a failing, that's a fact of life. However, we can work to create games where it's safe to get hurt, where it doesn't hurt as badly, and where we can bounce back because we have each others' backs. I highly recommend establishing tone and expectations before your first session, using safety tools such as the X Card, Lines and Veils, and Script Change during play, and checking in regularly with your fellow players. The City is wide enough for all of us- let's keep it that way.

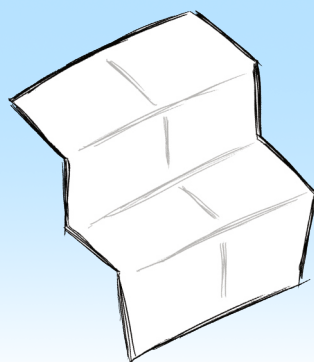
*Never been fond of that slogan.  
Feels too tourist-y. It's unbecoming.*

#### SIDEBARS

This book features a number of helpful sidebars, which expand on and provide context for various things brought up in the primary text. It may also feature a number of annotations from a or multiple prior wielders of this book, the accuracy of which unfortunately cannot be verified by this book's author. If you find the desire striking you, please feel free to add your own annotations.

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**FIGURE 1**  
A sheet folded into eight sections.



## PLAYER ROLES

Each player chooses a unique role from the list below for their character. These roles give the character you're playing some starting definition and a handful of unique abilities, but also offer narrative roles for that character to explore, play with, and reshape.

### THE KNIGHT

You're a traveler, come from some faraway land to the Named City. You don't know the ways of this strange place, but you'll have to learn them to accomplish whatever it is that's brought you here.

In story terms, you'd be the hero, the protagonist: your actions guide the narrative, and it's your goals the plot often follows. Of course, in a game like this everyone should get plenty of time to shine, but this role is for people who don't mind being singled out by the narrative. The Knight is a good role to play if you like to be the voice of reason who keeps the game grounded, or want to guide the narrative by centering it on particular themes at the core of your character.

### THE THIEF

You're a local, the flesh and blood of the Named City. You've explored all its corners, discovered all its secrets, and its people love you- even if you bring them trouble more often than not.

In story terms, you'd be the best friend or rival: you play off the hero and the rest of the cast, bring out their most interesting elements, and complicate the dynamic enough that there's always new stories to tell. The Thief is a good role to play if you love making rash decisions and seeing what the game spits back at you, or if you want to guide the narrative by introducing new threats and complications.

### THE SEER

You're an enigma, a seeker of mysteries with one foot in reality and the other in dreams. You know that there's more to the world than anyone expects, and you're here to show them that.

In story terms, you'd be the mentor or cryptic guide: you know more than you let on, uncover incredible secrets, and get to speak in coy riddles. The Seer is a good role to play if you enjoy being audience to the game rather than a major contributor, or if you want to guide the narrative by subtly planting seeds for future events.

### THE TOWER

You don't play a particular character. Instead, you play as the Named City, the Disparateum that feeds through it, and everyone and everything the other players encounter on their journey.

In story terms, you'd be the narrator: you observe everything from an omniscient perspective, frame scenes, put the players into interesting situations and see what they do. You bridge the gap between the players and the world, and offer them new possibilities to explore. The Tower is a good role to play if you're most comfortable in Game Master roles in other games, or if you want to guide the narrative by deciding which parts of this book to use and which to ignore.

#### THE KNIGHT

##### TRAIT- ROLE

An outsider, arriving here at the end of a long and arduous journey.

**RANK ONE:** The Knight is an outsider, and doesn't know the ways of the Named City.

**RANK TWO:** The Knight is always clear-minded, alert, and aware of the true nature of the world.

**RANK THREE:** The Knight knows many things from beyond these walls, and always has a nugget of wisdom or well-worn advice.

**RANK FOUR:** The Knight is a good judge of character, and the trust they place in others always comes to fruition.

#### THE THIEF

##### TRAIT- ROLE

A troublemaker, always looking to shake the foundations of the City.

**RANK ONE:** The Thief is always at the center of trouble.

**RANK TWO:** The Thief always knows someone who can help, but they last parted on poor terms.

**RANK THREE:** The Thief has done everything at least once, and has crucial insight into how to do it again.

**RANK FOUR:** The Thief can't be caught, held down, or taken out of the picture.

#### THE SEER

##### TRAIT- ROLE

A mystic, bearing knowledge beyond the scope of belief.

**RANK ONE:** The Seer is drifting through life, careless and carefree.

**RANK TWO:** The Seer knows what nobody else does, but struggles to convey it properly.

**RANK THREE:** The Seer can ask anyone any question at any time.

**RANK FOUR:** The Seer can see the whole of everything, all at once, and pluck crucial understanding from its infinite complexity.

# THE CITY

WHERE PEOPLE LIVE NEAR-ORDINARY LIVES  
AT THE NEXUS OF WORLDS

<p><b>THE CITY TRAIT- LAYER</b> The unshakable foundation of the Disparateum. Always open, and is accessible through any path back to reality.</p> <p><b>[RECOVER TRAITS BY:]</b> Gathering obligations based on them, or causing long-term problems tied to them.</p>	<p><b>STABLE TRAIT</b> The City is the Disparateum's bedrock, and remains steady even during the most dramatic of changes.</p> <p><b>[1 TOKEN:]</b> Set a new scene during a quiet moment.</p>
<p><b>CONSEQUENTIAL TRAIT</b> Nothing that happens in the City goes unnoticed, and all things are repaid in time.</p> <p><b>[1 TOKEN:]</b> Reintroduce the consequences of a decision.</p>	<p><b>SPRAWLING TRAIT</b> There's always more to find if you know where to look.</p> <p><b>[1 TOKEN:]</b> Find something surprising around the corner.</p> <p><b>[3 TOKENS:]</b> Add a new fixture to the City's tapestry.</p>

**THE CITY IS WIDE ENOUGH FOR ALL OF US.** At the edge of the world lies an incredible place, a place where dreams take on a life of their own and everyone can find what they're seeking. A place that acts as a prism for a glorious rainbow of other worlds.

The City is old. It's persisted through many ages, changing constantly but carrying the weight of that age along. Every culture that's called it home has given it a different name, and it carried those names with it too. At this point, just about whatever name or epithet you can imagine has been used for it, to the point that many people nowadays have taken to calling it the Named City and moving on. In an attempt at an impossible notion of objectivity, and out of a deep affection for the damned place, I'll be doing the same.

## THRONE DISTRICT

In the very center of the Named City, a cluster of buildings forms what appears to be an enormous blocky chair. The neighborhood surrounding it, aptly called the Throne District, is primarily a place of entertainment and relaxation for the City's residents.

### THE PARK

Starting only a few blocks from the main gate and winding all the way to the base of the Throne, a broad greenway forms one of the Named City's main thoroughfares. Dotted throughout it are playgrounds, artificial lakes, and old folks playing chess. The Park branches in places, extending a few blocks into various neighborhoods before terminating in a monument or statue of some kind. Many of these are decorated with flowers and gifts, though none receive as many as the unlabeled pillar of obsidian directly in front of the Throne.

### PARLOR TRICKS

An ice cream parlor run by Maggie Morthendain, a powerful wizard. It boasts an incredibly long list of flavors, and a sign behind the counter informs patrons that if they can name a flavor not found on the menu, Maggie will personally track it down and add it within a day's time. Because of this, Parlor Tricks boasts a massive, weighty tome of a menu, with flavors found nowhere else in the world, including a hundred or so conceptual flavors and three that defy logic.

### THE OUTLOOK

A tall, narrow hotel building tucked into a corner of the district. It used to be a place frequented by ambassadors and traveling royalty, but as the world outside has become tangled up in its own affairs and the Named City's gone largely ignored, the Outlook's grown quiet. It's still impossibly grand, though. Live music seeps into the twisting hallways from some faraway lounge, gorgeous paintings and sepia tone photographs clutter every available wall, and each room is furnished in a unique style and features an incredible view.

### GLASSPILLAR MUSIC HALL

Built into the back of the Throne itself is an enormous concert hall, boasting a gorgeous amphitheater, plentiful tiered seating, and no less than three gift shops. It's barely ever used. Everyone involved in the music scene knows that the real shows happen all over, tucked away in basements or back alleys or performed spontaneously in the street. Glasshall isn't completely pointless, however: it's often used as common ground during tense negotiations, and children often use the seating area to play games when they're supposed to be in school.

### THE THEATER

The Theater is a mainstay of the City's entertainment and one of the very few businesses that stays open after dark. They put on three plays a day, with the morning and evening slots dedicated to popular classics and the midnight slot always sporting something new and experimental. Whatever person or collective writes these midnight plays is clearly quite talented, but the late night shows have received just criticism for layering cryptic symbolism, archaic language, and self-referential material so heavily that they've become practically unintelligible.

### TECHNOLOGY

The City's level of technology doesn't cleanly map to any particular historical moment in the world outside, though some things are recognizable. Cars and planes don't exist here, travel to and from the City is done through magic, train, or caravan. Guns don't exist either, though black powder and other explosives do—there's simply easier ways to kill, if you're willing to face the consequences. Radio and television are fairly common, and even early iterations of the internet are starting to make their way to the City. If you're wondering if a particular technology exists, the answer is likely "Someone has made it somewhere, but it's anyone's guess if it'll catch on."

*Strange when the Book offers... opinions, particularly ones as odd as this. It seems to imply that the Hall was doomed from the start, when of course it was quite successful. I used to go as a child. Then... well, things change. Sometimes, at least.*

## THE GOLD MARKET

Every city worth its salt has an open-air market, and the City is no different. The Gold Market is a constantly rotating cast of small booths occupying several blocks of street. Anyone you meet in the City has or has considered setting up a booth here, but today we'll single in on a few you'll be sure to see every visit.

### MONEY

Over its history, the Named City has been part of many nations, and traded with many others. Nowadays it exists beyond borders and rulers, but there's still plenty of old currency floating around. Some folks have preferences, but nobody'll turn you down for not having the right kind of coin.

Additionally, for those uninterested in carrying coin purses around, a rich barter economy underlies the Named City's markets. If you've got goods, valuables, or a willingness to tackle some odd jobs, the world's your oyster.

*Never been too fond of this place. Too crowded, too many witless people desperate for attention. Still, it serves its purpose.*

### THE WORLD BEYOND

The Smuggler is one of a handful of characters with a link to the world outside the Named City. You may find yourself wondering what it's like out there, but frankly that's one of the few things beyond the scope of this book. If you're still curious, ask the Knight—they long traveled beyond these walls, and could tell you more than I ever could.

### THE BLACKSMITH'S BOOTH

The Old Blacksmith has a booth at the market set up directly in front of his smithy mostly as an excuse to sit in the sun and watch soap operas on a shitty portable TV. His three daughters do most of the day-to-day work nowadays. Rumor has it that the Blacksmith used to be a real living legend, forging tools and weapons for royalty, adventurers, and minor gods. They say his daughters are part divine, and that their celestial parent visits on solstices to have their armor repaired and spear sharpened. Of course, anyone who's met them knows how absurd this all is—they're just a sweet, down-to-earth family like any other.

### THE LANDSCAPIST'S BOOTH

The Landscapist sits at a small handmade easel at the edge of the Market. She's surrounded by paintings of the City from every angle and perspective you can imagine. She has a few of her best works tattooed across her arms and back, and when she moves it looks like the skyline twisting and reshaping itself.

### THE PUPPET SHOW

Every hour, on the hour, a cute little stand decorated to look like a stage puts on one of a variety of miniature puppet shows. The stand has an ongoing partnership with the Theater, often doing simplified, kid-friendly versions of currently-running plays using the actual actors for voices. The Puppeteer themself wears a full suit of armor, decorated to resemble an unpainted wooden puppet. Cut strings hang limply from the suit's hands and elbows. Behind the visor, one can faintly make out bright, smiling eyes, but no other features of the mysterious figure's face.

### THE BURGER BOOTH

It's not much more than a tent with some flat top grills, coolers, and stools, but it smells like home. In addition to a wide variety of burgers and toppings, it's got chicken and lamb on rice, shish kebabs, hot dogs, and vegetable stir-fry. The husbands who run it have been meaning to move into a permanent location, but people love the booth so much that they've been putting it off.

### THE SMUGGLER'S BOOTH

You need something from outside the City? Need to avoid attention? Rather keep your reputation intact? The Smuggler's got whatever you need. Weapons, disguises, relics, radioactive waste, encrypted letters, honey, monster blood, anything and everything is for sale here. The Smuggler often hides their booth in narrow alleyways or under stairways branching off from the main Marketplace, but they're also subtle as a bag of chickens so it's typically not difficult finding where they've decided to set up this time.

## THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND MAGIC (MOAM)

The Museum is a fairly unassuming gray sandstone building from the outside. It's a broad, squat thing, occupying a square of four city blocks just outside the Throne district. The inside, however, is an entirely different story. As a result of its magical nature, the Museum is vastly larger on the inside, forming an unmappable tangle of gorgeous hallways, display chambers, educational facilities, and backrooms. Some of its furthest reaches even cross over into nearby realities, making it a simple, if not easy, means of world-hopping for those without the talent or budget to do so otherwise.

### HALL OF CURIOSITIES

A wing of the Museum dedicated to showcasing tools, art pieces, and magical relics taken from cultures across the world. Many of these were uncovered from dungeons by treasure hunters and monster slayers, but it only became evident why after they'd been collected here—magical items naturally generate labyrinths, traps, and monsters around them over the course of centuries, and this process is dramatically accelerated when many artifacts are collected together. As such, much of the Museum has become a patchwork of dungeons in the styles of civilizations across the world. Tours are available, but have a non-insignificant failure rate.

### THE PORTRAIT GALLERY

This wing of the Museum is taken up almost entirely by portraits, painted gorgeously in a wide variety of styles. Looking closely, you'll find that there's a portrait here for every person in the Named City—including you. In addition to indicating exactly who's in the City at any given time (though, without any proper organization, it's not always easy to track an individual this way), they also update to reflect your general status and mood, and can act as a beacon back to the City for those who've found themselves lost in the Disparateum. If you see someone falling out of their painting, it's common courtesy to help them out. It's possible that damage to a portrait could cause harm to the person it depicts, but nobody has yet risked upsetting the Curator to find out.

### THE TOWER OF MODERNITY

Near the back of the Museum is a broad, circular wing dedicated to recent innovations in magic and technology. A stairwell winding around the outer edge leads to a long series of sub-floors, each dedicated to the technology of a slightly earlier era. Whenever a new significant innovation is made, the whole tower sinks a level and a new floor is added to the top; the lower floors are deep enough to provide alternate paths into the Undercity. It's unclear how far back the tower goes, as nobody's yet reported finding a floor without another stairway down.

### THE CURATOR

The Curator resides here, in the Museum. She's usually cloistered away in MoAM's back rooms and secret corridors, but occasionally wanders the halls and discusses exhibits with guests. She's a fifteen-foot-tall angel clad in flowing garments of woven silver, and her hair burns with a light that's hard to look at. She has two pairs of wings, though the bottom leftmost wing is nothing but a ragged stump. It still bleeds, but she pays it no mind. Mop crews follow her around whenever she enters the public areas.

### NEW EXHIBITS

It's worth remembering that the Curator isn't human. She isn't motivated by human desires, and doesn't have human needs. Her sole focus, her single obsession, is adding to the Museum. If you donate something interesting, you'll earn special privileges for life: access to exhibits closed off to the public, secretive events, and libraries full of occult truths. If you bring something that gets her attention, she's willing to bargain for it. And if you ever try to take something from her collection, she'll leverage all her wealth and influence to destroy you.

**KEYKEEPER'S ART**

Practitioners carve keyholes into their skull, spine, elbows, kneecaps, and ribs. By inserting keys into specific keyholes, they temporarily gain access to focused and very powerful abilities. However, this specificity is their downfall: while using a technique, their one-track mind leaves them vulnerable.

**BLOOD-SOAKED FOOL**

A style based around enchanting one's blood, turning it into a sticky, corrosive, and highly flammable substance. Practitioners lacerate their tongue and the inside of their mouth to turn their spit into a deadly weapon, and throw themselves into danger to harm anyone who unknowingly draws their blood.

**IRON INK STYLE**

A fighting style based around covering one's body in enormous, blocky tattoos. The ink used is enchanted to be almost entirely indestructible, but is also immensely heavy—very few practitioners can cover more than an eighth of their body without their bones shattering under the strain. However, even that much gives one the ability to weather nearly any blow and shatter concrete with a touch.

**THE TOWER, INVERTED**

A school of thought that results in a fighting style almost accidentally, practitioners of this style undergo a series of magical procedures to turn their body inside-out. This process inverts the usual relationship of conscious and subconscious mind, giving them control over their mind and body others can only dream of. It also allows them to attack their enemies with a terrifying barrage of bones, veins, and organs.

**PATIENT OAK**

A style laughed at by the other Blood Art Schools for its utter lack of flair and perceived weakness. Practitioners simply commit to mild, regular training with no gimmicks or shortcuts. At the end of two years, they can knock a foe across the City with a light slap, or collapse buildings with a forceful breath.

## THE UNDERCITY

Nearly half the City is hidden underground, accessible only to those who know where to look. This section is sparse not from a lack of things to find, but a lack of reliable knowledge about them.

**THE PASSAGES**

Like many old cities, the City is built atop a complicated network of interconnected vents, tunnels, basements, sewers, and catacombs. If you know the way, you can get from anywhere to anywhere through these tangled passages, but there's always a risk of getting lost or, maybe worse, running into something else down there.

**THE SUBWAY**

If you prefer a more conventional way to get around than the web of tunnels and sub-basements, the Subway is quick, dirty, and cheap. Buskers provide unmatched entertainment, and the food carts here are incredible. Just make sure to keep up to date on track changes, and double check your map before you get on a train—not every line goes both ways, and some stations are easier to leave than others.

**PARCHMENT TATTOO PARLOR**

Identity's a slippery thing in the Disparateum. It can be hard to hold onto who you truly are when the context of your reality keeps changing, and that's not even counting the stress of running into other versions of yourself. Tattoos keep people grounded, and nobody does them better than the Scribe. Be warned, though, the parlor's pretty hidden. You'll have to climb down a manhole, navigate a maze of sewer tunnels, and enter an abandoned subway station to get to it. It's usually a good idea to ask someone who's been before to guide you.

**SCHOOL OF BLOOD ARTS**

While commonly referred to as a single "school", this actually refers to a series of loosely affiliated groups in the Undercity dedicated to discovering new combat styles. The practitioners here are constantly innovating, doing everything from drilling keyholes into their bones to cursing their blood to turning their entire body inside out to get an edge in combat. Some of these innovations have made their way to the surface, but the most potent are kept closely guarded here.

**CORPSE OF THE MOLDERING GOD**

Deep below the City lies its ancient master, a pale and eyeless god. The god's tangled body fills a cathedral-like chamber whose doors were sealed off ages ago. Entering isn't recommended purely out of respect for the dead. Leave it be.

## RITUAL OF RETURN

### FOR RESUMING OUR TALE WHERE WE LEFT OFF

The candles are lit. The instrument is polished and tuned. The stage is properly set.  
[To THE KNIGHT:] Where's your path leading you, and where should we begin today?

The knife is drawn. The first note is played. The actors take their places.  
[To THE THIEF:] What problems have we left unresolved, and which of them is looming over us now?

The words are spoken. The song begins. The curtain rises.  
[To THE SEER:] How does this scene begin, and what's about to happen?

The Disparateum continues telling its favorite story.

*Patterns shape this world, and shape us inside it. They define our stories, our memories, our interactions with each other. I never saw the full shape of it until I found the Book. Now I understand.*

# THE DREAMING

WHERE ALL SLEEPING SOULS RESIDE,  
LIVING THE IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL MORNING

## THE DREAMING TRAIT- LAYER

The City's subconscious. Opens when the Knight falls asleep for the first time, and is accessible through a quiet night's rest.

[RECOVER TRAITS BY:] Using them in impossible or unimaginable ways, or challenging your preconceived notions about them.

## INCONSEQUENTIAL TRAIT

Nothing done on this layer can materially influence any other layer, and nothing but memories can cross its barriers.

[1 TOKEN:] Deem something irrelevant.

[0 TOKENS:] Wake up.

## UNSTABLE TRAIT

The Dreaming is a malleable place, constantly reshaping itself as dreamers pass through it.

[1 TOKEN:] Do the impossible.

*Then what's the point?*

**THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY ARE UNITED THROUGH DREAM.** Everyone who falls asleep inside its walls are brought to the same collective dreamscape, and are met with a beautiful and distorted version of the waking world. Here, floating through the air is as easy as walking, entire structures can be manifested with a thought, and dying is just another way to wake up.

The Dreaming also serves as a means of reaching deeper, stranger parts of the mind. If you venture down those paths, make sure to take stock of who you are first—you don't want to come back with any important pieces missing or changed.

## THRONE DISTRICT

Towering above the Dreaming sits the Slumbering God, master of two worlds. While its body lies dead deep under the Named City, here it lingers for at least a moment longer. The dreamers residing here either pay it no mind or openly celebrate it, though it's unclear whether the gaunt, haggard thing is even aware of this.

### THE LANTERN PROCESSION

All throughout the City, colorful glass baubles drift through the air, illuminated from within. It's said that there's one for each dreamer, and that if you can identify and capture yours you'll find your deepest wish fulfilled. This theory is rarely tested, however, as they're evasive enough that some people think they're intelligent. And of course, how would you even know one was yours in the first place?

### THE WANDERING PARK

The Dreaming version of the Park also weaves its way through other neighborhoods, but does so much more intensely. Paths of greenery worm their way through buildings, climb up walls, and twist into the Undercity. Statues and monuments are more common here, but less recognizable. Many are faceless or abstract, and the few with plaques have distorted or shifting text engraved into them. Children run and play, tumbling through the air as they learn to fly after each other. Duels aren't uncommon in the Park, as the Dreaming makes for an ideal means to test one's skills and recover one's honor without risking death in the waking world.

### THE SMOLDERING RUIN

From anywhere in the City, you can see a faint plume of smoke. Following it to its origin brings you to a single lot filled with the charred remains of a stately building. In the wreckage, you can make out part of what used to be a stage.

### THE NIGHTCLUB

The dream version of Parlor Tricks opens up its back doors, revealing a private club for practitioners of strange and mystic arts. There are exactly two hundred invitations in, so getting one as a gift is a high honor—and those carrying tickets are subject to no little jealousy. It's unclear what happens inside, but stories tell of members casually discussing secrets of the universe over strange, unwinnable games.

### GLASSHALL

Music suffuses the Dreaming, which puts Glasshall in an interesting spot: here, it's the only place with silence. You'll typically find a few dozen people scattered throughout the spacious seating area here. Most are just sitting quietly, though every once in a while someone'll climb up on stage, speak words they'd struggle to otherwise, and then step back into the comfortable silence. It's a kind place, free of judgment.

*I have my own place to think... a little apartment, near the top of the Throne. If I've passed this book onto you, I suggest you find a similar place.*

*You'll need a place safely away from our enemies.*

### LAW & ORDER

The Named City doesn't have a government, and as such it doesn't have any of the structures of political control you'd expect from one. There's no one to enforce the laws because there are no laws, simply the trust placed on you by others and the consequences of violating that trust. The people of the City provide for the needs of those around them, and stand unified against those who would threaten that. As such, even the killers and thieves that make up the City's underbelly hold themselves to strict codes of conduct, and readily dedicate themselves to the betterment of their home.

## THE SILVER MARKET

Fewer people run booths in the Dreaming's Silver Market, but what it lacks in the bustle of its daytime counterpart it more than makes up for in the strange wares available. Just remember that, even in dreams, an offer that seems too good to be true usually is.

### THE LANDSCAPIST'S BOOTH

The Landscapist is still set up at her easel, still painting away. Here, though, her paintings are abstract splashes of color and shapes. She beckons you closer, then waves a tattooed arm in front of the canvasses. As it passes over, you see the city change: the painting seems to filter through the tattoo, and you see as the skyline is brought to life in vibrant, unnatural colors. Other things change, too: buildings appear and disappear, esoteric structures loom in the distance, inhuman creatures wander the streets. Are these other worlds? She merely smiles at you.

### THE SMUGGLER'S BOOTH

You won't find the Smuggler's booth at the Silver Market, but it's included here as a courtesy. They put considerably more effort into hiding it here in the Dreaming, so be prepared to explore rooftops, sewers, and abandoned warehouses. The goods are worth it, though: here, the Smuggler sells memories. They're one of the only things you can bring back to the City, after all. Just, don't ask whose memories they are, they won't tell you anyway.

### THE BANDSTAND

In a world permeated with music, what's the role of the musician? Here, musicians don't create music, but play along with it, shape it, teach and learn from it. You can always tell when someone's playing at the Silver Market, because the whole of the Dreaming sways in time.

### THE BOOKSELLER'S BOOTH

A young man in oversized circular glasses runs this booth, surrounded by piles of books tall enough to hide him from most angles. Reading the books themselves is... difficult. The words swim around, fade in and out, melt and reform, and if you stare at them too long it feels like the book is drawing you into it—until the Bookseller clears his throat and you snap out of it. He doesn't accept anything for the books, merely talking with prospective customers until he has an idea of what they're looking for and then plucks a single volume from the stacks. In the morning when you wake, you'll find the book under your pillow, neatly wrapped in brown paper and twine. And when you read it, you get the sense again that it's pulling you in.

#### CURRENCY IN THE DREAMING

Some people still trade in the Dreaming, though since objects can't be taken in or out, bartering for favors and information is much more common. Some things can only exist in the Dreaming, and some folk do value collecting them, so that's something to keep an eye out for. The Dreaming is also a place where decisions are often made based on games, gambles, and contests of wits. If you can't get someone to budge on a trade, try something a little trickier and a lot more fun.

## THE LOST WING

Sunken into the ground lies a shattered and collapsed section of the MoAM. Once, this was a high-security wing dedicated to cursed and hostile magical relics. Now it's nothing but a blight on the City. The streets here are often empty.

### THE DEATH WARD

A section of the museum dedicated to all the ways humanity has sought immortality through magic. A few extremely powerful objects were once held here—petrified souls and fingers of gods—and their auras have thoroughly corrupted this place. Scavengers try to recover talismans to turn away disease or twist luck in their favor, and all of them come out changed. If you find a friend acting out of character, seek help, don't meet their eyes, and whatever you do don't let them wake up.

### THE MENAGERIE

For a time the Curator collected monsters too. That ended with whatever catastrophe dragged the Lost Wing into the Dreaming. Some were scattered through other neighborhoods, but most remained inside the broken Museum, staking out territories and hiding away from the confusing world outside. They're too real for this place, which makes it nearly impossible for them to feed or rest, and without a sleeping body to wake up into they're unable to die. Research is being done into how to best help them, but progress is slow. In the meantime, give them space. Leave them be.

### HALL OF IMMERSIVE ART

This exhibit used to be in the Portrait Gallery's wing, but was shut down after one too many incidents of art pieces permanently altering museum-goers in irreversible ways. The pieces here range from instructions for a gesture that makes you forget a random memory, to a shard of mirrored glass that inverts your fears and desires while held, to a stuffed teddy bear that's convinced it's got the soul of the first museum-goer to touch it trapped inside. Eventually these exhibits were all scrapped, and got locked away in a dusty corner of this wing until the disaster that shunted it into the Dreaming. Most of the collection is intact, but a few pieces have since gone missing.

#### AN ODD CROWD

Outside the Museum, a group of unlikely creatures have formed a "pack" of sorts, led by a one-eyed cockatrice. They wander the Dreaming, looking for anything substantial enough to feed them. They won't go out of their way to attack dreamers, but they're easily scared and will lash out if cornered. Some residents have taken to leaving out particularly vivid memories of food for them, which seems to help a bit.

*Dangerous things indeed...  
but potentially useful.  
Can they be taken from the Dreaming?  
Requires further research.*

## THE UNDERCITY

The Undercity was already a pain to navigate, but here it's nothing but a free-associative nightmare. It's impossible to navigate, so don't bother—if you find yourself here, just trust your gut and keep an eye out for exits.

### THE CATHEDRAL

In the darkest corners of the Undercity, the secretive Godeaters meet to plot the destruction of the Named City and all its residents. To their chagrin, the residents themselves see this as a bit of charming local flavor, and nothing they do ever seems to establish them as a real threat. Don't get me wrong, they can be sincerely dangerous, but their track record is so full of embarrassments that if they try to coerce or intimidate you, it's probably best to just walk away.

### THE SUBWAY

No trains run in the Dreaming, so if you want to get anywhere through here you'll be walking through the tunnels. It's worth it, though, even if you don't have anywhere to be. Graffiti from the waking City takes on new life here, each piece illuminated faintly with neon colors as it twists and grows across the walls. Tags curl and twist like smoke, stencils move with stop-motion jerkiness, and memorials smile down on those who come to visit.

### THE FAIRY CIRCLE

At the base of a steep staircase is a dark, nearly empty room. The open space is dominated by a ring, fifteen feet across, of faintly phosphorescent mushrooms of various colors. Sitting in the middle of the circle is a vending machine. You can see the plug just lying on the floor, but it's lit up and perfectly functional. I'd add more, but I'm honestly just as lost as you are. Maybe don't drink anything from it, though.

### THE VAULT

The lowest level of the Dreaming's Undercity is marked with a circular vault door. It's set into the ground at a shallow angle, about a quarter of a mile across, and covered in about four hundred thousand locks in all shapes and sizes. Despite the Dreaming having no discernible temperature anywhere else, here, in the Vault's chamber, it's cold. The locks and the spiderweb of chains connecting them seem perfectly ordinary, but the moment you touch the Vault door itself you're violently torn from the Dreaming. You wake up, screaming and shaking, with your fingernails covered in ice. It takes you a moment to remember anything but the cold.

#### NAVIGATING THE DREAMING

Even ignoring that you can fly in the Dreaming, getting around is easy. No travel times, no need for exact routes, just set off and there you are! Well, I say easy, and that's mostly true, but we should break that down. It's easy to leave places, for sure. It's easy to arrive at other places after you leave. It's not exactly easy to get somewhere specific, though. If you're an experienced dreamer, and you know the place you're heading well, and you're willing to try a few times... well, you'll probably be fine. And even if not, you'll never wind up somewhere boring.

## RITUAL OF SLEEP

### FOR CROSSING THE FIRST OF MANY THRESHOLDS

Night falls, and the Named City quiets down. Shades are drawn, books are bookmarked, and lights are extinguished.

[TO EACH SLEEPER, IN TURN:] Where are you? What's your nightly ritual? How do you drift off?

The Knight doesn't immediately notice the transition into dream. Instead, colors seem to become more vibrant, the walls seem to sway gently, and the quiet murmur of the City gives way to the songs of the Dreaming.

[TO THE KNIGHT:] How do you feel? What do you notice first? Where do you go first?

[TO EACH OTHER DREAMER, IN TURN:] Where are you now? What do you do differently in the Dreaming? When do you cross paths with the Knight again?

## TRAITS

In addition to your role, you'll have a set of traits that flesh out your character with skills, goals, and obstacles. There's five different kinds of traits: roles, skills, motivations, bonds, and destinies. There's only three roles (the Knight, Thief, and Seer) but the other types describe broad categories that can be filled out however you want. There's a handful of examples listed in the sidebar, though don't be afraid to experiment—if you want a skill that lets you walk through walls, a bond that connects you to an enchanted lantern, or a destiny that binds you to your family's cycle of revenge, go ahead!

To make a player character, take a sheet divided into eight sections. Put your name and role in the top left section, then place three other traits in three other sections of your sheet. Distribute seven ranks among your rank and traits so that each has at least one rank and at most four. PCs can pick up new traits in their adventures, as long as they have more empty sections on their character sheet.

The Tower doesn't have traits, because they're not playing a single character. They can, however, introduce non-player characters at any time. NPCs behave just like PCs, except they don't have a role and use half a sheet, so they're capped at a maximum of four traits. NPCs can be created with any number and arrangement of ranks, and don't tend to rank up.

### TOKENS

Each trait has a pool of tokens associated with it. Players can spend a token from one of those pools to take meaningful, impactful action using or relating to that trait. You can also spend a token to fight the action of another, but no amount of effort can negate the effect: the best you can do is change, twist, or redirect it.

### RANKS

When you begin a session, each trait starts with tokens equal to its rank. A trait's rank ranges from one to four, and traits gain a rank whenever a character's understanding or relationship with that trait broadens. This is purposely vague, as (outside of some specific effects) traits will only ever gain ranks when their player feels it's appropriate.

Some traits have properties that kick in at certain ranks. You don't need to use tokens to bring these properties up during a game, they're considered to be true unless that character's player rejects or changes them. Roles have one of these at each rank, but other traits only need one or two to really shine.

### RECOVERY

Each layer gives a way for characters to "recover" their traits by taking some action connected to that trait. When that happens, you reset the trait to having tokens equal to its rank. Recovering traits often involve doing something that creates drama or causes problems, though of course there are exceptions. Regardless, these should always be *significant* in some way. If a trait recovery feels bland or routine, think about ways to increase the stakes or tie it into the story at hand.

#### OIL PAINTING

##### TRAIT- SKILL

Your floors are covered in drying paintings, and your walls with messy pencil sketches.

**RANK TWO:** You've developed a style nobody can replicate.

**RANK THREE:** You've made a name for yourself, and people recognize you in the street. A student arrives on your doorstep one day, asking to be taught.

#### DRIVEN BY GLORY

##### TRAIT- MOTIVATION

You will rise above. You will be anointed with a crown of gold and flame, and your actions will echo through history.

**RANK ONE:** Your journey begins. Declare what incredible thing you'll be known for soon.

**RANK FOUR:** You've reached the first of many pinnacles. What do you understand about yourself that you didn't before?

#### TENSE RIVALRY

##### TRAIT- BOND

Wherever you go... they're there. Always one step ahead, always interfering. You wouldn't have it any other way.

**RANK TWO:** What incredible skill or talent do you have *only* when you're competing with your rival?

**RANK FOUR:** What part of you is missing when your rival isn't here?

#### DESTINED FOR CATASTROPHE

##### TRAIT- DESTINY

You've carried this mark for a long time, and you know what it means—disaster is coming for you, and when it arrives it'll be on your hands.

**RANK THREE:** Your downfall is so close, you can smell it. Everything sags towards disaster. When the moment comes, rank up.

**RANK FOUR:** It's here. When the catastrophe passes, cut this trait off your sheet.

## WORLD-HOPPING

In the course of your adventures, you'll find yourself frequently crossing thresholds into new worlds. The Disparateum is multifaceted and interconnected, and there's always an open door if you know where to look.

### LAYER TRAITS

Worlds are quite a bit like people, and can have traits too. Layer traits set rules and expectations for how things happen on that layer, and can give everyone on that layer new ways to spend their tokens. You can spend tokens from any of your traits to take layer actions, and those actions don't need to be related to the trait you're using. Layer traits don't have ranks.

### OPENING PATHS

Most layers have specific requirements for accessing them for the first time, but once a layer's been opened up it becomes much easier to access. A layer is described as "open" when the conditions needed to reach it have been met, and an open layer is accessible through a particular set of actions or approaches.

### APPLYING LAYERS

As you travel along your path through the Disparateum, you'll often find yourself existing in the context of more than one layer at once. After all, *how* you arrived where you are is often just as important as the place itself. Reaching a layer through your dreams will be a vastly different experience to being pulled into a book, and both will be entirely unlike crossing through a doorway that vanishes behind you.

Whenever we travel to a new layer, we represent this bleed-through by placing the new layer's traits over the previous one's (keeping the same orientation—see Figure 2). Since these layers are each laid out on a two-by-two grid, there'll be four traits on top at any given time, but since many layers have gaps in their layout, some pieces of the lower layers will seep through. The same layer may be represented multiple times in a single journey, but don't worry about that, it rarely matters. If you retrace your steps and leave a layer the same way you entered it, remove that topmost layer instead.

## RITUALS

Rituals are formalized moments, structures that click into the natural flow of play and send us off in a direction. Some rituals exist for specific purposes: the Ritual of Beginning gives us a place to begin our exploration of the Disparateum, and the Ritual of Return gives us a jumping-off point to resume the game at the beginning of a session. Others exist to shape certain scenes, explore certain concepts, or formalize certain actions. Whenever a ritual feels appropriate to invoke, go for it!

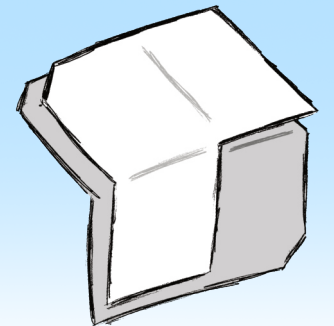
Rituals don't have to be completed in one go. If a scene wants to sit squarely in the middle of a ritual, let it. Explore it, and then return to the ritual when you're ready. Think of it like a moment of dialog in the middle of a musical number.

*Good to know the pages aren't missing, but I wonder why they've been rearranged. I suspect the Book's been somehow altered.*

*But by who?*

*And to what end?*

**FIGURE 2**  
Two layers in a stack.



### THOUGHTS ON CROSSROADS

These rules are phrased in such a way that they assume all players are tracing the same general path through the Disparateum: everyone's usually on the same layer, and everyone's usually doing the same things to move from one to another. This isn't always true, though! You may be playing a game where it's common for players to chart their own routes, only occasionally crossing paths in the same layer and rarely arriving there in the same way. That's not a problem, just make sure everyone's keeping track of their own path with their own stack of layers, and that you're not driving the Tower too crazy with it.

# THE NARRATIVE

WHERE STORIES COME ALIVE  
AND GROW THROUGH THEIR TELLING

## THE NARRATIVE

### TRAIT- LAYER

The birthplace of myths and legends. Opens when you lose yourself in a story, and is accessible through a well-told tale.

[RECOVER TRAITS BY:] Using them to play into tropes, or to push the narrative forward.

## TRANSIENT

### TRAIT

This place only lasts as long as the story being told, and when it finishes it'll send us back to where we came from.

[1 TOKEN:] Skip to the next important part.

## KAYFABE

### TRAIT

You are not yourself here. When you enter the Narrative, you take on a role in the story.

[1 TOKEN:] Cover up one of your traits with one of your role's.

[3 TOKENS:] Take on the role of a different character in the story.

**THE DISPARATEUM IS BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF STORIES.** Stories amaze us, entertain us, give us new perspectives, and give us insight into who we are. They're bridges into others' lives, currencies that doesn't deplete in the spending, memories of what could be.

Here, stories are material, their rules and patterns as unshakable as our physics. This layer rises up from the depths of the Disparateum whenever a story begins, and vanishes again when it ends. Travelers here take on the roles of characters in that story, playing along with the narrative as events unfold. But stories are ever-evolving things, and always change in the retelling. Just because you're bound to a particular story doesn't mean you can't make things interesting.

# RITUAL OF STORYTELLING

FOR LOSING YOURSELF IN A TALE WELL-TOLD

All gather around, and we begin to listen.

[TO THE STORYTELLER:] What kind of story are you telling?

[TO THE KNIGHT, IF PRESENT, ELSE THE STORYTELLER:] Who is our protagonist, and what are they struggling with when the story begins?

[TO THE SEER, IF PRESENT, ELSE THE STORYTELLER:] Who is allied to the protagonist, and what are they doing to help?

[TO THE THIEF, IF PRESENT, ELSE THE STORYTELLER:] Who is our antagonist, and what have they just accomplished?

[TO THE STORYTELLER:] Where do we begin our story?

## FREQUENT GENRES

There are an uncountable number of stories, and no shortage of mouths to tell them and hands to record them. As much as I'd like to show you every single one, however, our time here is limited. Instead, here's a brief and shallow list of genres that're popular right now in the Named City, that you're likely to run into.

### HIGH FANTASY

Tales of brave warriors, dashing rogues, clever wizards, and proud kings. Often set in grassy, sun-drenched kingdoms full of strange creatures and epic quests. If you want to blend in, practice a dramatic tone of voice and olde-tymey speech patterns. Tends to overlap with Historical Fiction.

### ROMANCE

Ranging from simple stories of true love to intricate webs of intrigue and betrayal, the Romance genre is passionate, diverse, and thriving. Stories from the Named City tend to feature a great number of mistaken identities, alternate selves and swapped bodies—all things known to happen to travelers of the Disparateum, though of course with the details... embellished, somewhat.

### SCIENCE FICTION

The future, where boxy machines are used to travel to worlds yet unimagined, where robots question what it means to be alive, and where the secrets of magic have been thoroughly uncovered. These stories tend to fall into two camps: *hard* SF, which tends to limit itself to a single layer and all that we know is possible there, and *soft* SF, which allows itself to go wherever the story demands at the cost of being somewhat less grounded for the average reader.

### HISTORICAL FICTION

Stories, often with a limited scope and a strong character focus, set during particularly vibrant moments in history. Expect to encounter a lot of elaborate outfits and long scenes focused on particular bits of historical minutiae. Tends to be set outside the Named City, as stories set during the City's past fall more in line with High Fantasy.

### NOIR

Mystery stories are always thrilling, and what better than a mystery story that *knows* it's a mystery story? These are stark, intense stories about obsession, trauma, and self-destruction, often coming face to face with the dark underbelly of their setting and indulging in all that comes with that. The Investigator's Guild argues that these stories are outlandish and paint an incorrect picture of what they do, but we all know they secretly eat it up.

### HORROR

Horror stories thrive on the unknown, and those living alongside the Disparateum know the unknown like a friendly neighbor. Horror offers insight in a way no other genre does, and as such has persisted as one of the most ancient and storied genres. Recently, a craze of unverifiable "based on real events" stories have swept the Named City, and anxiety has begun to spread about the effect they're having on the Dreaming.

*When I have time to read fiction,  
I tend towards Noir.*

*There's just something about lone heroes  
fighting a one-man battle against the  
corruption threatening to swallow their world.*

*Another way I knew I was chosen for this,  
I suppose.*

## THE COUNCIL OF DRAGONS

In the silence between words, the space beyond stories, the Council of Dragons meets to draw lines between genres and claim stories for their own. These meetings are deeply political affairs, involving brief alliances and long-held rivalries. New dragons appear whenever an influential story births a new genre, and regularly drive the Council into a frenzy of alliances and betrayals.

### PAUNTH AEON, SWORD-BEARING DRAGON OF FANTASY

Paunth is a proud, regal dragon, always fighting for what he believes in and never backing down from a challenge. While noble, this all makes Paunth an ideal tool for the more subtle and conniving members of the Council. He keeps a glittering horde of stories that the others covet, but to this day have been unable to find; some suspect he got help from an outside force in hiding them away, but despite the Council's best efforts this mysterious collaborator hasn't been found.

### SLAUBERN, SILK-DRAPED DRAGON OF ROMANCE

One of the oldest and wisest dragons on the Council, Slaubern is famous for their generosity. While the other dragons fight over every story that even vaguely approaches their genre, Slaubern only claims stories dedicated fully to Romance. Few realize the full consequences of this, however; with so many Romance tropes ending up in other genres, Slaubern has fingers in nearly every story told. Should they bring that power to bear, they could destroy the Council with ease.

### SAI BRUNETRIX, ARTIFICIAL DRAGON OF SCIENCE FICTION

Sai is a true genius, weaving plans and strategies that far outshine those of the other dragons. She has so many brilliant plans, in fact, that she often struggles to recall which ones are in motion, and how far along they are. Don't dismiss her, though—in her moments of clarity, there's nobody more dangerous or better prepared.

### OUTHANTICKITY, REGAL DRAGON OF HISTORICAL FICTION

Outhantickity presents herself as a softer, more soft-spoken counterpart to Paunth, but under her proper demeanor lies a very different heart. Outhantickity is ruthless, cutthroat, and bloodthirsty. She fears losing her high placement in the Council, and so works tirelessly to manipulate and sabotage the others. Many times, others have plotted to destroy her, only for a gentle word or fragrant letter to turn the conspirators against each other at the last moment.

### GHEMSUE, HARD-SMOKING DRAGON OF NOIR

Ghemsue commonly plays the part of mediator and tiebreaker at the Council, and few of the others can hold up to xir scrutiny for long. This would make xem an excellent ally, if xe was interested in playing the game. Ghemsue's content with xir position, rarely fights to take ownership of stories on xir genre's fringes, and would be happy to never go to another one of these gatherings.

### PERRANO MORL, SMILING DRAGON OF HORROR

Morl is a stranger to these gatherings, rarely arriving to them and often staying quiet and distant when he does. That's not to say he's uninterested, however: he simply does most of his scheming from the margins, only acting directly to put the final nail in the coffin. As such, his arrival at the Council is treated as a bad omen.

*Hm. I find this distasteful.*

*All that power, and they have no better  
use for it than hoarding and squabbling?*

*But, I suppose as long as they  
keep to their little corner,  
they're of no concern.*

### NEW DRAGONS

A new dragon is born whenever a story becomes influential enough to create a genre of its own, and they can only die when all their stories have been forgotten. Therefore, the dragons' hoards of stories do more than stoke their egos—they're what keep them alive. Newborn dragons are desperate to get their claws on a hoard of their own, which drives them immediately into conflict with the rest of the Council. The oldest and most established dragons are skilled at turning that conflict to their own gain.

*Then again, if one were to  
make a dragon...*

# THE NETWORK

## WHERE TECHNOLOGY JOYOUSLY CARVES OUT NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR ITSELF

### THE NETWORK

#### TRAIT- LAYER

The City-wide web. Opens when you discover the potential of technology, and accessible through any internet-connected machine.

**[RECOVER TRAITS BY:]** Using them to find community, or by uncovering strange knowledge related to them.

#### SYMBOLIC TRAIT

Nothing that exists in the Network is bound by its physical form, so people and places here are represented as abstract digital constructs.

**[1 TOKEN:]** Change your digital form to anything you can imagine.

#### GROWING TRAIT

There's always space to grow, and always something to add.

**[3 TOKENS:]** Establish your own corner of the Network.

**[1 TOKENS:]** Introduce someone to your community, or meet someone new through it.

*Ah yes, I spent plenty of time online in my youth. Of course, the Disparateum offers a more hands-on approach.*

**THE NETWORK IS YOUNG, BUT IT'S GROWING.** New pathways spread like lichen across a tapestry of information. New tools and systems are emerging every day, promising to revolutionize the way we relate to the worlds around us. And not all those promises are baseless- while it'll still be some time before the internet is part of everyday life, the early adopters can tell this is something altogether unique.

As a layer, the Network is elaborate and diverse. Each website is like its own little world, all tied into each other through an elaborate system of connections. When going from one site to another, it's wise to make a lot of short jumps rather than a single long journey. Dangers lurk beyond what your monitor can display.

## THE GATEWAY

The Named City's internet is still young enough that most people are only vaguely aware of it, and sites are passed around almost entirely by word of mouth. Even still, there's communities online that've attracted enough attention that it's assumed anyone who's been on a computer has heard of them.

### MEMESIS.NCT

Whenever people find a new way to communicate, the first thing they do is figure out how to make jokes with it. Memes are a mainstay of the Network, and while you'll have to explore some real weird corners to get the best ones, many perfectly fine memes get collected here. The Memesis comments sections have a reputation for being hostile and combative, but the reality is that it's a quite healthy and open community that just occasionally gets into long-winded arguments over the minutiae of memecraft.

### THEARCHIVE.GNO

An enormous digital collection of encyclopedia-style entries, research essays, and scanned books and other preserved media. Accepts submissions from anyone, but all new content goes through a vetting process to ensure it's properly preserved, sourced, and tagged. Even so, some things slip through the cracks or get stuck in pending approval, so taking the time to dig into the darker corners of the Archive can reveal some really fascinating stuff.

### IGNITION\_MANUAL.KLN/FORUM/

The biggest pyromancy forum on the internet, the IMF was created to be a resource where experienced mages could share resources and advice with the next generation. It remained as such for approximately two weeks, before a three-hundred-page thread over whether magmakinesis should count as pyromancy shattered the community into dozens of warring factions, who then splintered further as new forms of discourse were discovered. Several topics (including reagent sourcing, facial hair, and ever-burning flames) have caused such a stir that even mentioning them can get you slapped with a month-long suspension.

### PANELSHOW.COBB

A site dedicated to showcasing webcomics, the hot new online trend. Webcomics are typically hosted on personal sites, but Panel Show lets creators share a blurb and a couple sample pages to draw people in. An involved tagging system helps readers find new comics to check out, and is facilitating a whole host of hilariously specific new genres. There's even an official podcast, where the moderators of the site bring on a couple new creators to talk about their work and give tips to people just starting out. It's thrilling, getting to see a medium come together like this.

### SILICONMARKET.NCT

You can find just about anything in the Named City, but often that requires a lot of running around, haggling, dealing with other people, et cetera et cetera. The Silicon Market is an easy way to buy and sell things without all that inconvenience, at the cost of sometimes not getting quite what you thought, and other times getting much more than you bargained for.

### DOMAIN EXTENSIONS

Here's a couple commonly-used domain extensions, and what they tend to indicate.

.NCT extensions are hosted in the Named City, and are notable for often having unique features if accessed in the Dreaming.

.GNO extensions (pronounced like "naa") indicate an educational or informative source, often cross-referenced by an institute of seers and scholars.

.COB (Collective Organized Board) sites are hosted decentrally, meaning that a group of users collectively host and maintain the site rather than any one authority.

### A MAGICAL COMMUNITY

Much of the Network's current core userbase are mages, as they tend to spend a lot of time working alone at home and the internet gives them a convenient way to research and socialize. As a result, most of the major communities have a hard sorcerous bent. If you spend any significant amount of time online, you'll likely pick up some basic concepts and phrases, though actual practical magic is still something that takes time and hard work.

## THE BACKDOORS

Most of the Network is here, on the fringes: sites that haven't gathered as much attention, sites that are partially or entirely obscured, sites that are more of a novelty than anything else. It's the nature of the internet that most people only ever experience the shallow end, and that's great because it means there's always something incredible waiting to be found.

### TRUTHSEEKERS.NCT

A fun little website that updates every few months with a handful of clues to a new ARG (or alternate-reality game). Several forums are dedicated to piecing these mysteries together, and often compete with each other to see who can solve them fastest. The site is well known in ARG communities for its quality puzzle design, interesting themes, and for occasionally revealing actual conspiracies.

### ADVENTURERS UNION.GNO

A recruitment site for a group of adventurers that boldly journey into the furthest reaches of the Disparateum and record what they find. Those that return often submit treasure troves of information to the Archive, and checking their recent excursions page is a great way to see what Archive articles are about to see major revisions. Of course, their current findings aren't nearly as broad or as deep as those in the book you're holding. Still, nice effort.

### WITCH.IO

A storefront for independently-designed rituals, which has garnered an unexpected but not out of place tabletop gaming community. Naturally, the longer the two coexist the more the lines have been blurred, to the point now that most professional witches have polyhedral dice sets in their offices and most hobbyist gamers have accidentally brought to life at least one household appliance.

### S/ASH.COB

A hacker forum, accessible only through machines that have been infected with a very particular virus. This virus seeks out people first learning how to code and attempts to invade their system, obviously at first and then with increasingly clever techniques. Members of the forum are awarded a badge next to their username indicating how long they were able to hold it off.

### !!-TIME\_WINDS-!.THEORY.GNO

This site is host to an enormous, poorly written and inconsistently formatted ramble on the nature of time. It posits that time is neither linear nor causal, and instead moves in fits and starts backwards and forwards in a strange rhythm. Several elaborate diagrams seem to show this happening on particular days, with some hours happening repeatedly and others not existing at all. It's unclear what, if anything, the author believes happens during the time that doesn't exist. Usually these kinds of sites would be quickly disproven and stripped of their .gno extension, but everyone who's attempted that here has gotten so turned around that they quit.

*Again, the Book provides strange commentary. I refuse to believe that these childish jabs are the remarks of the same creator who made this world.*

*Why would someone add this, though?*

## THE SPIDER'S NEST

Whenever a computer sends or requests information, a connection must be made. These connections are precise, delicate, and elaborate. Fledgling hackers tend to assume these threads are the results of the computers themselves, perhaps sending signals through the air to establish bonds with each other. Then they peek just outside their monitor's precisely curated window into the Network, and they see the spiders.

### THE BROOD

An endless swarm of digital spiders crawl through the virtual un-space between websites, tending to the health of the Network's enormous system of connections. Well-worn threads are reinforced and built off of, while unused connections are trimmed and repurposed. Packets are shepherded to their proper location, and defended from outside interference. New sites are seamlessly built into the system as though they had always been planned for. They keep the Network running smoothly, and disruptions to their order are brief and rare.

### THE WEAVER WIDOW

At the heart of the internet sits the Widow, a massive spider with eight heads and ten thousand legs. Her web is a massive tesseract that stretches to the furthest corners of the Network. Here she spins the threads of code that make up this layer's foundations. Her Brood acts out her will across the web, working tirelessly to ensure the Network is constantly expanding its range of influence and fighting off threats to its beautiful geometry.

### [ NULL ].COB

Even here, where human interference is hunted down and removed, people carve out spaces for themselves. If you want to learn secrets others would rather forget, barter for objects that make the impossible trivial, or get in touch with people who don't want to be found, you'll have to trek out to the tattered far reaches of the Network.

#### EXPLORING THE NETWORK

Anyone can visit a website, but only travelers of the Disparateum know what it's like to wander the Network. On this layer, each site and device is a physical location, and the only way to get around is across shaking bridges made of connection threads. There's no easier way to slip past security, get access to valuable information, or trace a connection to its source—as long as you're willing to risk your trip across those narrow bridges being sabotaged by a disgruntled spider or some hostile malware.

# REFLECTIONS OF THE DREAMING

Dreaming the things the dreamers here rejected? For every dream, a nightmare. The Dreaming, for all its chaos and unpredictability, is a cultivated garden. The Named City's dreamers and wonders and cut away horrors. But nothing is ever truly lost, and many of those horrors end up here. Or are the wonders of the

## LANTERNFLY SWARM

Clusters of raindrop lights in the night sky aren't nearly as comforting in the Reflection. Lanternflies are enormous, dream-sucking insects about a forearm's-length across, with shells made of multicolored glass shards. Their abdomens glow when they've recently fed, but no lanternfly is ever sated. They most frequently attack lone dreamers, but will go after crowds if sufficiently hungry, angry, or bold.

## GLASS TOWER

Here, Glasshall is a labyrinthine spire of windows and mirrors. Shards pass over the glass here from people long-gone, and distorted echoes linger behind every surface. It's said that you can make doorways to other moments in time if you break the right piece of glass at the right moment, but nobody wants to risk the misthroun that could come from that. And even if you did, how would you know which one to break?

## THE LAIR

In the deepest recesses of the Reflection, where no mirror-light threatens to enforce the nature of your Named City, your Reflection reads itself for what it has to do. From the moment you killed a fragment of yourself, your Reflection has hidden itself here as it prepares to take revenge. You've broken a sacred pact between selves. You've crossed a line that can never be undone, and now you—and anyone who allies themselves with you—has to pay the price.

## PARCHMENT TATTOO PARLOR

The path to the tattoo parlor is changed. The Undercity is twisted here, full of collapsed rooms, labyrinthine hallways, and sudden drops into darkness. The abandoned subway station is changed, too. It's sealed off and rigged with traps, made to be nearly impossible to reach from the outside. The parlor itself, though, is identical. There doesn't seem to be anyone here right now, but the chairs, the peeling posters, the wait in the corner there. What is that? ... Wait, is that really something? How'd the Scribe get their hands on that?

*What's this? Is someone censoring the book? Why? And why?*

**REFLECTIONS OF REFLECTIONS**  
There is a Reflection of every layer, not just the two described here. Each layer's Reflection behaves as a person's does—it takes that layer's nature and twists it into something wholly alien. Whatever that layer rewards, its Reflection punishes. Whatever that layer shuns, its Reflection welcomes. Be careful when traveling the Dispartium on the other side of the mirror. It's not like our own.

# RITUAL OF BLOODSHED

FOR COMING TO TERMS WITH WHAT YOU'VE DONE

Blood runs through the cracks of the sidewalk and seeps into the bones of the City. Your hands are stained with it. The silence puzzles.

**[TO ALL BUT THE KILLER:]** What have we gained? Before answering, consider silently for two minutes.

**[TO ALL BUT THE KILLER:]** What have we lost? Before answering, consider silently for two minutes.

**[TO THE KILLER:]** Was it worth it? Before and after answering, consider silently for two minutes.

# THE REFLECTION

## WHERE EVERYTHING WE REFUSE TO FACE LIES IN WAIT

*Odd. This whole section seems off.*

**THE REFLECTION**  
**TRAIT-LAYER**  
 The nemesis. Opens when you kill an alternate version of yourself, and accesses through any reflective surface while your Reflection is missing.

**[RECOVER TRAITS BY:]** Finding the unsettling acts your Reflection has committed with them.

**DISQUIETING**  
**TRAIT**  
 Everything here's wrong, and it makes your skin writhe. Anything you've found comfort in before is missing or changed in this place.

**[I TOKEN:]** Find the Reflection of someone you know, and learn what they keep hidden.

**LETHAL**  
**TRAIT**  
 It's much easier to die in a world fundamentally hostile to you. Take even mild threats more seriously here.

**[I TOKEN:]** Invite disaster or catastrophe.

**YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING TERRIBLE.** The Disparstenum is a word of duplicities- once you start exploring other layers, you're bound to run into plenty of versions of yourself. Dream-copies, memory fragments, future selves, digital imprints, they're all branching off from some difficult-to-define Self, carving their own paths through the infinite possibility space. Living their own, irreplacable lives.

And you killed one. For whatever reason, you thought it'd be a good idea to kill a treatment of yourself.

Your Reflection refuses to face you now. When you look in the mirror, the other side is empty. But there's an opportunity there, too. You step through the glass and find yourself in a world exactly like your own, but not. I'm sure there's no end to the things you can imagine to do with a second Named City. Just watch out for the residents, and especially for your Reflection. It's not hiding. It's planning.

**REFLECTIONS OF THE NAMED CITY**  
 The Reflection is a strange place. Mirrors pin certain locations in place, forcing them to conform to the other side of the glass, but anything beyond those boundaries is allowed to become whatever it wants, and this layer wants to be something wholly alien to the City it's chained to.

**THE TARNISHED MARKET**  
 The Reflection's market is ragged and torn, with monstrous vendors selling hostile wares for vicious prices. There, a stall filled with golden tinkers that whisper hoarsely. There, a stall that offers caged beasts in exchange for handfuls of severed fingers. There, a stall selling knives that can carve bootmarks in canvas. This isn't a place for getting anything you could ever want. This is a place for the things others would prefer you not have.

**THE LABYRINTH WOOD**  
 Snaking through the Reflection is a dark, impenetrable forest. Its roots dig through the street's foundations, and its branches reach through windows and clas at doors. It's populated by fears and nightmares, all the things that you see behind you in the mirror but are gone when you turn around.

**THE STATUE GARDEN**  
 Statues litter the Reflection. Some are intact with only mild wear, but most are broken and scattered about. The Wood has the most, but nowhere's free of them. They've got different scales, too: some are life-sized, others slightly exaggerated, and a few tower over buildings or lie crumpled across entire neighborhoods. If you look closely, you'll inevitably find some that resemble you or people you know, posed in a way that feels indescribably familiar. Of course, not many people spend so much time looking at their faces, on account of the eyes.

**MAOM**  
 Here, the Museum's been sealed up for decades. Barricades wrapped in webs of chains cover every entrance and window, and the streets around it are lullily abandoned. Sometimes, from outside, you can hear something enormous moving around inside, but other than that it's entirely silent. Some rare fools have tried to venture inside to claim the treasures supposedly tabbed inside, but none ever come out.

**THE THEATER**  
 There is no Theater in the Reflection.

**THE SMIRNING GOD**  
 Deep below the Reflection lies its ancient master, an eyeless and smiling god. The god's tangled body is trapped within a cathedral-like cage and sealed with miles-long lengths of chain, but its constant laughter echoes through the tunnels and passages of the Undercity and seeps up into the City above.

**WHAT IS A REFLECTION?**  
 Reflections are our opposites, but the way that manifests varies from person to person. Some people's Reflections are complete inversions, valuing everything their counterparts do, and despising everything they do. Others bring the surface everything their counterparts wants to keep hidden, representing all their deepest regrets and flaws. Still others take the shape of everything their counterparts wishes they could be, but cannot.

Are these forms intentional cruelty? Well, it's hard to tell. After all, to the Reflection, we're a similar mockery of everything they hold dear. If your Reflection is a greater version of yourself, wouldn't you to them be an expression of everything they've tried to leave behind?

*The moment I read this section, the moment I understood its significance... I immediately set out and slew my Reflection. Too much rests on my shoulders. Too much would be lost if the things it knew got out. The covering thing didn't even put up a fight. Pathetic.*

# THE INTERIOR

## WHERE TRUTHS ARE LAID BARE

### THE INTERIOR

#### TRAIT- LAYER

The space within. Opens when you have a crisis of identity, and can be reached by crossing through any representation of the self.

[RECOVER TRAITS BY:] Examining your relationship to them, or uncovering unsettling truths about them.

### TIMELESS

#### TRAIT

The Interior is detached from time. Anything that happens within it occurs instantaneously to those outside it.

[1 TOKEN:] Perform your next action a million times before you leave the Interior.

### THE DISPARATEUM IS HOME TO MANY THINGS STRANGER THAN WORLDS.

The further out you travel, the less you can expect the Disparateum to resemble our typical reality. Here on the fringes, layers represent concepts and patterns, defining how the world "above" them functions. Be careful tampering here, the ripple effects can be enormous.

This layer is where souls reside. Every person has one, as do some things that aren't quite people. It contains the sum of your experiences, the shape of your being, and the trajectory of your life. Of your lives, really, as this place isn't limited to just the you-that-is, but is bound to every you-that-could-be. It's a place with a lot of power, and a lot of risk. Use it wisely.

## THE TRUE SELF

Inside you is a palace. Its walls are your boundaries, its furnishings your qualities. It's not always a literal palace, mind: for some, it's an iron spire, for others a dense forest. Sometimes it's a place you've been, sometimes it's a place you explored in dreams, and sometimes it's born from nothing you know or remember, but still tingles with familiarity. However, it's always grand, sacred, and labyrinthine. Here's an overview of the kinds of places you can expect to find.

### THE ARMS

A pair of long, twisting hallways flank the rest of the palace, adorned with tools, mementos, and trophies. Everything here represents some skill, talent, or quality you possess. Old, partially forgotten skills are covered in dust and cobwebs; skills in the process of being learned may be rough, unrefined, or needing assembly. Changes here can give you incredible new talents and aptitudes, but don't provide the knowledge and experience associated with them. Be careful when trying them out for the first time.

### THE LUNGS

In the basement of your palace is a vast machine, shuddering and pulsing as it maintains your soul. You see no workers here, but their handiwork is everywhere- tools left scattered about, freshly repaired machine parts, mugs of still-hot coffee sitting out on desks covered in blueprints. It's like they all suddenly left the moment you arrived, and will just as suddenly return when you leave.

### THE MIND

At the highest point of your palace, a great library bears the total weight of your experiences. Every thought, memory, sensory experience, it's all recorded here in precise detail. Within these walls, nothing is lost or overlooked, but learning from this place isn't just a matter of locating the exact information you need. Each person's library is recorded in its own language, with its own structures and patterns. Decoding it requires enormous skill, patience, and no small amount of luck, but the treasure trove it unlocks is unimaginable.

### THE HEART

Tucked into a side passage, behind a dusty bookshelf, or covered in peeling wallpaper, there is a door. Behind that door is a small room. I couldn't tell you what's inside yours, and I would never tell you what's inside mine. All I can say is that you should keep that door as hidden as you can, because no amount of self-actualization is worth the risk of someone else finding the root of your fundamental essence.

### ECHOES OF OTHERS

When you enter the Interior, you find yourself in a closed-off representation of your own mind. However, that's not to say you'll be alone. Your Interior may be populated by Echoes, mental representations of the people they resemble cobbled together from your perceptions of them. The better you know someone, the more accurate their Echo will be, but no Echo is perfect and many will differ in dramatic and unexpected ways. Typically, players control Echoes of their own characters.

### A RIVER, BRANCHING

Your Interior may be limited to just you, but it's not limited to any *particular* you. The Mind holds the experiences of every version of you, the Heart holds the key that unites you all. You may, on occasion, encounter another version of yourself roaming these halls. Try to remember that you're no more true than them.

## THE STATUE GARDEN

True to its name, the spaces you find in the Interior are always enclosed. If it has windows, they look out on more rooms, more halls. If it has doors, they only lead further inside. However, that's not to say it's inescapable—you just need to make your own way out.

### GETTING OUT

The statues of the garden are indestructible- from the outside. From within, it's not terribly hard to dig through. Moreover, many folks find themselves with a palace already filled with holes—these could be signs of loss, damage from an internal struggle, gaps left by a rejected part of yourself, or (such as with the Keykeepers) an esoteric means of drawing in great power. Regardless, they offer unique opportunities on this layer as long as they're open, but also risk the possibility of someone e/so getting in.

### QUESTIONS RAISED

If all people are statues in the Interior, then what of actual statues? What would it be like if you could somehow climb into one of them? Is their soul preserved inside, or has something else taken up residence? Unfortunately, it seems there's no way to know.

### THE WORLD OUTSIDE

The world outside the Interior is a massive, petrified version of the moment you entered the layer. Living things are statues at a hundred times the scale, preserved perfectly in dusty gray stone. The sky is a gently glowing firmament made of massive purple crystals, resembling the inside of a geode.

Typically, this world will be an oversized version of the Named City, but that's not always the case. You can access the Interior from any layer, and can even travel to other layers from within it, as long as you're able to meet their requirements while you're an inch tall.

### THE STATUES

Each person is represented in the Interior by a massive stone statue, with their palace contained within it. Holes broken through these statues are lined with geodic crystals. From the outside, this stone is completely indestructible: you can scratch at its rough surface a bit, and can even drive a climbing spike securely into it, but it can only be broken through from the inside.

These statues are often highly realistic, but sometimes take on strange, abstract structures, particularly when it comes to the more unusual denizens of the Disparateum. Statues that don't resemble a person's physical form may be a glimpse into how they truly see themselves, and statues made of unusual materials may be a sign that someone comes from a layer other than the Named City.

## RITUAL OF RESHAPING

### FOR CUTTING AWAY THE FALSE SELF, AND REVEALING THE TRUE

We are ever-changing, constantly taking on new aspects and discarding old ones. We can't live without change, we can't exist in stagnation. This is a ritual for those who can't wait any longer.

**[TO THE RITUAL'S PERFORMER:]** What trait have you chosen to change today?

**[TO THOSE WHO KNOW YOU AS YOU WERE:]** What memories will you always hold?

**[TO THOSE WHO KNOW YOU AS YOU WILL BE:]** What will only become possible now?

The moment comes.

**[TO THE RITUAL'S PERFORMER:]** With this, are you revealing long-hidden truths, or cutting off long-lingering falsehoods?

**[IF REVEALING THE TRUE:]** Either temporarily affix a new trait over the old on your character sheet, or permanently affix a temporary trait.

**[IF CUTTING AWAY THE FALSE:]** Cut the trait off your character sheet.

*I hope you realize just how foolish this ritual is.*

*This whole layer demonstrates the unwavering truth of the Disparateum: we are cogs in a beautiful, perfect machine. Our past, future, all our possible selves, all laid out to see. There's no change there. All of creation is described in this very Book! Everything that is, everything that should be, is contained within these unwavering pages.*

*My name is Alexander.  
I am the Lord of Scriptures  
and master of the Disparateum.  
I am nothing less, and have no need of change.*

*For posterity:  
Today I made a discovery. Possibly the most  
important discovery of all time; even my previous  
accomplishments pale in the face of it. Today I  
confirmed what I'd long suspected, what I'd  
always hoped but could never put into words.*

*This is a perfect world. Born from nothing,  
shaped by the all-knowing, and set into motion  
with divine purpose.*

*I am to be this world's guardian. I know this now.  
All my life, the signs have pointed to this.  
I leave my words here so that the inheritor  
of this book can carry on my mission, and the  
Disparateum will be preserved forever.*

*~ Alexander*

*...what*

**IF IT'S INTERESTING,  
YOU CAN DO IT  
IF YOU FORGET ABOUT IT,  
IGNORE IT  
THE CITY IS WIDE ENOUGH  
FOR ALL OF US**

**DISPARATEUM**  
**A GAME FOR A BARD,  
A MAGE, AND A SCRIBE**

*What?  
What's happening?*



# RITUAL OF BEGINNING

## FOR GUIDING A NEW AGE OF STORIES

It's late at night in the Named City, and three old friends are playing a game. Many rounds have been played, and many things have already been gambled or bartered away. Here, though, at the end of the night, simple bets aren't cutting it anymore. As the sun begins to rise outside, three bets are placed.

The Bard bets the greatest story ever told.  
**[TO THE BARD:]** How has this story always eluded you, and what breakthrough have you recently had in getting it?

The Mage bets power beyond imagining.  
**[TO THE MAGE:]** What terrible thing must you overcome to get it, and what tiny edge will you have in that conflict?

The Scribe bets knowledge without equal.  
**[TO THE SCRIBE:]** What insurmountable obstacle exists to keep the source of this knowledge safe, and how do you plan to outsmart it?

The final round of the game is played, and while it's close, one player manages a beautiful victory.  
**[TO ALL PLAYERS:]** Who wins?  
**[TO THE LOSERS:]** What's your first step in getting what you've promised?  
**[TO THE WINNER:]** How will you accompany your friends on their journeys?

*...Scribe?*

*Where have I heard that before?*

*I don't understand...  
 Could this be another instance of tampering?  
 ...But that was my handwriting.*

*Oh, you motherfucker.*

*Of course, I knew someone had to be interfering with my work, but now I understand why. After all, there's only one kind of person who would benefit from the perversion of my world.*

*You're one of them. An outsider. You're a PC.*

## NPCs

The Disparateum is a broad, diverse, and strange place. The Named City alone is host to hundreds of thousands from all over the world, each with their own irreplicable perspective. Often, the first time you meet someone, they'll seem simple and one-dimensional, but over time you'll come to understand who they are and what makes them tick.

### SPECIAL CASES

Not everything described here applies universally. Some NPCs may be resistant or immune to the warping effects of various layers, and some players may run their PCs as being subject to those same whims. Use only what inspires you, and ignore any limitations that would get in the way of what the table agrees would be most interesting. The Disparateum's a broad place, it's got plenty of room for corner cases and exceptions.

### MAKING NPCs

NPCs often start off as a simple idea, existing to fill a gap in the world or add flavor to a scene. Many NPCs won't even have names when they're first introduced, and instead go by a title or descriptor. You may know a character as "the Old Blacksmith" forever, or you may learn that his name is Anton as you get to know him and his daughters.

NPCs have a limit of four traits, and don't have access to roles like PCs do. If they have a trait related to their title or descriptor, that'll go in the top right corner as a role would. NPCs don't have any restrictions on their starting ranks and don't tend to rank up except through major circumstance.

Any player can introduce (or reintroduce) NPCs to a scene as is reasonable. If your table wants to delve deep into what makes your cast of NPCs tick, you should lean towards reintroducing NPCs when you would otherwise make new ones, and try to put characters in unusual places to see what happens. On the contrary, if your table prefers a world that feels vast and expansive, try introducing new characters early and often, and push the envelope on how weird they can be. And remember, this isn't a binary- you can always broaden and narrow your scope as you play, focusing in on odd throwaway characters or contextualizing well-developed characters in a wider world.

### CONTEXT-SENSITIVE

Just like PCs, NPCs can travel the Disparateum, and even those who don't have alternate versions of themselves scattered across the layers. Unlike PCs, however, NPCs are often dramatically influenced by the layer they're on. A cheerful NPC may become grim and morose on a melancholy layer, and a frustrating antagonist might become positively friendly in the right context.

This is where their traits come in. Regardless of context, an NPC's traits describe fundamental aspects of their character. These traits may be expressed differently, but they form a foundation for the character, a consistent throughline to their stories and experiences.

### PLAYING WITH NPCs

NPCs are played by the Tower of the layer they're currently on, but any player can take token actions with them. If an NPC has a trait, anyone at the table can spend a token from that trait to bring it into play. Players can also introduce problems for an NPC to refresh one of their traits, but have to pay out the tokens required to bring them up to full out of their own supply.

*The Disparateum is perfect. It's been shaped by divine hands, set in motion with the exacting precision of a god.*

*And what do you do? You spoil it. You stumble cluelessly around, changing things on a whim, upsetting the beautiful interplay of my world.*

*And for what?*

## TOWERS

The Tower is a powerful NPC role, used exclusively by the figures that shape the Disparateum. Each layer of reality is kept stable by a singular Tower, who has an enormous amount of direct and indirect influence over that layer. Towers are powerful, formidable forces, but lack the direct influence over the world that PCs have.

### SPINE OF THE WORLD

Layers can't exist without Towers, though they take on different forms and play different roles across the Disparateum. Towers are united by a few properties, such as not needing to spend tokens to take actions on their layer, but otherwise differ wildly from one another. Not every layer's Tower is obvious, either—it may be immediately clear that the Slumbering God is the Dreaming's Tower, but not as much that you're the Tower of your own Interior.

### TOWERS AND NPCs

NPCs are the primary way Towers exert their influence. The broad strokes of what an NPC does depends on the actions of the table and the token economy, but the specifics always come down to the current layer's Tower. Typically, Towers use this to promote the kind of behavior they want to see in their layer. NPCs won't act counter to their true nature, but will lean more subdued or dramatic, more friendly or hostile, more honest or shady, depending on the whims of the Tower.

### ALTERNATE STRUCTURES

So far, this book has assumed you're playing with a single player controlling every Tower, but that's not always the case. Players can distribute the various Towers out among themselves before the game, or hand them out over the course of play. Players can trade off responsibility for one or more Towers, or collaboratively control them. You could even play a game with one player running all Towers, but who also plays a PC and participates in the action directly.

### THE SLUMBERING GOD

The Tower of both the City and the Dreaming. Both instances of it (the Slumbering and Moldering God) are in fact the same being at different points in time, with its death and entombment under the City its inevitable conclusion.

The Slumbering God is even-handed and conflict-adverse, rarely acting directly. It's theorized that it plays some part in drawing heroes and legends to the Disparateum, but if there's a direct connection there it hasn't yet been found.

### THE COUNCIL OF DRAGONS

The Narrative is controlled by a group of Towers, each with complete control over their own genre of story but little influence over the others.

The dragons are dramatic, self-obsessed, and unsubtle. They're always looking for opportunities to play themselves up, so expect stories that cross genre borders to experience sudden changes in tone, theme, and characterization. NPCs in the Narrative are *always* hamming it up due to this influence.

### THE WEAVER WIDOW

Deep inside the Network lies the Weaver Widow and her swarm of spiders. She rules her layer from the shadows, influencing the world outside through the information allowed to pass through her domain.

The Widow is intense and critical, judging others solely by their value to her. Those who satisfy her (by helping to expand the Network, for instance) can expect to be rewarded with secret truths that otherwise might never have seen the light of day.

*If you truly understood the beauty of the Disparateum, the sacredness of the ground you trample to death, you would understand why I have to do what I do.*

*You would understand that you deserve everything I have in store.*

*You would thank me for your death.*

hey, Rath here! don't worry, this bit probably isn't canon. i just wanted to thank you for checking out this weird little project of mine. it's something that's been rattling around in the back of my head for ages, and having a chunk of it this substantial out in the world is exhilarating. i hope you enjoyed reading this as much as i enjoyed writing it, and i hope my self-indulgent bullshit wasn't too much. if you wanna share your thoughts, don't hesitate to get in touch! my twitter dms are always open, and you can also email me at [Rathayibacter@gmail.com](mailto:Rathayibacter@gmail.com). thanks again, and i'll see you around! <3

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