



## A TABLETOP SYSTEM DESIGNED AND ILLUSTRATED BY

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# FOREWORD

When you watch a movie, or read a book, the odds are not equal for everyone. The decks are always stacked in one person's favour or another.

I have found in the past with tabletop campaigns, dice systems seemed to swing wildly in the favour of luck and pure statistics. This system was born to make it feel like it's more than just a gamble, that you have made choices that have directly altered your character's fate.

For the players the Choice System is designed to let you control your odds, to bend luck in your favour. You will create a deck tailored to your character, closely representing who they are and their capabilities. The cards present you with something that truly represents your creation and the decisions that they make and give you something solid to take home after your sessions. We hope that even after everyone has their separate ways, you will have a physical memento to remind you of the fond time spent with friends.

For game masters, I hope that you find the species and ideas held within these covers useful nuggets of inspiration. To amaze your peers, and create memories that you won't forget - use this book as a guide as you navigate through a story that only you can tell.

As you experience the system for yourselves, I wish that whatever happens, it is unforgettable.



## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

### A DECK OF CARDS FOR EACH PLAYER

In the Choice System, each player controls a single character and a deck constructed out of a set of regular playing cards. The cards you choose will represent your character's health and mind. The larger the deck, the more options and health they have, while in comparison with fewer cards, the more limited their actions are.

You will need to make some hard decisions when constructing your deck because of one simple reason: Parselings are not gods, nor are they omnipotent. They will need others to help do what they themselves cannot.

### A SET OF DICE FOR YOUR GM

Though predominantly a deck building game, you will still need a set of dice to be shared by your group for several parts of this game. During the game players will not need these dice, rather it is for the benefit of the GM. While a lot of NPC actions could be replicated with cards, sometimes for lesser challenges it is faster for the GM to operate with dice.

A small pool of **d6s** (six sided dice) to represent any small enemies or obstacles in the campaign.

A single **d10** (ten sided dice), **d12** (twelve sided dice), and **d20** (twenty sided dice) to help decide a Parseling's words and ultimately how the world sees them.

### YOUR IMAGINATION

We share tales among friends and strangers to make sure that we are remembered. The more ideas are spoken and shared, the more real they become in our society.

As a role-playing game, stories are at the heart of these systems and the rules offer a systematic way of translating actions into a format that everyone else can agree upon. We are utilizing our imagination to fuel the game, putting our time and our effort to create to a story we would want to listen to. For players this means you'll need to be able to describe your character and what they want to do. For the GM, you'll be weaving these characters together to create an adventure that everyone can enjoy.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

This book is a role playing book that heavily relies on role-playing, and crafting a story that belongs to you. The mechanics and systems behind the game simply serve as guidelines as you tell the story you want to hear. To help you navigate this book, it has been broken down into several different sections. For ease of reading, this book is split up into several chapters and appendices.

**Chapter 1 'Introduction'** is designed around giving you some context of many things including terminology, themes and various bits about the Parseling world. It will help you digest the information in the rest of the book.

**Chapter 2 'Getting started'** is aimed at character creation and helping people get started on their journey. It provides a glimpse into the process of filling out your stat sheet. There will be terminology present in this chapter later in the book.

**Chapter 3 'Choice System'** talks about the basic mechanics of this system universal to any characters, Parseling or otherwise. If you're looking for information on basic checks, equipment and various statistics, look no further.

**Chapter 4 'Parse System'** revolves around all Parseling mechanics, teaching you how to be a Parseling including, how to use the unique spell casting system.

**Chapter 5 'GM handbook'** discusses some basic points on running this system as a game master. It delves deeper into the concepts behind Checks, Parses and various other parts of this game.

**Chapter 6 'Parseling Research notes'** is a collection of deeper dissections about Parsecetes and their derivatives. Essential reading for anyone wondering about the true nature of these beings.

**Appendix A: 'Tricks'** is a compendium filled with all the Tricks you can take to personalize how your deck plays.

**Appendix B: 'Equipment'** is a list of example gear that you can use to build up an armoury for your team.

**Appendix C: 'Checks'** is an optional guideline for any checks you may end up completing as a player.

**Appendix D: 'Challenges & Conditions'** is written to provide players and GMS with inspiration on what could constitute as a Challenge or Condition.

**Appendix E: 'Tables & Sheets'** is a compilation of all the tables within the book for easy reference, as well as a copy of the suggested Character sheet to use.

## THE AFFLICTED

With their amorphous powers and abilities, they have become the bogeyman, an easy scapegoat for the riots and tragedies that fill this world. Though there are few that are well informed, the majority have been kept in the dark. As far as the public is concerned, the threat known as Parselings is nothing but a bomb waiting to go off. Having little understanding of how they work, the stories of these creatures have already spread far and wide, from the loud proclamations on the TV to the sinister whispers of the Internet. Hard facts are hard to find amidst the sea of anecdotes, with people's imaginations running wild.

### PARSECYTE

*The Formless Hunger*

Ink-like creatures which lack an identity of their own. They seek to build a place in the world for themselves through devouring the identities of others. They somehow are able to perceive nature of things, but ignorant of their widespread reputation as a devouring plague.

Devouring anything that moves, this small entity often adopts traits held by whatever they eat. When left unchecked, these ravenous entities will continually search out similar prey, until they begin to develop their own fledgling sense of self.

These creatures seem to have an interesting response when attempting to consume other living organisms with sapience of their own. Rather than consuming their prey, they invade them physically. They root themselves within the creature's body, integrating with their consciousness. This grants a tentative symbiosis between the Parsecye and the host, granting them abilities beyond the sum of their individual parts. While it is possible that the host can survive this process, many do not.

### PARSELINGS

*Manifestations of Identity*

Humans who have survived the infection of a Parsecye, defined by how the world perceives them. However, you will only see a Parseling's full definition when their ink blends in with others of their kind.

In almost all cases, a person must encounter an ink-like parasitic creature known as a Parsecye in order to sense and use Parses. Through reaching a symbiotic relationship, creatures with a developed sense of language may become a Parseling.

From the point of their rebirth, Parselings feel the urge to gather with others of their kind, to immerse themselves in otherwise inaccessible worlds. In contrast, the Parsecye demands consistency and constants in aspects of personality and self identity. They require fidelity at all times from the Parseling to their specific words.

Survival of both body and mind requires balance, knowing when to keep true to one's self, and when to accept new ideas into themselves. Should they lean too far in either direction, they will find themselves becoming unrecognisable parodies of who they once were.

### INCOHERENT

*Ideas that just don't die*

A Parseling that has forgone their humanity and crossed the border of death. Consumed by the Parsecye within, this entity is fuelled by a single word, an idea. Every Incoherent is a unique monster, a creature destined to lose its rationality.

The final and inevitable state of the interaction between a Parseling and its Parsecye. Eventually, the Parsecye will all but consume its host's identity, burning a singular word straight through who they are and altering them on both a physical and conceptual basis. These terrible creatures wear the husks of human beings and feign rationality. A mere shade of what they could have been, their potential has been sucked dry and unleashed for a singular purpose. They might speak like a human, but are given away by their irrational behaviour.

For those that do retain some sort of sanity or reasoning, they are driven by a deep and profound desire. Should they not sate the desire to embody their core identity, their grip on reality slowly slips, and they will descend into little more than a beast.

There is no returning one from incoherency. Attempting to deny their concept, or even other Parses is highly likely to make it worse and drag others into the brink of destruction with them.

### PARSESES

*Warped Perceptions*

Parselings as individuals are single agents in a grander design; a word in a sentence, meaningless without context. Based on the perception and understanding of the words they bear, a Parse is the communication between two Parselings about what they wish their reality to be and the external force of their identity in the world as power.

All Parselings need is physical contact with their kind, an understanding of the Parse they are to attempt, and to utter their words. Sometimes the effects of a Parse are minor, mere parlour tricks. Other times, they can push the boundaries upon the laws of reality.

No matter the Parse, however, it causes strain upon those involved. The cost of using a Parse is taken from the Parselings' minds and in severe cases their own bodies. Upon being created, these magics have the ability to warp the properties of anything within sight, often resulting in unforeseen problems. If left to fester, they can rot and develop into catastrophes.

There have been reports of minor telepathic links between Parselings during their Parses.

### LINGUA

*Stories Given Form*

A being formed of an animal host that has been infected with a Parsecye. They are simpler in composition and ability than a Parseling, which reflects the simpler cognitive identity of animals. They are single-minded fuelled by their drive to thrive and grow.

The forms of Lingua are as varied as all the creatures in the animal kingdom, and more. They typically begin to deviate from normal animal development several days after infection. Like Parsecyes, they feed on representations of their core identity to sustain their growth. Once the Parsecye has sufficiently integrated with its host, it becomes a **Greater Lingua** capable of much more.

Fundamentally different from a Parseling, these creatures have not been typically known to directly initiate a Parse on their own. However, they seem to be drawn to other Parsecye-based organisms.

## APTITUDE

Every person has talents for various things in their lives, and to represent this in the **Choice System** each character has their own **Aptitudes**. These are a measure of their skill in any facet of their lives. Some people are born with these talents, while others have spent hours honing their craft. **Aptitudes** have been broken down into three greater categories; **Intent**, **Feats** and **Conduct**. Typically these categories act as guidelines to which **Image** stat can be applied to which **Aptitude**, however there are always exceptions to the rules.

In game there are many ways of overcoming the challenges your GM may throw at you. From daily tasks, to difficult and deadly endeavours, **Aptitudes** appear in the vast majority of the **Checks** needed to determine your character's fate. As with **Image**, one point in an **Aptitude** represents someone who has not put any effort into improving in that area of expertise.

TABLE 3.2: APTITUDE SCALE

Point 1	An unpractised individual with a minimum of, or no expertise in the subject. Relying on their instinct, what expertise they may show is down to little more than guesswork.
Point 2	A novice, someone who has shown a regard of interest in this field of work. They have learnt a modicum of skill through experimentation.
Point 3	An individual who, through regularly practiced or developed a knack for this area of work. Typically at this point of skill it this could make the person a professional in this field.
Point 4	Professionals who have devoted a lot of time and effort developing these skills. Through long hours of study and practice they have honed their knowledge.
Point 5	A true visionary of the field, one whose name is known and often revered among the circles they're in. Their talent is outstanding, recognizable by sight alone.

## INTENT APTITUDES

Aptitudes linked to the Intent category rely on a person's mind more than their body, and can often take extended amounts of time. Those skilled in the following show great creativity and a wide breadth of knowledge.

### CRAFTING

*Artistry, Engineers, Mechanics, Tradesmen*

In our lives we find tools and trinkets that we use without a thought. They've become such a large part of our everyday lives that most people have become reliant on them, without even considering how they are made or function. We rely on craftsmen and tradesmen; architects to draft blueprints, labourers to construct our buildings, engineers to develop and design our technology, and artists to create wonder and awe in our life. Thanks to the hard work of others, no one has to know every single thing.

Those who tinker and create are proficient in the **Craft Aptitude**. It is the ability to design and express your ideas through any given medium. When attempting to make, modify, or repair, your character will need to exercise their **Craft** skills.

### MEDIC

*Doctors, Nurses, First Aid Responders*

Helping others isn't always easy, but saving lives is often its own reward. The art of healing is about managing trauma so that your patient may live to walk another day. Even with the guiding hand of a skilled doctor, recovery takes time to occur. However, if left alone conditions can continue to degrade, potentially resulting in life threatening situations. Some maladies are incapable of improving on their own without medical help.

Recovery doesn't happen overnight, but having a **Medic** treat wounds and ailments does assist the body in healing itself. Removing or tending to the cause of a problem with medication or surgery is the calling of those who use the **Medic Aptitude**. Checks with this aptitude can be used to assess the severity of an injury, providing long term care, or even get hands on and treat the cause. See "Wounds" and "Health Damage [2]" on page 42

### MEMORY

*Historians, Lawyers, Translators, Waiter*

The process of learning is one of trial and error. By remembering the past, we avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again. Everything we see and learn becomes buried deep in our subconscious minds, compartmentalized until it is needed.

**Memory** is for both the character and the player. Nobody's perfect, and sometimes you (the player) and you (the character) might want to call back on some information from past session or even pre-campaign that you are uncertain on. In this case, make a **Memory Check** to help recall this information with the help of your GM or friends.

### PERCEPTION

*Investigators, Police, Scouts*

From the day each of us was born, we take in the world around us with all the senses we have available. Feeling the texture of objects, hearing the sound of another person's voice, taking in new sights and smells with each waking moment; every second of our lives we observe with all we have. We use this to build an understanding of what the world is like, and in turn, when something is wrong. We can notice when a scent, sound, or sight is out of place and alien, or when danger is lurking.

**Perception** is your skill at observing and noting specific details in your environment. The more informed you are about your situation the better choices you are able to make. Making a **Perception Check** helps you notice thing you might not see with a casual glance, gleaning a deeper understanding of what options are available.

### RESEARCH

*Academics, Students, Researchers*

The Research aptitude revolves around the idea that all knowledge is a road paved by others. Somewhere out there, someone has recorded their thoughts on a subject you're trying to better understand, at times without you even knowing entirely what it is you're looking for. Like a light in the dark, a skilled Researcher will understand not only what answers to seek, but also what questions are required to find them.

As an aptitude, **Research** focuses on the character's ability to stay on target, and sniff out information relevant to their topic. This knowledge can be obtained from books, the Internet, and even dissection and experimentation. When attempting to learn new information about a subject, with sufficient resources your GM may ask you to make a **Intelligence + Research Check**.

### TECHNOLOGY

*Designers, Programmers, Scientists*

Technology helps us achieve things ordinarily impossible with just our two hands. The world around us was built upon a plethora of ideas meshing together to become something greater. From simple tools like the hammer, to the complex inner workings of a computer; it is impossible to avoid see how this has changed our world.

The sister aptitude to craftsmanship, **Technology** revolves around the understanding and development of functioning machines that make our daily lives easier. This aptitude delves into the theoretical side of creation, designing and handling the creation of concepts. This can range from designing schematics and computer programming, or even understanding long forgotten relics.

# COMBAT

Here comes the hard part. You're trying to convince someone you're right and negotiation hasn't always been your strong suit. Conflict is on the horizon and you've got to hurt someone, or they'll do worse. At points in your game, you may not be able to escape the need to fight, so it's best to learn how to defend yourself. At all times, combat is considered a **High Intensity** scene.

## TURN ORDER

In all games, it's important to determine the order in which characters can react. This is known as the **Turn Order**. Being the first to act has many benefits. From pushing your foes on the defensive from the get go, to bracing your character against harm. It often means, others are reacting to the full range of choices you present them and that you are acting with a full deck.

Each turn taken happens in quick succession. The entire rotation of the turn order should only last the span of 3 seconds. Enough for your character to respond to threats, but far too little time to take their time and undertake **Extended Actions**. On your turn you may move up to your **Speed** in distance and undertake a single **Simple Action**.

**You may not take any Extended Actions during Combat.** Doing so will remove you from the turn order, as each turn is a matter of seconds, and the precise work that is included in extended actions cannot be completed.

## DETERMINING ORDER

Draw a single card from your deck and add your **Initiative** (See "Derived Statistics" on page 43) to the value of that card, this becomes your initiative score.

The higher the initiative score, the earlier your character will react. If you are near another allied character, you may combine to theirs forming a **Group Initiative**.

If the scores are tied, the individual with the **highest base Initiative** will go first.

The GM will order the characters from highest Initiative to lowest, at this time you may recompose your deck.

## GROUP INITIATIVE

(Highest Individual Initiative - (Group Size))

Communication may slow down the process of the fastest individuals, but there are only so much you can achieve alone. As a pack, you can work in quick succession of each other, preventing your foes from disrupting your plans, as well as letting you protect one another.

When moving in a group, or co-ordinating as a team, it makes sense to move as a group. You may form a group with a friendly character within your character's **speed**. At any time on your turn, you may join up with other characters to form a group.



## STEP ONE: ATTACK

You are on the offence, ready to dealing out the pain. If this is not you, jump to step two. If this is you, describe what you want to do to your opponent. Your GM will ask you to make the appropriate Check.

### MELEE ATTACK

**Type:** Simple Action  
**Check:** Force + Melee  
**Suit:** Clubs  
**Contested by:** Defence  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses

Its close quarters and anything goes, fists, bats, bottles, martial arts, you name it and you can use it. Melee attacks are all about the close combat, about beating down your foes before they get you. Just be careful, your opponent will probably get a chance to strike back.

When making an attack at close quarters, your GM will ask you to use this check. If you are using weapons or anything beyond your bare fists, remember to always apply the **Equipment Modifier** as additional successes.

### RANGED ATTACK

**Type:** Simple Action  
**Check:** Finesse + Ranged  
**Suit:** Clubs  
**Contested by:** Defence  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses

When attacking at range, you will be relying on this Check. You may add your equipment as a success modifier. Some firearms have the **Automatic** trait, which can be used in Burst and Full Auto modes. (See "Automatic" on page 54).

### VEHICULAR ATTACK

**Type:** Simple Action  
**Check:** Force + Ride  
**Suit:** Clubs  
**Contested by:** Defence  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses, Vehicle Armour

Whilst driving a car, its mass and size can easily make for a devastating blow. After making the Attack, add your Car's **Armour** as bonus successes.

## STEP TWO: DEFENCE

You are the one about to get hurt, the one who needs to keep moving if you like that pretty face of yours. When attacked, your GM will ask how you would like to react to the threat.

### DEFENCE

**Stat:** (Perseverance+Insight+Finesse+Cunning)/2  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses

No trick, or skill or technique is too dirty if it means you stay alive and if you stop moving otherwise you're as good as dead. If it keeps you alive. This will always apply unless you actively drop your guard or are under external influences, you will always apply your Defence.

When attacked, you may apply your Defence as a **Negative Success Modifier**. With your GM's permission, wearing armour may add **Equipment** as additional penalties.

### DODGE

**Type:** Simple Action  
**Check:** (Perseverance+Insight+Finesse+Cunning)/2  
**Suit:** Clubs  
**Contested by:** Attack(s)  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses

Dodging will take up your **simple action** to purposefully avoid being hurt. You may not undertake another simple action this turn. Add your successes to your Defence until your next turn.

If you are sharing your initiative with an ally, you may also use your dodge action to bolster one person's Defence until your next turn.

### DEFENSIVE DRIVING

**Type:** Reflexive Action  
**Check:** Finesse + Ride  
**Suit:** Clubs  
**Contested by:** Attack(s)  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Pareses, Vehicle Armour

Your driver may attempt to make a **Finesse + Ride** Check to defend the vehicles occupants. This uses the car's speed and body to shield the passengers from harm. After making the Check, you may add your Car's **Armour** as bonus successes.

## STEP THREE: WOUNDS

The blows have been traded, and it's time to see how you have fared. Reduce the attacker's pools by the Defender's Defence. If the Attacker's success pool is not reduced to zero, the defender will suffer wounds.

For each remaining success in the Attacker's success pool, the defender sends cards from the top of their **Deck** into the **Wounds** pile.

If there are insufficient cards in the player's deck, **Recompose** their deck and send the top cards from their deck into the wounds pile. Unless they spend a point of **Perseverance**, they will lose their next simple action.

### HEALTH DAMAGE

If the total of their **Deck** and **Discard** is **less than 4**, you will take **Health Damage**. Shuffle your **Wounds**, **Discard**, **Removed** and **Deck** together and send the top card of the deck to the **Health Damage** Pile.

Depending on the situation, your GM may elect to add a **Condition** into your deck that is suitable to the scene.

When your **Health Damage** *exceeds your Health* of a character, they will either die or undergo **Incoherency**. (See "Incoherency" on page 73).

## CHECKS

It's time to put your Image to good use. At various points in this game, your characters will face difficult tasks that will challenge them, and push them to their limits. At appropriate times, a GM may ask you to make a Check to see if your endeavours are successful. Depending on the scene, some actions may or may not be permitted by your GM. There are three main types of Checks.

### REFLEXIVE CHECKS

These can be completed in under 1 second. These checks usually are done in response to threats and intuitive. You may immediately reshuffle the cards revealed into the deck without taking an additional turn.

### SIMPLE CHECKS

Actions that can be completed in 3 seconds. Like reflexive actions, your character only has time to make a single **Simple Check** per turn.

### TEAMWORK CHECKS

When attempting to assist a friend, describe to your gm how you are helping your companion. You may spend your turn to draw 2 cards from your deck. Your value limit for the cards you reveal will be equal to your ally's **Draw**. Add any successes gained to their success pool.

### EXTENDED CHECKS

Complicated moves that require 10 or more minutes to complete. These Checks may need more than one attempt to resolve. Every point in the appropriate aptitude allows you may make an additional draw.

*For example, a character with Medic 3 can make up to three Intelligence+Medic Checks to treat a single injury on another character.*

## RECOMPOSE

If you find that your deck is exhausted or running low on cards, you may re-compose themselves. This represents your character taking a few moments to breath, regain and face the task at hand with renewed vigour.

When in a **Low Intensity Scene** or **Downtime Scene**, this action can be completed at any time.

However in a **High Intensity Scene**, Choosing when to rest and take a couple moments to think can be a deadly delay, but many humans do not deal well under constant stress and exertion. This will take up your character's action during their turn.

Spend your next **Simple Action** to reshuffle your **Discard pile** into your deck. **Removed cards** may not be reshuffled back into your deck through this action. You may also complete tasks like Perception checks, changing/picking up gear, moving or even reloading weapons.

## STEP ONE: INTENT

Drawing cards from your deck is playing with chance, the situation and your state of mind in the moment. The only thing that matters is what you and your character wants to do. Describe all your character's intents, from success to even self restraint or doubt, so that your GM can accurately assess the situation. The more specific you are, the better the GM can tell your story.

## STEP TWO: MODIFIERS

The GM will declare what **Image** and **Aptitudes** are involved in the Check. The sum of these two stats will determine the maximum number cards you may reveal in a check. This is known as your **Draw**.

According to the situation, the GM may offer **Modifiers** to help or hinder your Check. These modifiers may come in the form of *additional successes* or *adjustments to the number of cards drawn*.

You may also voluntarily reduce your **Draw** up to a minimum of 2 cards.

The GM will also announce the **Success Threshold** for the task. This will be the number to beat. For simple mundane tasks, the recommended threshold is **2 successes**. Each number above 2 indicates an increase in difficulty for the task. (GMs please see "Success thresholds" on page 99.)

## STEP THREE: DRAW

Reveal cards from the top of the deck equal to your declared **Draw**. Sort out the cards by suit. Depending on the Image used in the check, you will be looking for different suits. As a reminder:

**Spades** for **Intent** (Intelligence, Insight)  
**Clubs** for **Feats** (Force, Finesse)  
**Hearts** for **Conduct** (Charm, Cunning)  
**Diamonds** for **Push** (Potential, Perseverance)

## PERSEVERANCE

If you do not have any cards left in your deck, but want to draw more cards, you may spend a point of **Perseverance**. Reshuffle your **Discard** into your deck. Continue the Check as per normal.

## STEP FOUR: COUNTING

Review the cards revealed. *Only cards of the correct suit will contribute to your Successes*. Unless specified, **Aces** have a value of **one**.

When the value of a card is below or equal to the **Draw**, they add their *full value as successes*

When the value of a card is above the **Draw**, they only add *One success*.

## STEP FIVE: CHANGES

By putting your body and minds on the line, you can succeed through sheer willpower and determination. Before the Check is finalized, you may have a chance to change the outcome of their action.

## POTENTIAL

This may only be completed **once** per **Check** when you have a **Diamond** in your hand. Select any card and place it in the **Removed** pile. Treat this card as if it were a suit of your choice for the remainder of this check.

## COMPROMISE

Sometimes you have to burn more than just your options, you have to sacrifice parts of your future as well. In a **High Intensity Scenes**, you may voluntarily shuffle a new Condition or Joker card into your Deck, you will gain additional successes as follows:

**Jokers:** 5 Successes  
**Kings:** 3 Successes  
**Queens:** 2 Successes  
**Jacks:** 1 Success

This can be done up to (**Potential** + **Perseverance**) times per scene and once per individual check. Just remember, your character can only ever have 4 **Kings**, 4 **Queens**, 4 **Jacks**, and 2 **Jokers** at any given time. **Jokers** gained in this fashion are considered Challenges that your character will not be able to remove.

## EXAMPLE

*Marley needs to cause a distraction so that her dad can sneak into the construction site. She spots a lone guard having lunch. The girl approaches the man and quietly reaching out for the radio dangling from his belt.*

To steal the radio without being noticed Marley's player, Jodi, has been asked by her GM to make a **Finesse + Larceny** Check with a **Success Threshold** of 5 (♣) being the desired suit. With Marley's **Finesse** 2 and **Larceny** 2, her **Draw** will be 4 cards. Revealing her 4 cards from the top of her deck, she has the cards 5 (♣), 2 (♣), 2 (♠) and 5 (♦) in front of her.

Only the 2 cards are of the correct suit. Jodi gains 2 Successes from the 2 (♣) since its value is under the **Draw** (4). However, only 1 Success from the 5 (♣), since its value is greater than the **Draw** (4). The total successes at this point in time is a grand total of 3 Successes, 2 shy of the necessary 5. Since she has a (♦) card in her hand, she has two options.

1. Fail the check
2. Spend a point of Potential and remove the 2 (♠) for two additional successes.

## STEP SIX: CALCULATION

Depending on the outcome of your draw, your character may succeed or fail at their task. The GM will resolve the task as appropriate to your success, though the outcome may be altered by any **Conditions** revealed.

## SUCCESS:

If the total successes is *greater than* the **Success Threshold**. Your character succeeds in their task.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS:

If the check succeeds and *all cards drawn are of the same suit*. Your character succeeds wildly in their task. This can push your character towards their goals by leaps and bounds.

## GRAVE FAILURE:

If 3 or more cards are revealed of the *same incorrect suit*, the scene takes a turn for the worse. The check fails, causing significant problems in the process.

## STEP SEVEN: RESET

At the end of the Check, assign all cards revealed to their correct piles.

**Numbered, Joker** and **Queen** cards revealed are sent to the **Discard** pile.  
**Jacks** are sent to the **Removed** pile.  
**Kings** are shuffled back into your deck.



# WEAPONS

At times during this game, your characters will face different adversaries. Sometimes it will be necessary to gear up to deal with these enemies. This section will outline basic information about the different properties of weapons.

## PROPERTIES

Every weapon has been designed to suit our various needs throughout human history. To hurt or harm, to protect or hide. The following are specific to weapons.

### MELEE

These weapons were designed to be used at close range. It needs nothing to function other than itself. Weapons with this property are governed by the **Melee Aptitude**.

### RANGED

This weapon was designed to be used at a distance (usually). While you gain the benefits of distance, you have a trade off of needing ammo. Weapons with this property are governed by the **Ranged Aptitude**.

### AUTOMATIC

Some conventional weaponry have the option of firing more than one bullet with the single squeeze of a trigger. By holding down the trigger of a gun, they can continually fire bullets at the target. Though more bullets are fired, it does not improve the marksmanship of the shooter. Rather it expends more bullets and increase the chances of the target being hit. There are two states of automatic gun fire commonly used. **Burst** and **Full Auto**.

#### Burst:

With the burst setting is set on an automatic gun, a single squeeze of the trigger fires a pre-determined amount of bullets.

When making a Burst attack, *spend 3 ammo* and increase your **Draw** by 1.

#### Full Auto:

By squeezing down on the trigger, the gun's internal mechanism keeps the bullets firing. Typically this continues until the trigger is released, or the ammunition is consumed.

When making a Full Auto attack, *spend 14 ammo* and increase your **Draw** by 2.

## RANGE

Each weapon is designed with a specific Range in mind. Going too close or too far, and they will fail to meet their target. If your target is outside of your range, you will not gain any bonus modifiers when using the weapon.

### MELEE

Give or take, this distance is within your character's **Speed**. You are actively moving to hit your target directly or swinging your weapon of choice against their flesh. For some ranged weapons, you may be off treating it as a club if your target gets this close.

### SHORT (1M - 7M)

Not quite melee range, but pretty close to it. This range extends out a few meters (or yards), and is no longer than an average room.

### MEDIUM (7M - 21M)

This range is more along the lines of across a house or possibly 2, but not much further. Targets are still clearly visible to the average person's naked eye at this range.

### LONG (21M - 100M)

At this range, you are approaching the point where targets appear smaller than they actually are. This range extends out several city blocks, though not so far as the naked eye will have trouble seeing.

### EXTREME (100M - 800M)

At this range, it is getting difficult (or impossible) to see your target, let alone actually aim accurately at them without special equipment or powers.

### INDIRECT

This is more of a modifier to the type of range category, than a range category itself. Ranges listed as "indirect" mean that they can be fired (within reason) without direct line of sight for a target. This includes things like throwing grenades over walls, or mortars.

## AMMO CAPACITY

Every weapon has a number of uses, something fuelling their capacity to hurt. Bullets, arrows, even good old knives and axes. If it has the Ranged property, it is bound to have ammo.

Once a gun runs out of ammo, you will need to take a breather and reload your gun. You can spend a turn reloading the gun and as a bonus, you may also take the action to **Recompose** yourself, reshuffling your **Discard** into your **Deck**.

### SINGLE

Bows, crossbows and thrown weapons typically can only be used once, before preparation is necessary to fire again. Single shot weapons, as their name indicates only allow for one shot before needing to be reloaded.

### SMALL

Typically reserved for smaller guns like pistols and revolvers and BB guns.

A small ammo capacity contains *7 shots, or 1 Burst*.

### MEDIUM

Guns such as assault rifles or submachine guns have larger capacities than their smaller companions.

A medium ammo capacity contains *28 shots, or 4 Bursts, or 2 Full Autos* (or combination thereof).

### LARGE

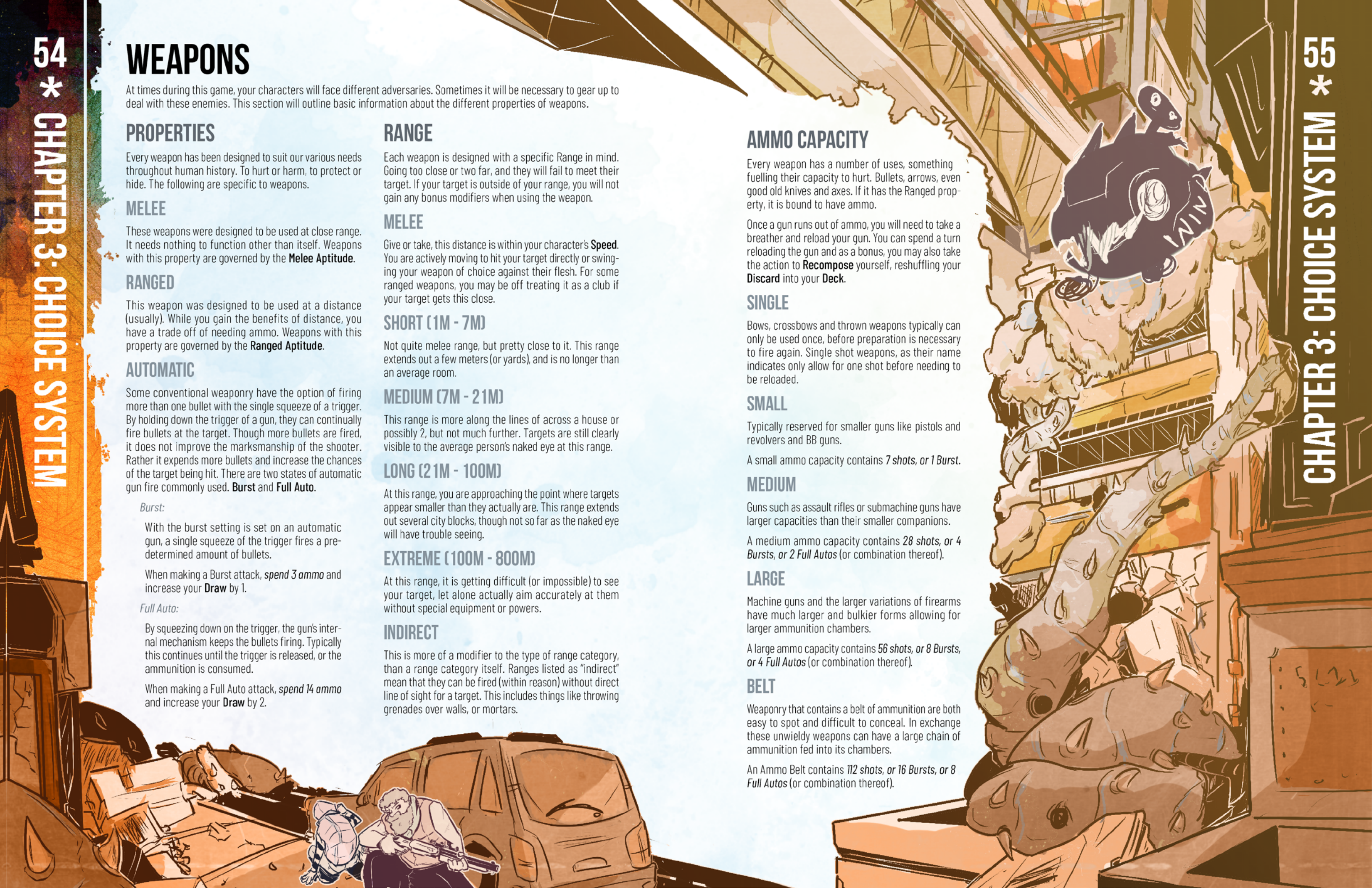
Machine guns and the larger variations of firearms have much larger and bulkier forms allowing for larger ammunition chambers.

A large ammo capacity contains *56 shots, or 8 Bursts, or 4 Full Autos* (or combination thereof).

### BELT

Weaponry that contains a belt of ammunition are both easy to spot and difficult to conceal. In exchange these unwieldy weapons can have a large chain of ammunition fed into its chambers.

An Ammo Belt contains *112 shots, or 16 Bursts, or 8 Full Autos* (or combination thereof).



## PARSE CREATION

When two or more Parselings or Lingua consent to a Parse, they must start it through a physical touch. In that instant, their intentions about Parsing are conveyed into each other's minds. After their intentions coalesce into a single form, the compatriots will utter their words together and pour their power out into the world.

When you first begin Parsing as players, this process can take a while, as it requires discussion as a team. As the campaign progresses, Parsing will become easier and quicker. We recommend to draft up potential Parses before and after sessions, creating a repertoire of ideas that you can use on the fly. Alternatively, GMs might limit the amount of time they allow players to attempt to come up with a Parse.

### STEP 1: CONTACT

Parsing is a **Simple Action** taking only a matter of seconds in game. It will take up the turn of all Parselings involved and in **High Intensity Scenes** can only be completed by people sharing the same **Initiative Group**.

Each characters involved must be willingly touching at least one other member, showing their consent to Parse.

### STEP 2: BRAINSTORMING

Discuss with your team what you want the Parse to do. It can be anything from preparation with mild improvements to yourself or reactionary Parses that cause wild changes in the environment. All you need is an idea of what you want to do.

Amongst the consenting Parselings, decide on the **Aspect** of the Parse. This may be one of the biggest choices you'll make for the Parse. It will determine who will be the core of the Parse, and what it may affect.

Choose **Augments** to determine how the **Aspect** will change or what qualities the Parse may have. Each individual can only contribute one word, unless they have the Erudite Trick (See "Erudite" on page 156).

The selected words will form the intent of the Parse. It will be up to your team how you describe the idea and your GM to interpret what effects they have.

### STEP 3: DEFINITIONS

Once your team has a vague idea of the words used and intent for the Parse, you are ready to describe it to your GM. If at any time a Player disagrees with the outline, return to **Step 2**, or cease your attempts at Parsing. Remember to answer the following questions.

#### THE EFFECTS OF A PARSE

Explain to the GM as a group what your intended effects are. Be specific when describing the Parse. If you leave too much room for interpretation, there may be unintended consequences. Keep in mind that the larger the desired Parse effect, the higher the Parse Level.

#### THE TYPE OF PARSE

**An Emission Parse**, will create the **Aspect** within your surroundings. Generally, it acts as a new force or entity that affects the environment. When using this type of Parse, you will need to draw **Spades**.

**An Embodiment Parse**, will change the **Aspect** within those involved in your characters. It is about changing your body or mind to suit the task at hand. When using this type of Parse, you will need to draw **Clubs**.

**An Enchantment Parse**, will change the **Aspect** within external objects or individuals. It is about changing others to suit your needs. When using this type of Parse, you will need to draw **Hearts**.

#### THE WORDS USED

List out to the GM the **Augments** in the order desired followed by the target **Aspect**. This allows everyone to refer to this phrase, preventing undue confusion. Each Parseling involved must spend a **Syllable** point. At this point, you have committed to completing the Parse.

### STEP 4: PARSE LEVEL

Your GM will review your Parse and offer you several different Parse levels. Some of these may fit your team's intentions perfectly, but carry a lot of risk. Others may only act as stepping stones to success, rather taking slow steps to achieve your goal.

As a group you must commit to a **Parse Level** before continuing with the Parse Check. Weigh up the risks and rewards of different Parses.

Generally, it is strongly recommended to create smaller Parses with controlled and minimal effects over one large Parse which resolves all the issues at hand. The weaker Parses are easier to achieve and less likely to cause catastrophic side effects.

### STEP 5: PARSE CHECK

All participants in the Parse must spend **1 Syllable**. Depending on what type of Word you are applying to the Parse, your role in the check will be different. Treat the total number of cards revealed by all players as the **Draw** for the Parse.

#### CONTRIBUTING ASPECT:

The Parseling contributing the **Aspect** reveals cards equal to relevant **Parsing Aptitude** to the Parse. For each additional word used in the Parse (*Augment or otherwise*), they draw an *additional card*.

As an example, a four word Parse (1 **Aspect** and 3 **Augments**) would allow the Parseling to draw 3 extra cards.

#### CONTRIBUTING AUGMENTS:

Every other Parseling contributing a word as an **Augment** must reveal only 2 cards from their own decks.

### STEP 6: COUNTING

Review the cards revealed. As with regular Checks, only cards of the correct suit will contribute to your Successes. Like with regular checks, unless otherwise specified, **Aces** have a value of one.

When the value of a card is *below or equal* to the **Draw**, they add their full value to the Successes for the Check.

When the value of a card is *above* the **Draw**, they add only a single point to the Successes for the Check.

### STEP 7: RESOLUTION

Once the Check is completed, the GM will resolve the effect of the Parse.

**On Failure:** The Parse, fails and the energy used rebounds on the Parselings. Each individual **Parse Level** has its own failure effects.

**On Grave Failure:** The Parse works, but not in the way you intended it to. The GM will decide on an effect based on the provided words.

**On Success:** The Parse succeeds with the intent declared by the players.

**On Run-On** (*Gaining successes triple the target successes or all cards revealed are of the same suit*): The Parse is automatically upgraded into a **Miraculous** or **Divine** Parse. These Parses not only succeed, but they run rampant, beyond the control of the Parselings that conjured it.

This can cause a severe disturbance in the tentative balance between Parsecyte and host. The players must make a **Perseverance + Articulation Check**. If no **Push** cards are drawn, they will lose 1 **Coherency**.

# BUILDING THE WORLD

*Why should we care?*

Creating a complete and logical universe is more than picking a genre and the natural setting that comes packaged with it. While it can be useful to lean on genre, there are many more things to consider, so that you and the players understand what they're interacting with. The magic of a tabletop game is your imagination - cue sparkling text. So let's get to the nitty gritty.

## GENRE

When is the story set? Where in the world does the story take place in? What kind of people will they encounter? From the collective media and stories we consume on a daily basis, we have come to associate certain themes with settings and genres. They become headers on a blank page, helping identify what this story is for.

- Epic high fantasy set in a post apocalyptic earth ravaged by natural disasters.
- A dark fairytale set in a treacherous society of Victorian era Steampunk London.
- Science fiction set in an advanced and peaceful colony on the moon.

Simply by reading this single line, your players will begin jumping to conclusions from their own experiences. As you share the details of the campaign, you may end up suggesting delightful concepts that become central to the story and the ultimate goal of the party.

## NPCs

Flesh out the immediate cast your players can interact with. Have a collection of NPCs to draw upon during play. Find ways to entwine the history and motivations of your ensemble with those of your players. Your personal characters should fill a specific role, or add depth. They are your tools to drive the story forward. It should go without saying that these important NPCs deserve their own stat sheets and likely their own little pre-set deck of cards.

While you will have your favourite complex characters with detailed backstories and personalities, it is also prudent to have a handful of simple throwaway characters you can draw upon in an unexpected situation. You may find the **Quick NPCs** (see "Quick NPCs" on page 100) useful to meet such needs.

For Parseling and Incoherent NPCs, build their words around the personality or role you created for them. Try to be mindful of how this might affect the parsing the players might be capable of with your NPC in the mix. Avoiding overpowered or bizarre useless words isn't just for players, but you as well. If you're struggling to come up with new words at all for big and small NPCs, try the highly sophisticated method of picking up a book, flipping to a random page and pointing to a spot on the page. Let fate decide and have fun.

## THE PROTAGONISTS

Without any limitations players will create all sorts of weird and wonderful individuals. However, not all of them will fit into the world you have in mind. Giving them as much information about the world as you can and the pitch of the story will allow them to craft their babies into compelling individuals.

Try presenting your table with a blanketing group to identify with, the focus of the story, the would-be protagonists. This will guide what kind of characters are and aren't acceptable, and suggest for players identify roles within the party they could occupy.

- A group of small-time criminals who pull cons on businesses. This time they target the wrong business and uncover a dangerous cult.
- Volunteers at a religious organisation, who know each other through community service. They notice that some of the homeless they have come to know aren't behaving like themselves and strange new graffiti appearing.
- Colleagues working at a large pet shop find themselves at the centre of a siege from a Lingua swarm.
- A bunch of teens with attitude, who have been given their powers by a wise(?) old man. Their job? To defend the town they live in.

## THE ANTAGONISTS

Every story needs an opposition, a reason for conflict to occur. The antagonist doesn't have to be a masked villain or an evil corporation, it can be a simple concept like the impassable mists that surround the city. All it has to be is a force that resists the players as they march towards their goals. Ask yourself: does the challenge present your table with an initial objective or a clear expectation for the scale of the campaign? Does it allow players to flesh out their character's ideals and personalities, and give them something to have a relationship with?

Having said this, at the conception of your campaign, it's okay not to have this all completely figured out. The antagonistic forces of the game will evolve as your table interacts with the world, gaining more and more substance with every session.

## COMMON KNOWLEDGE

How far will your universe deviate from our present reality? Perhaps you only need to make a few subtle tweaks, or set it in the past or near future. Maybe your story is set in a dystopia where individuals exist in cages alone without realising it, and there's no way to distinguish reality from VR. Maybe it's set on Mars where all the Parselings have been exiled and there's a black market for Lingua as the only animal forms for pets. In the end it's all in your hands.

Remember write notes as you plan, for consistency. Maybe make a master document to share with the players for them to use while creating their characters, and to refer to. Having it all in writing also means no one can say they weren't told or make things up. That's your job.

## SOCIETY

Set the rules for societal norms. Your players and NPCs have to exist and role play convincingly in this world, so give them the framework to do so. The devil is in the details.

**What role do Parselings play in this world?** Are they accepted or shunned? Hidden or common knowledge? Carefully regulated or created through accidents? Prized or hated? And all other shades of in between.

**How numerous are the infected in the world?** In general; the greater the number of Parselings living in society, the more chaotic the state of the life in general.

## LOCATION

Work on a good description for the location the story is set in. This includes not only what it looks like, but the smell, sounds and climate. Engage all of the senses. What resources can be found and used? Consider the local politics, communities, current events and pop culture. Who are the relevant public figures?

## TECHNOLOGY

Set some ground rules for what technology is available in your world, and be clear about this with your players from the outset to avoid deus ex machina equipment showing up later. How do the people of this world travel about? What do they eat? How do they communicate? Is crime a serious consideration, and how does it operate? How do most people in this world spend their spare time? What sort of jobs are relevant?

## SESSION BLUEPRINT

*Drafting for the hours ahead*

While the players might have the luxury of jumping into the playground of your campaign and picking up the shiny things that interest them, you as the GM should have some sort of structure in place.

You're the team leader here.

It's what you've been dreaming of since you've decided to become a GM. All of those delicious ideas and stories, people and monsters lurking in that head of yours. You're always ready to tell your story your way. However, you have these things called players that may not react the way you expect. Not everything will go your way, but that's fine right? That's what makes GMing so interesting.

## THE FRAMEWORK

Consider the following when drafting the battle plans for the game ahead.

What is the goal of the session? How do you and the players know the session has been completed, and what should they be able to achieve? Take careful note of how many **Wounds** or **Health damage** they have taken.

What were the players interested in pursuing, and how will you give it to them? What will motivate the players to engage deeper in your story? Assess this for them both as a group and individuals. If you are still struggling for ideas, perhaps look at previously incomplete story lines or player speculation for inspiration.

What are the likely outcomes of this session? Rewards and consequences abound, depending on their choices and the luck of the cards. Let each session push your plot forward.

How long do you expect the session to run? Depending on the number of players, what could have been a simple event can stretch out into hours. As a rule of thumb, with 3-4 characters, any major event will need at least 1 or more hours to complete.

When starting out, keep a folder of simple notes for yourself, in shorthand and dot points you will be able to understand quickly. By keeping it loose and vaguely organized, you should be able to glean information at a glance, as well as be ready re-juggle your ideas at a moment's notice. As you continue to be a GM, you'll find other ways to store and record information to help you run your session.

## NARRATIVE

When getting started with all your players present, consider running through a brief screen-cap of where you last left off. It doesn't always have to be you, the GM, who does this. If the class was paying attention, a volunteer should be able to assist.

### ITS ALL IN THE DETAILS

Break the session down into key scenes. Begin each scene with a general description that everyone gets to know by being present and having a normal level of attention to detail. This is your chance to add a little creative flair and be as immersive as possible in setting the scene. Dot your scene with things begging for interaction, such as a conversation behind a closed door, a mysterious stranger eyeing them from the bar or an unattended backpack at a bus stop. Then allow an initial exploration, invite players to conduct a perception check or take an action.

Be specific about what is apparent to all versus specific players and adjust your guidance to the team dynamic. Sometimes switching between allowing the party to roam free or presenting a choice of actions for specific players can shift the feeling of a scene. Creating a sense of direction or urgency as the players decide what to do.

### AN EVER CHANGING WORLD

Introducing stakes to keep the party engaged. Other than the obvious possible bodily harm or gain of material goods, consider other things the characters will care about - such as gaining a reputation, or mechanical benefits like opportunities to learn specific skills or abilities. As always, you will also need to be mindful of what greater ripple effect certain events might have on things the players will not be aware of. For example, selling an item may allow an unknown NPC to commit a crime, or infecting a public figure to become a Parseling may damage a political campaign. The universe you have created should continue to move outside of what the players see and in itself is a living and growing organism.

As you develop the story try to create various broad pathways for your players to meander down. Offer multiple opportunities to obtain the same information or achieve a single goal. The players should always have a route for progression and advancement. Should you create an inescapable situation, your may players will be trapped and unable to keep momentum in your story. Take the time to be kind, offer hints and suggestions if they get stuck or in deliberation for long periods of time. It is an amazing feeling to see their eyes light up as their brains come up with a brilliant solution. It helps remind you that you are playing with your table and not against them.

## USEFUL TOOLS AND AIDES

Everyone learns and retains information in different ways. When learning in school, we try many different methods of instilling knowledge in our heads. We read books, listen to lectures, complete practical exercise or even use simple jingles to help us retain information. Consider using similar techniques and add new dimensions to your game.

### MUSIC, AMBIANCE AND SOUND EFFECTS

The power of music to manipulate emotions and create a mood is profound. Having music like this at the tips of your fingers can be a great boon for setting the scene without having to utter a single word. The tunes themselves carry some sort of emotional weight that can help carry your vision just that little bit further. We recommend to curate a playlist for:

A session intro and an outro theme, carefully chosen to suit your campaign. Play when players are gathering, and then when wrapping up, to get into the mood. The music change is also often a priceless device to signalling to players to focus.

Different types of scenes e.g. investigation and research, foot chase, car chases, combat, suspense, sadness and loss.

Theme music for certain groups or NPCs, adding to their flavour and identity.

Sound effects, if you're advanced enough to be able to juggle the storytelling, mechanics and technicality of sound effects at the right time. Maybe just a few key ones like creepy whispering, an explosion or traffic sounds.

With consistent and repeated use of your chosen music, you can set up your players to react the way you want. Think of boss battle music in a video game, or the theme song of your favourite TV show. Especially for the duration of the session, try to favour instrumental music with few or no lyrics. Your voice and rest of the players should be the centre of attention, and clear to understand. Clips or songs that can be looped without too much disruption are also preferred.

### PROPS AND PICTURES

Having more than your verbal description to use for items will save you time and assure you everyone has the same vague idea. If you're playing in person, sourcing items to pass around the table will add valuable dimension to the story. Giving the players another element to touch or see, they can come to their own conclusions about a scene.

As the table shares their findings, the discussion can help cement certain notions in their head and gives you additional material to mould into your liking. This might be a little trinket, cardigan you've pulled from your mum's wardrobe, an elaborate puzzle box, postcard, handwritten letter or even a box of slime.

The internet of course is another rich resource useful for online players as well. It's simple enough to find photos or artworks that convey the feeling you wish to share with your players.

### MAPS

This can be as formal as creating your own elaborate map with accurate dimensions and tokens to indicate players or NPCs; or as casual as diagrammatic scribbling on paper or a paint file during the session. Like the props and pictures, it gives the players something tangible to interact with and allows a shared vision between players. Sometimes, even using a picture of a location as a point of reference can be immensely useful. Everyone has to get on the same page somehow.



## FINALIZING THE PARSE

With all the mechanical systems aside, any single Parse can be a complex and difficult thing to determine. Your players will request actions that may contradict the logic of the world. As the GM, you will need to adjust the minor details, until you can satisfy yourself and your team.

### PARSE ASSESSMENT

Think about what the Parse is being used for. Break down and analyse the players request, before making any hasty responses. The Parse itself should not entirely resolve their issues. Rather it is a stepping stone, bringing the group closer to their goal.

See what the players are asking for and what their intentions are. Sometimes the players may be stretching the meaning of words to fit their agenda. If the Parse does not fit their goals, do not be afraid to stop the idea. After all, things in life do not play out so simply.

### PRESENT OPTIONS

Create a scale of effects that can be derived from the Parses. It is important to offer the players the options to go for stronger or weaker Parses. Let them think and weigh up the choices. Do they go for the sure thing, risking the chance that they will overshoot their target? Or do they look for a stronger effect with the potential of failing.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Spend a few moments accessing the effect of the Parse on the story and the world as a whole. The stronger the Parse, the greater the chance that things may not go as smoothly for the players as expected. More often than not, these twists can become the start of a new plot hook or story arc down the road.

Think about the following things when looking at the Parse. Have there been similar Parses in the past? Will allowing the intended effects alter the landscape of your campaign? How will this advance the story you are building as a group? If something seems out of place or not quite right, the Parse may need a little twist, a little bit extra that the players are not expecting. Just enough to change the outcome ever so slightly, but nothing that contradicts their intentions rather something that had lacked the foresight to think about.

A simple unforeseen consequence of a Parse could be something that affects something beyond their target. Introducing small little Challenges into their targets, perhaps they have given birth to a new monster, one with a mind of its own.

### REVIEW

Once the players heard their choices, they will begin to debate and argue amongst themselves. Listen carefully to their conversation, It may provide you insight into their expectations and fears. Every bit of information lets you think and review your ideas.

### EXECUTION

Regardless if the players succeed or fail their attempts on a Parse. Something will happen, for better or worse. After all of this consideration, it's time for the magic to be let loose. Take the time to describe the effects and how it influences the world.

How their words and snake their way into the seams of the world, reworking things into their own reality.

**On Success:** Focus on the things that go right. Reward their hard work with details of what it accomplished. Be sure drop little hints of complications, a taste of the consequences yet to come.

**On a Run-on:** When the Parse works a little too well in run- on Parses, it is a force of nature. Let the players witness as the Parse goes rampant. Small little ripples that grow bigger and bigger until they are tidal waves crashing upon the rocks. The wild and chaotic energies that rush forward without a care. They affect anything and everything that meets its requirements. It pulls the Parselings involved, feeding the Parsecye within.

**On Failure:** The energies accumulated recoil back into the Parselings. Describe the impact on their bodies, as the Parsecye within them twists their words and intentions. As their desires rebound upon their bodies and the world around them. A horrible sensation that leaves the mind cluttered and jarred. At times language can seem indecipherable.

After all is said and done, Parsing relies on your own judgment and how you want to embellish the details. Let your imagination and the words of your players sculpt out the world as you wish.

## CUSTOM ABILITIES

Through your time as a GM, it is inevitable that you will need to create specialized abilities for your players. You will be presented with a wide range of requests. Some will be reasonable. Others will be outrageous. Some of them will seem insignificant on paper. Others will be less than useful. Unlike Parses, which change from use to use, these powers will be used time and time again. Spend time with your players and carefully assess the options you come up with. If need be, search for a third party to mediate this process.

For the abilities generated from the trick trees **Incoherency**, **Expression**, **Projection**, **Parse-Afflicted** and **Amplifier**, treat them as if they were **Moderate** or **Major** Parses. Each of these abilities should be related to one of your character's words as the core of the ability.

### STEP 1: AIM

*What is the purpose of this power?*

The first question that should be asked of your player when beginning the process of power creation. These abilities should be born from the character's mindset and design. Talk to your player about the word or idea placed at the core of this ability. See what options they have considered and why.

With your player come up with a small handful of ideas derived from the initial intent. Look at what would be fun for both player and GM. Find ideas that reflect some aspect of the character's identity. Parts of how they function to exaggerate and make a caricature of. Be it their personality, their role in a group or even the way they act. The powers themselves should not create some new part of the character, rather amplify what was already there.

A Sharp tongued high school Diva with the word Divide could focus on a **Social Divide**. Physically splitting people up and preventing Parses, by categorizing people in some fashion or another.

Or another Idea could be **Divide and Conquer**. Using her ability to learn the secrets and worries of her foes, she could whisper malicious thoughts in their heads. Segregating the group and causing in fighting.

Yet another idea could be, **United We Stand**, Divided we fall. Mustering all of her power, she becomes a radiant figure, one to be adored and obeyed. Those that work with her find themselves reinvigorated by her energies.

### STEP 2: FIT

*How will it affect your story?*

After several ideas, have been developed. Take a step back and consider the impact it could have for your campaign. Will it cause misery and mayhem wherever the ability is used? Can the power be twisted and abused in ways that would be overpowered in comparison to the other players? Does it counteract the ideas and spirit of your campaign?

If any of these questions cause doubts in your mind, it is better to shelve the power and look at other options. Developing a well suited concept will take time and revisions will only help provide a more satisfying outcome.

Keep narrowing down the field of options you and your player would like to use, until there's only a couple left.

### STEP 3: ADAPTATION

*How will it work?*

Once you've brought down the possibilities to a small handful, it's now time to consider how it works mechanically. There are two parts to consider in this step. Translating the desired effects into measurable quantities within the system. Then off setting the benefits with adequate drawbacks.

On the next page are some of the suggested benefits and drawbacks. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is useful to consider. Each of these effects have been given a positive or negative points. When these values add up to zero and simple in world logic has been applied, you should have developed a balanced power.

# EXAMPLE CASE FILES

Accidens Subject Files:  
 PARS0005, PARS10352, PARS  
 May 9th, 0002 AP  
 Dr. Solomon Macquarie

The following notes have been compiled after field reports from various operatives in the field, as well as eye witness accounts. All information have been confirmed by multiple sources. Key information regarding these individuals heavily revolve around the words they have been known at the present time.

As many of the personnel that have encountered groups of infected individuals in the past, one of the most vital pieces is the you'll discover is a Parseling's tattoos. This will help your squad anticipate what potential Parses could be flung towards your team, as well as anticipating of the potential behaviour these individuals may exhibit. They are both their strengths and weaknesses and there are many assumptions we can make on these words alone.

## PARSELING PROTOCOL

To further the organization's goals of containing and maintaining some semblance of order, please use the following case files as an example of what information. Record any details discovered during any encounter, paying specific attention to the following topics:

- Any words the individual may have. Photos are preferred if possible.
- Information about their source of infection.
- Defining moments in the individual's life.
- Known affiliations, age and gender.

Like humans, unless previously trained, in the similar fashion to armed citizens. A potential threat to themselves and others around them, however typical negotiation methods should be effective. In all scenarios, proceed with caution as the situation may rapidly escalate beyond your control.

Avoid lethal force if necessary, as the emergence of an Incoherent is less than idea, but always be sure to note down the words of individuals for future reference. Even if you are unable to utilise the information during the encounter, future agents may rely on this as a matter of life or death.

## PARSELING #00005

Parseling Case file  
 August 9th, 0002 AP  
 Dr. Solomon Macquarie

Name: Allana Milure  
 Age: 34 (Deceased)  
 Sex: F  
 Origin: Coventry, England  
 Affiliation: Fairbrooks Pharmaceutical  
 Known Words: Mark, Organized, Secure, Efficient



## INFECTION:

No clear data has been obtained regarding the infection of Allana Milure. Reports speculate that she was infected via her Company's prototype serum [CTSRTCH#0012] or through interaction of a cat based lingua.

However the appearance of her tattoos in public are noteworthy. It was considered the recorded emergence of a Parseling's tattoo. One of the few videos that were not completely lost amid the sea of images uploaded during the "First Parse" occurred.

## SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

Initially the secretary for the Fairbrooks CEO Johan Alghrest, she assumed control of the Fairbrooks Assets during the quarantine period the absence of said CEO. The quick thinking of Allana and her team has been said to delay/squash some of the most dangerous incoherents that emerged from within the city.

Her assistance was appreciated in procuring research materials from within the city. In exchange for monopoly of any humanitarian aid, she often had her faction leave weakened and wounded lingua for observation at the quarantine border.

## NOTES:

Prior to becoming a Parseling, Allana was often targeted of Corporate Espionage. Perhaps some organizations saw her as an easy target. Declared Missing after the 'Third Parse.' Presumed dead.

Words were noted to be located behind her left ear.

Co-operated amicably with the Accidens Corps and sought to maintain order with in the city walls. Provided many protocols that are still currently used by our organization.

Avoid lethal force if necessary, as the emergence of an Incoherent is less than idea, but always be sure to note down the words of individuals for future reference. Even if you are unable to utilise the information during the encounter, future agents may rely on this as a matter of life or death.

## PARSELING #00052

Parseling Case file  
 August 9th, 0002 AP  
 Dr. Solomon Macquarie

Name: Rudolph. D Clancy  
 Age: 56  
 Sex: M  
 Origin: Kilkenny, Ireland  
 Affiliation: Fairbrooks Pharmaceutical , Accidens Corps  
 Known Words: Limit, Strife, Strong, Crumble, Empty, Explosive Fallible, Flawed, Psychosomatic

## INFECTION:

Fairbrooks Subject: [ A volunteer subject during the quarantine within the walls of Nominal City. Proved as an excellent recovery agent for his employees, often bringing back his quarry dead and missing their words.

Prior to infection, worked at the DMV and had no real significant role. No recorded affiliation with criminal activity or any military training.

## SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

Served as Allana's top operative, Rudolph spent his time within Nominal City tracking down and terminating/retrieving errant products.

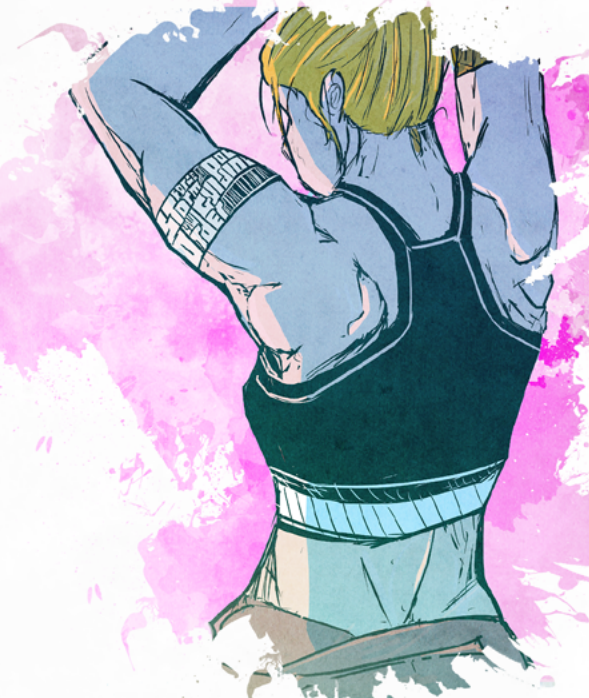
Was often seen by guards stationed at the wall, bringing in weakened/injured Lingua. It was noted that rarely the same men/women accompanied this Parseling.

## NOTES:

Reports indicated that his words appeared as "Hot Pink" letters on his face.

Towards the end of his time with Fairbrooks, very little untouched skin remained. Many of his words seemed contrary to his actual behaviour.

Has a particular attachment to his shotgun.



## PARSELING #00000

Case file  
 August 9th, 0002 AP  
 Dr. Solomon Macquarie

Name: ~~Director Helen Macquarie~~ (redacted)  
 Age: 47  
 Sex: F  
 Origin: Born in Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Affiliation: Accidens Corps  
 Known Words: Storm, Force. Law, Order, Powerful, Guiding.

## INFECTION:

Infected in an experiment as a test subject of her husband, ~~Solomon Macquarie~~. She was repeatedly injected with small quantities of reconstituted Parsecyte material. The process of her infection was reportedly very smooth and required close to no recovery period.

## SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

~~Director Helen Macquarie~~ is the Director of the Accidens Corp, a military body composed of Parseling members that exclusively created to manage the quarantine.

Present at the initial quarantine of Nominal city, taking command as during the Events of the "Second" Parse. Reports from her team suggest that she played a vital role in suppressing the escaping Incoherents.

The subject played a vital role in shaping Accidens corps to being one of the primary forces in charge of Parselings community.

## NOTES:

~~Director Helen Macquarie~~ is reputed to be a force to be reckoned with. Proficient at Glima and Judo martial arts.

\*\*Remaining notes are Classified\*\*

# INCOHERENTS CASE FILES

Accidens Subject Files: INK008, INK20104, INK20354  
May 9th, 0002 AP  
Dr. Solomon Macquarie

The following notes have been compiled after field reports from various operatives in the field, as well as eye witness accounts. All information have been confirmed by multiple sources, extraneous rumours and unconfirmed information has been omitted to avoid incorrect assumptions about these creatures. As with all Parselings, tattoos serve as the best form of identification for the subjects, as other features can be altered through the use of Parses. All units completing reports are to conform to these Examples.

## INCOHERENT #00008

Parseling Case file  
August 9th, 0002 AP  
Dr. Solomon Macquarie

**Name:** Caleb Stamos [Panic]  
**Age:** 24  
**Sex:** Male  
**Origin:** Born in Nominal City, ██████  
**Words:** Panic, Prayer, Pandemonium

### INFECTION:

Unknown Source.

Caleb was a Parseling prior to the First Parse, one of many citizens that were infected within Nominal City. Reports from Allana Milure indicate that this youth suffered a heart attack while on a subway, resulting in his death. His rebirth caused widespread panic on the train, resulting in the formation of a mob.

### SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

Was a IT tech support for a small local company.

Subsequent activities of Caleb Stamos is unknown. He has been assumed to have been killed during the events of the quarantine, due to the natural discomfort an Incoherent cause to Parselings.

### NOTES:

Eyewitness accounts described him having two toned skin, one half of his face appearing Anaemic and frozen, the other half emitting a golden hue.

Skin to skin contact with subject is likely to induce panic and loss of rationality. However under certain conditions, his presence seems to induce a calming and sedating effects for individuals. This may be an effective feeding tactic for this incoherent, creating a feeding loop.

It is unfortunate that his body was never recovered.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES:

- Avoid skin to skin contact with subject
- Steer subject away from large crowds



## INCOHERENT #02104

Parseling Case file  
August 9th, 0002 AP  
Dr. Solomon Macquarie

**Name:** Songbird [Voice]  
**Age:** ??  
**Sex:** Agender  
**Origin:** ???  
**Words:** Voice (other words have been surgically removed)

### INFECTION:

Unknown, Incoherent was recovered from a Parseling smuggling ring in ██████ run by ██████. It is to be reported that the subject had been operated on multiple times. Surgical removal of several patches of skin and larynx have been observed. It was uncertain if this was completed pre or post incoherency.

### SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

Suspected to have been utilized previously used by ██████ Movement Radicals as a Parse deterrent. No other known reported activities.

### NOTES:

Songbird is incapable of speech and remembering their own voice. This individual uses the mouths and voices of others to talk. Verbal communication not to be relied upon in the presence of Songbird.

Currently placed in isolation in ██████ 3027 by request of Dr Macquarie for [Project Birdcage].

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES:

- Avoid speaking in presence of Song Bird. Written/visual confirmation of orders strongly recommended.
- Avoid using Parseling Agents when managing subject. Parses may be adversely affected

## INCOHERENT #02354

Parseling Case file  
August 9th, 0002 AP  
Dr. Solomon Macquarie

**Name:** Tomiko Kei [Lucky]  
**Age:** 37  
**Sex:** M  
**Origin:** Born in Osaka, Japan  
**Words:** Lucky, Tip, Atmospheric, Slick

### INFECTION:

From investigation of the Fairbrooks Files, it is noted that [CTSRCH#0021] was administered to Kei. However, no other records of activity with in the Fairbrooks Corporation exists

### SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES:

During his time in Nominal City, he was considered the head of the organization known as Folk Law' a Gang of Parselings who attempted numerous times to escort individuals out of the quarantine zone.

From the investigations completed by Accidens Corps, it is suspected that his faction masterminded the breach at Liminal Bay.

### NOTES:

It is unknown when Kei became an Incoherent, but the most likely time frame is suspected to be during the Liminal Bay Breakout incident.

Coming into physical contact with Tomiko Kei's skin directly is ill advised. It is theorized that is this Incoherent's preferred method of feeding. His victims have been noted to suffer bouts of paranoia and anxiety.

No reliable confirmation of Kei's death, however there are no this Incoherent post Nominal City. It is suspected that he was killed during the events of the Third Parse.

### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES:

- Personal with any faith in fate or luck should avoid this Incoherent.
- As with many Incoherents, avoid physical contact with target if encountered.





## LINGUA

*Accidens Corps Briefing Notes; Lingua  
August 9th, 0001 AP  
Professor Adrian Myrrh*

A Lingua is a unique creature formed from an animal host infected with a Parsecye. In addition to different species of animals giving form to distinct types of Lingua, there are also variations within the same groups of species. As a rule, the general characteristics of the animals are further exaggerated, often in strange ways.

In contrast to Parselings who have multiple words, they have far fewer, and gain them very slowly. It is common for Lingua to have a single core word, and usually no more than three as an exception. In a limited fashion, Lingua are capable of parsing with other Infected.

### FORM ORIGINS

The shape of the Lingua will generally resemble the animal it once was. A dog Lingua will retain most canine features such as walking on four legs, fur, a tail etc. A bird Lingua will have wings, feathers and be able to fly. The differences arise from their words, and the experience it holds as an Infected creature. The word for each animal is more often but not always the same as for another in the same species. For example there have been dog Lingua specimens that have had the words "love", or "bark" or "hungry". The "love" dog Lingua had a fluffier coat of fur, which was notably pink and naturally grew a darker patch in a love heart shape on their lower backs. The "bark" dog Lingua had a thick bark-like skin underneath, and the "hungry" dog was emaciated with noticeably sharp teeth.

### LINGUA DEVELOPMENT

Though the original core word will initially dictate their physicality, the diet of the Lingua will begin to influence their development. Lingua, like Incoherents, must consume objects, emotions or experiences related to their core identity (including cannibalizing creatures of the same species). However, as they continue to feed, they will slowly become more and more complex.

They will begin to exhibit qualities related to the other interpretations of their food. The Lingua will also eventually show a greater capacity for reason and understanding. The strength and intricacy of parsing ability will steadily increase, and new words may emerge.

Usually the most obvious indication of this growing intelligence and power, is their size typically exceeding what is naturally expected of the emulated species. In some cases, there have been Lingua grown to the size of a school bus or train. It is unclear how substantial Lingua have the potential to grow to. We have defined the evolution of Lingua into three categories - **Minor**, **Major** and **Divine**.

## LINGUA CATEGORIZATION

*Accidens Corps Briefing Notes; Lingua  
August 9th, 0001 AP  
Dr Solomon Macquarie*

### MINOR LINGUA

*Initial state of infection.*

- Represents the majority of the Lingua. Size may be smaller than the original host to grow up to 2x larger.
- Typically minimal deviations from the norm, few mutations, closely resembles the original animal host.
- Dominated by the need to consume and grow. They could potentially be unstable and break down into smaller parts to become of miniature versions of themselves or even swarms of Parsecyes.
- If the fragments are too small, they may even devolve into a swarm of Parsecyes, complex or otherwise.

### MAJOR LINGUA

*Secondary advanced stage of infection.*

- Represents 5-15% of Lingua populations in different areas. Size ranges from 2-4x the size of the original animal host.
- Their forms very obviously deviated from the original infected animal with many mutations, though they remain recognizable.
- These creatures can develop abilities to rival most Incoherents and powerful Parselings.
- Capable of intelligent thought and communication, and may form social connections with other Lingua. They have been known to be able to demonstrate restraint in feeding.

### DIVINE LINGUA

*Theoretical stage of infection.*

- Stories have been told over the world of legends and myths of great beasts that wandered the land. Perhaps the Parsecye is not a new phenomena to this world.
- Interestingly, many creatures in stories often resemble animals we are aware of, with some notable mutations. They are however, notably gargantuan in size, able to occupy the space of mountains or large ships.
- If lingua are able to reach these sizes, they are expected to have unimaginable power, and are closer to forces of nature. Their hunger is a concerning variable. Will it grow proportional to its size?



# PARSELING TRICKS

## CHROMASTAINED

**Points:** (2) (or 6 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** nil  
**Requirement(s):** Nil

The ink that runs through your veins isn't black, like all the other Parselings. Research seems to indicate the presence of impurities within your blood. It's an irregularity to say the least, and your capabilities seem to be a little bit different from your peers.

Parselings afflicted with Chroma Stained have altered **Parse Aptitudes**. Increase one Parse aptitude of your choice by one Point. Decrease a different Parse aptitude of your choice by one.

## EQUILIBRIUM

**Points:** (3) (or 12 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** Character Creation only

While Parsing your Parsecyte seems to play well with others. It becomes a pliable bridge able to distribute the tasks burden between participants

When Parsing and contributing the Aspect of a Parse, you may use this trick. You may redistribute the number of cards revealed by the other Parselings. For example, one member may an additional card and in response, another members draw one card less.

*The total number of cards drawn by the group does not change and each Parseling must draw at least 1 card.*

## ERUDITE

**Points:** (3/4) (or 12/+8 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** Articulation 2/5 respectively

Understanding one's self is the most important thing a Parseling can achieve. By working in tandem with their Parsecyte and their partners, some individuals are able to tap into far more powerful Parses.

**At Point 3:** You gain the ability to add an additional Augment when Parsing.

**At Point 4:** the same as Point 3, however you may add a total of two additional Augments when Parsing.

*When using this trick, you will still need at least two Parselings to trigger the Parse.*

## FORTRESS OF THE MIND

**Points:** (4) (or 20 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** Perseverance 3

You've always been good at staying true to yourself, resisting the whims of your peers and friends. This trait has helped you deal with the constant tugging of the Parsecyte at the corners of your mind.

When asked to make a **Coherency Check** to retain your **Coherency**, reveal **one additional Card**.

## FOCI

**Points:** (2) (or 6 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** Nil

You're somewhat of an aberration, an oddity. For some reason or another, your Parse core has the same word printed onto your skin twice. As you Parse with these words, instead of the singular word being filled with light, both copies of the word Illuminate. The scholars and researchers are puzzled by this and have yet to come up with a valid explanation of this phenomena.

Select **One Word** for this trick to apply to. When using the specified word to Parse, **Ace cards** may be treated as if they have the value of another card that you have drawn.

*This Trick must be re-purchased for each individual word and it will take up an additional word slot.*

## ILLEGIBLE

**Points:** (1/ 2) (or 2/+4 Total Script)  
**Check:** Insight + Perception  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** GM approval

The words on your skin are not as clear or legible as most of your kind, rather they look rather mundane and different. They may appear as badly drawn illustrations, a doctor's scrawl or have unfortunately taken to a faded pigment that seems to blend with your skin. While this may not earn the love and trust of your peers, it does help you blend in to mundane society.

**Point 1:** When others attempt to read your words they need to make a **Insight + Perception check** with a Success threshold of 7. Reduce the number of **successes** equal to points in **Illegible**.

**Point 2:** Select a word, when any attempts to determine the nature of your Parse are made using that word, reduce the number of cards drawn equal to your points in **Illegible**.

## INTERPRETATIONS

**Points:** (2/4) (or 6/+14 Total Script)  
**Check:** Nil  
**Cost:** Nil  
**Requirement(s):** Nil

Researchers and scholars alike have always said the words granted to a Parseling have always been from the depths of those individuals. That the words brought to the surface by the Parsecyte are simply those that resonate strongest within the creature. With meditation or heightened emotions, one should theoretically be able to tap into the possibilities within the creature.

At the start of the scene, you may use this trick.

**Point 2:** You may use a random word from your potential **Augments**. Roll 1d20. Treat it as if it were a word you own.

**Point 4:** You may use a random word from your potential **Aspects**. Roll 1d10. Treat it as if it were a word you own.

## LENS

**Points:** (1/ 2) (or 2/+4 Total Script)  
**Check:** Insight+Perception  
**Cost:** 1 Syllable  
**Requirement(s):** GM approval

*An honest man sees the world honestly.*

This phrase holds a double meaning for Parseling. By focusing on their words, they can view the world through that lens. This Lens will highlight their word in the world around them. A **FLAWED** Parseling will see the cracks and problems of things around them. A **MEASURED** Parseling may see physics in the world around them, the velocity of things in motion, dimensions.

Dedicate one **Word** to this Trick, this word cannot be changed at a later date. Lens grants your character a unique way of seeing the world. How it manifests is dependent on the word chosen. Typically it will revolve in how the chosen **Word** interacts with the world. Discuss with your GM on how this manifests as a vision.

To trigger this trick, spend one **Syllable**, and make an **Insight + Perception Check**. The minimum **Success Threshold** is 2.

**Point 1:** The Lens only applies for one check.

**Point 2:** The Lens will last for the remainder of the scene.

*For example, a Parseling who dedicates the word Liar to this trick may be able to pick out liars just by looking over the crowd. Or a Parseling with the word Measured, may be able to see the measurements of everything in their surroundings without any additional aids.*



# CONDUCT CHECKS

## ACTING/PREFORMING

**Type:** Simple  
**Check:** Charm + Acting  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Insight + Empathy or Cunning + Empathy  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

A performance is like slipping on a suit masquerading as something you are not. It can be used to entertain and beguile, or it can be used to win over the hearts of others. How it is used is up to you, it could relate to singing, playing music or even telling a story.

When using this check, it can be contested or understood with a **Insight + Empathy** or a **Cunning+Empathy** check. In the case of a tie, the individual conducting the initial **Acting** check will be treated as if they had garnered more successes over all.

## ANIMAL HANDLING

**Type:** Simple  
**Check:** Charm + Animal  
**Suit:** Diamonds Hearts Spades  
**Contested by:** Perseverance + Cunning  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

Animals are intelligent creatures and as such can be reasoned with to a degree. Its all about earning their trust and To lull them into a sense of security.

You may use this check when attempting to calm down aggressive or unsettled animals. It will be contested by their **Perseverance + Cunning** check.

## BLACK MARKET ACQUISITIONS

**Type:** Extended  
**Check:** Cunning + Rumours  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning + Stealth.  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Parses, Political Climate, Social Standing

Laws and regulations exist to keep the general population safe, to prevent means for violence or self harm. However, just because it is illegal, doesn't mean it is impossible. Ask around enough, and you'll find someone who knows a guy who has a cousin who can sell you what you need for the right price.

Used when looking for illicit goods. A successful Check may yield a location, seller or even a source to satisfy your needs. This represents hours of research and reaching out through your contacts. Depending on what you are searching for, your GM will set an appropriate success threshold.

## BLENDING IN

**Type:** Simple  
**Check:** Charm + Etiquette  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Nil  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

Monkey see, monkey do. Most people feel the need to blend in, to be apart of something greater. They do anything to fit in, laugh at jokes they don't find funny, dress to keep up with the latest fashions, imitate others just to not feel left out. In the end, becoming a part of the crowd is simply a survival strategy and a way of making new friends.

When attempting to blend into the ground, make impressions or find friends among strangers, you may use this check. It can also serve as a method of gaining information about different social groups, in the way they act, dress and even their general opinion on different topics.

## BEGUILEMENT/SEDUCTION

**Type:** Extended  
**Check:** Charm + Manipulation  
**Suit:** Diamonds Hearts Spades  
**Contested by:** Perseverance + Manipulation  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

People want to feel loved, to feel wanted and needed. You can give them that all it takes is a simple smile or touch at the right moment, feeding them all the promises they want to hear. They'll come to trust you and in turn listen to your own desires.

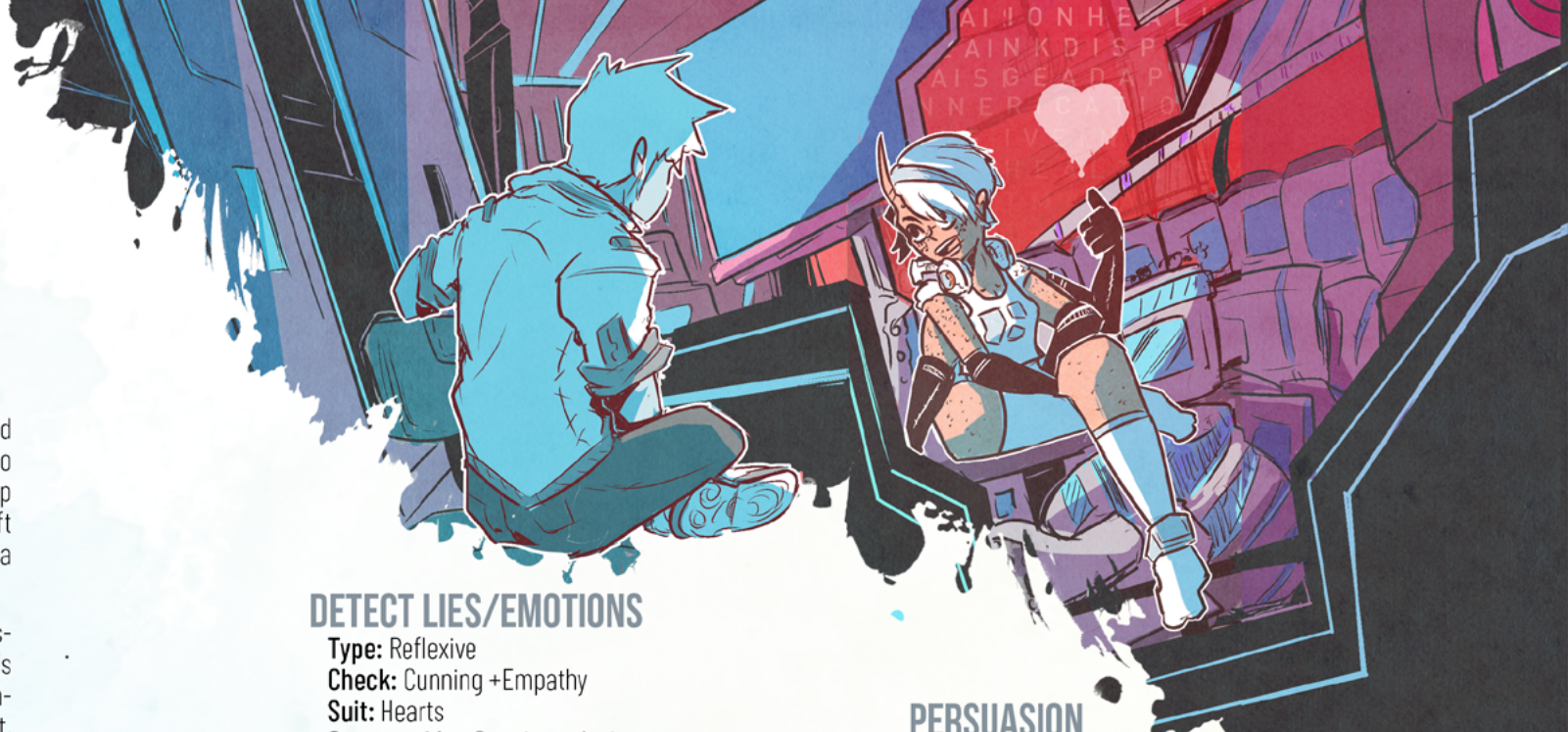
When attempting to win over another person's trust (or lust) you may use this check. Your target may contest your intentions with a **Cunning+Manipulation** or **Perseverance+Manipulation** Check.

## COMFORT

**Type:** Reflexive  
**Check:** Charm +Empathy  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning + Acting  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

Though we may not always do so, we have the ability to share our grief and lessen the pain of others. We find comfort in each other's touch, words and even presence as we share our burden with those that do care. It is simply easier to know that other people understand and that you are not alone in this world.

When attempting to de-escalate a situation or to console another person, you may make this check. The Gm may contest your check with a **Perseverance** check.



## DETECT LIES/EMOTIONS

**Type:** Reflexive  
**Check:** Cunning +Empathy  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning + Acting  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

There's always a tell when someone lies to you, the aversion of your eyes, that nervous laugh, a smile that's just a little too forced. All you need to do is watch for those signs and you'll find out what they're hiding, eventually.

When you wish to read someone's *emotions*, you may ask to make this check. If your opponent may contest with **Cunning + Acting** check. On a tie, you will be unable to determine their feelings.

When you suspect someone of *lying*, remember to ask your gm to make this check. If your opponent's **Cunning + Manipulation** check is lower, you will be able to tell gain some insight into their true intentions.

## LYING, HIDING EMOTIONS

**Type:** Simple  
**Check:** Cunning + Acting  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning +Empathy  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

To some lying is as easy or as important as breathing, but there are many different reasons why we choose to deceive people. We lie to protect others, we lie to safeguard our own interests, we sometimes lie for our own entertainment. In the end, we conceal the truth because we feel in the moment it is the right thing to do.

When attempting to conceal information or the truth, you may use this check. Others will be contest this check with **Cunning+Empathy** check of their own. In the case of a tie, the individual conducting the initial **Acting** check will be treated as if they had garnered more successes over all.

Depending on the situation, your GM may ask you to use other **Aptitudes** to have your character develop plausible lies. As an example, when attempting to hide digital data from prying eyes, you may need the help of **Technology** or **Larceny** instead of **Acting**.

## PERSUASION

**Type:** Simple  
**Check:** Cunning + Manipulation  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning+manipulation or Perseverance+Manipulation  
**Modifiers:** Distractions, Equipment, Parses,

Persuasion is the art of manipulating others into accepting your way of seeing things. Ideally every conflict can be sorted out with diplomacy, converting others to your line of thought through words and actions. There are many ways of handling people, through providing sound irrefutable arguments, coming to a compromise or even fast talking and throwing ideas out until you find one that sticks. Everyone wants something, you just need to find out how to use that to your advantage.

When attempting to convince someone of your point of view, you can employ this check. Your target may contest your intentions with a **Cunning+Manipulation** or **Perseverance+Manipulation** Check.

## RUMORMONGERING

**Type:** Extended  
**Check:** Cunning + Rumours  
**Suit:** Hearts  
**Contested by:** Cunning + Rumours  
**Modifiers:** Equipment, Parses, Political Climate, Social Standing

Rumours can be used in the control and manipulation of information. It takes time to reach the right ears or find the right mouths, but it can be far more potent than staring at a book for hours on end.

For every **2 successes** in this check, you may ask the GM 1 question about the general beliefs of a specific social group in your vicinity.

For every **3 successes** in this check, you may spread one piece of information among a specific social group. The easier it is to believe, the further it will spread.

# CONDUCT CONDITIONS

## DEBTS (MAJOR)

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** King (Queen)  
**Causes:** Needing money  
**Resolution:** Paying off the debt.

There's a number of common reasons why you could be in debt; hospital bills, house mortgages or even bailing out friends. Then there's other reasons like gambling, cons and fuelling addictions. Either way, your character has borrowed an impossible amount of money from others, and their debts have grown to the point of being a major problem.

When this **Condition** is in your **Deck**, your gm has the option of replacing one of your character's **Goals**, with a 'request' from the people you own. Consider these requests as "forceful suggestions". Or they may just try and take out your knees.

To resolve this Condition, your character needs to pay off the debts that they owe or find a way to balance the scales with their creditors.

## SEVERE DISFIGUREMENT

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Curse (King)  
**Causes:** Accidents, Fights, Parses  
**Resolution:** Surgery, Disguises, Parses

Scars and deformities tend to draw unwanted attention. Everyone's eyes are drawn to the imperfections with a morbid sense of curiosity. Judgments begin to form in their mind as they wonder what happened.

When this Condition is in your **Deck**, any **Conduct** checks have a -1 **Draw** penalty.

To resolve this Condition, your character will need to find a way to mask the disfigurement or preferably a way to fix it permanently.

## UNREQUITED LOVE

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Curse (King)  
**Causes:** Infatuations, Lust, Love  
**Resolution:** Emotional Maturity

Love is blind. The first thing you think of when you wake up and the last thing you wish for before you sleep. Their presence is all consuming and you simply can't get it out of your mind.

When this **Condition** is in your **Deck**, your attention wanes and any **Extended checks** have their **Draw** reduced by 1.

To resolve this **Condition**, your character must find some sort of closure for their feelings.

## STOLEN IDENTITY

**Suit:** Spades  
**Severity:** Malady (Queen)  
**Causes:** People, Fame, Data theft  
**Resolution:** Finding the culprit.

Someone has stolen your identity, and they've been less than scrupulous with it. Leaving a trail of disaster in their wake, they've broken laws, crossed the wrong kind people and unfortunately you're left with dealing with their karma.

When this **Condition** is in your **Deck**, other npcs may mistake you for the impostor leaving you to right any grievances they have.

To resolve this **Condition**, your character must find a solution to deal with their doppelgänger.

## UNWANTED ATTENTION

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Malady (Queen)  
**Causes:** Breaking the law, Causing unrest, crossing powerful people.  
**Resolution:** Time

So you've been caught in an awkward situation, be it from being shamed for eating food that wasn't yours, to offending the wrong person, or even breaking the laws. Your face is out there and people are noticing you possibly for the first time in your life, but not in a good way.

When this **Condition** is drawn, any **Acting**, **Manipulation** or **Rumour** Checks will have their **Success threshold** increased by two. To resolve this Condition, your character needs to lie low, or clear their name.

## WAVERING FEALTY/FAITH

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Malady (Queen)  
**Causes:** People, Organizations, Religion  
**Resolution:** Personal resolution.

Loyalty can be earned through favours, impressive displays or even debts that can never be repaid. For better or worse, your character has a strong sense of devotion and/or honour and has found themselves swearing their service to another. Now, they've requested help, which has put them in a tight spot.

When this **Condition** is drawn, your character's conscience tugs at them, forcing them to act in their benefactor's interests. To resolve this **Condition**, your character must find the strength to admitting enough is enough and abandoning their loyalties.

## BAD ODOUR

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Annoyance (Jack),  
**Causes:** Poor Hygiene, Body odour, "Accidents"  
**Resolution:** Hygiene

Bad odour is a natural part of life, its derived from many different factors, gender, age, diet, medication, health, hygiene and unhappy accidents. The problem is, that some times it isn't a nice smell, sometimes it can cause preconceived judgment about a person as a whole.

When this **Condition** is drawn, send it to the **Removed** pile. To resolve this Condition, your character needs to engage in personal hygiene or find a way to mask the smell. Perhaps some good deodorant.

## STARTLED

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Annoyance (Jack),  
**Causes:** Unexpected surprises" or News  
**Resolution:** Hygiene

The rug has been pulled from underneath you feet as someone comes bearing bad news. It could be a pet has died, or that someone has betrayed your trust, regardless it has shaken your character to their core. Their mind is covered by a haze, as their words come slower and their mind's gears try to start up again.

When this **Condition** is drawn, send it to the **Removed** pile. To resolve this Condition, your character needs to spend some time to process the facts that have come to light, typically in **Low Intensity** or **Downtime**.

## STARSTRUCK/INFATUATION

**Suit:** Hearts  
**Severity:** Annoyance (Jack),  
**Causes:** Admiration  
**Resolution:**

The love of your life has graced your presence, be it that gorgeous person you've had a crush on since you were 9 or the latest gizmos and gadgets. Its just distracting enough to take your mind off the job, and it might be just enough to get you killed.

When this **Condition** is drawn, send it to the **Removed** pile. To resolve this **Condition**, your character must confront the source of their Infatuation.



## NOMINAL CITY

Nominal city is a metropolis supported by shipping, tourism, and a strong financial sector. Most of the peninsula has been overtaken by ever expanding blocks of skyscrapers. Shoreline fishing districts still exist, although they are fighting tooth and nail to prevent redevelopment of their territories. About 1/3-1/2 of the land mass is deemed too difficult to build upon due to the mountains and forests that have stood there for many generations.

In many ways Nominal City is a quintessential metropolis which shares much of the complexity and problems we associate with urban living everywhere: dwindling or polluting industry, overcrowding, poverty stricken neighborhoods and restrictive zoning, and somehow feeling alienated among thousands to millions of other people. Because of that this adventure can easily take place in a number of real life cities you may be familiar with: New York, Los Angeles, London, Stockholm, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Lagos, Sydney, Moscow, and Istanbul are just a few examples.

Parselings is meant to be an alternate version of our own world, so if any particular city interests you or may feel engagingly close to home, feel free to make some changes and set it there. Otherwise, there are a few themes to touch on when describing Nominal City that will impart its intended gravitas.

### CONFUSION

*Who's driving the bus?*

Nobody knows exactly where the city or the world is going, and most people are keeping their heads down until it gets there. There could be a sense of impending change hanging over the city as the weirdness of the last several months mounts towards a crescendo, or perhaps all the uncertainty and complexity of the community has created a false sense of stasis which leaves the characters woefully unprepared for the coming calamity.

Whatever the case it seems hard for the characters to find meaningful direction lately, and perhaps truths taken for granted no longer mean as much as they used to.

### DEGRADATION

*How did the wonder disappear?*

Nominal City is about to get into deep trouble, but it's been far from a paradise for a long time. Players ought to feel that they're living in a place which has seen better days and is only aging worse every day.

There can still be beautiful places and culture, of course, but perhaps it simply isn't the same as when the characters were a little younger, they've become distorted.

As you might have guessed the intended tone to Nominal City is dreary and potentially downright oppressive, and harping on the above themes in your descriptions ought to bring that across. If you feel, however, that the depressed tone of the backdrop to your version of the adventure will hinder the fun, feel free to lighten up the conditions or insert more comedic elements as you need.

### LONELINESS

*Where did everyone go?*

If they aren't careful, the characters could become lost in the faceless crowd. Despite so many people, the characters may nevertheless feel alienated or out of place. Everyone else seems just as lonely, and friends are a rare reprieve few can afford.

Taking solace in others and seeking companionship is as necessary to stay sane as ever, but it seems hard to find the right people. Those relationships the characters do have ought to be cherished, and new acquaintances shouldn't be turned away lightly.

### WASTE

*What's it all for?*

Whether it's product packaging or people with no direction in life, the rubbish is piling up. The less glamorous byproducts of modern materialism seem more noticeable than ever, or maybe the recent removal of rose tinted glasses have made the players more aware.

Most of the energy in the city goes supporting the ventures of the major corporations who hold sway there, and it seems like the players are seeing very little of the benefits as all their work seems to feed elsewhere or directly into the pockets of a privileged few.

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS

*Shadows on the Streets*

Weird things have been happening across the city, as the Parsecytes have begun to creep into the streets. Deviations from the norm, these rumors may have reached the ears of your players. Some players may know all of these tales, others may only know a few. Its up to you how much you wish to divulge.

### COLORED BLOOD

*Keywords: Blood, Internet, Rumors*

*For the last month or so, some reports of people with atypically colored blood have been popping up on social media, though any footage of said blood has yet to come forward.*

### FASHION TREND: TATTOOS?

*Keywords: Fashion, Internet,*

*Recently there has been an abnormal surge in the popularity of tattoos, with people of all ages emerging with new and colorful art on their skin. While many of them appear to be tourists with no understanding of the words they've requested, the local ink district seems emptier than ever. Shop owners have been reporting that they've been having trouble sourcing supplies for their art.*

### INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

*Keywords: Cold & Flu, Sickness*

*Over the last few months, there has been a sudden wave of severe and terrible flu spreading across the city. The local pathology labs have been outsourcing all of their testing to the Fairbrooks Pharmaceutical. Rumors say that the labs have been pressured into relinquishing their samples to avoid government scandal over a faulty batch of flu shots this year.*

### MISSING PETS

*Keywords: Fliers, Pets, Rumors*

*All over the city missing cat posters have been plastered on every wall and post. Pet owners have noted that many outside cats have gone missing. Is the Food District to blame? Find out more as we investigate the scene.*

### SHIFTING MURALS

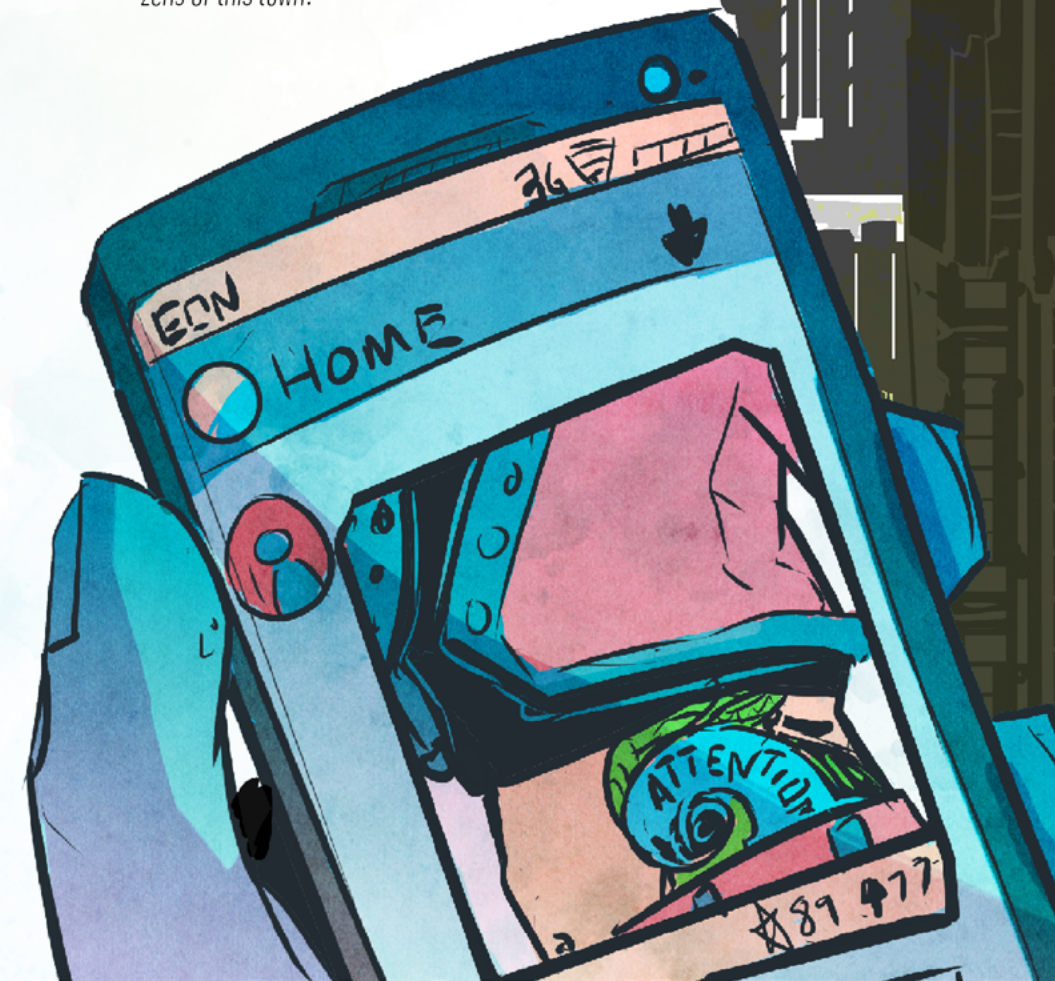
*Keywords: Art, Rumors, Wonders*

*Beautiful and evocative murals fill the back alleys, cul de sacs and the hidden places among the city. To the untrained eye, it always seems as if they have been freshly painted. Each of these pieces are filled with different colours, shapes and emotions. However there is one distinct and shared motif: the presence of Seven individuals.*

### TRUANCY TROLLS

*Keywords: Danger, Hoodlums*

*Have you ever been walking home at night, or down those shortcuts that used to be just yours and feeling just a little bit unsettled? Schools and boarding schools have noted an increase in frequency in delinquency and teens breaking curfew. It may be good for the local club owners, but what about the rest of the good citizens of this town?*



# THE PASSENGERS

*What Kind of Characters Fit this Scenario?*

A Parseling is any previously ordinary person who has been infected by a Parsecyte, and at this stage of the story nobody really knows what a "Parseling" is. In general, you will want to advise your players to create somewhat everyday people who have no foreknowledge of Parsing or their own hidden powers. The most they know coming in is that they have strange words tattooed on their skin. Characters can and ought to be as unique as any given human tends to be, perhaps even closely based on the real players themselves, but this module works best as a story of seemingly normal people discovering their latent abilities in an emergency.

## CHARACTERS SHEETS

With this book, you should have received some pre-generated generic character sheets. Have the players randomly select their words by rolling **1d10 (for Aspects)** and **3d20 (for Augments)**. These individuals are created using stereotypes of different trades that can be found within our society and designed for your players to project personalities upon.

If your players have already generated their own characters in accordance to the Character Creation guidelines in the Core rulebook, they may also use their own characters as desired.

In addition to this, there are two additional NPC character sheets **Allana Milure** and **Caleb Stamos**. Individuals that you will control during the session, that may hinder or help your players during the story.

## DEFINING YOUR GROUP

One question to prepare for is why the PCs should work together in this situation rather than fend for themselves. They may all simply be strangers who happen to be on the same train car, and it will suffice that the players will ensure their characters meet one another in the moment.

However it may be smoother to arrange with your players before game play begins proper exactly what relationships their characters have to one another and why they're together on the same train car. That way everyone's characters are already acquainted and their role-play benefits from having existing pretenses to trust one another. Your group should feel free to come up with whatever relationships and reasons are most interesting or helpful to them, but here are a few suggestions you may give your players as to why they are in this situation:

## ART LOVERS:

*Goal: See a Mural*

The group is made up of people sharing a mutual interest in graffiti and street art, one of the few avenues of defiance and self expression left in town. Today you've each come out in search of one thing—the freaky but gorgeous murals showing up all around the city. They've never seen anything like them before, and some appear in places that seem impossible to get to, let alone paint on. Is it one artist or a movement? Such questions abound, and the group is mostly eager to find more murals. And where better to start looking for graffiti than the train tunnels?

## COMMUTERS:

*Goal: Get everyone home safely*

The PCs are coworkers or acquaintances from the same work area who share an intersecting route home and have a daily routine of taking the train together, conversing to pass the time. Maybe they're starting to grow bored of one another, or take each other for granted as a daily distraction from the abstract blur of space that exists between their apartment and the workplace. A sudden break in the rut is about to shock away any blasé feelings they have for one another.

## FOLKS ON A BENDER:

*Goal: You don't quite remember*

It's been a bit of a blur since happy hour and this group of drinking buddies just wants to get home to prepare for their hangovers.

## MISSING CAT:

*Goal: Bring your cat home.*

A beloved cat belonging to one of the PCs has run away, and you as friends have decided to go out looking for it by handing out posters and looking into likely haunts in the surrounding blocks. Not that you actually expect to find the cat, but even trying something futile feels better than just sitting around. Perhaps they do find the cat during this adventure, just not the way they were hoping for.

## SUPPORT GROUP:

*Goal: Learn more about your tattoos*

When each of the PCs awoke from a particularly nasty fever they thought was all part of their flu, they found their Parse words inexplicably inked into their skin as if they had gotten them tattooed. Not remembering how they could have gotten the words on their bodies and with no explanation or way to wash them away, they got scared. Perhaps they hid it at first, hoping it might go away on its own.

Later they may have begun to wonder if there were others like them, or even saw someone else with a similar tattooed word. Upon reaching out online or in their social circles they were surprised to see there were others like them, also "flu" victims. Recently the players formed a little fellowship, an informal support group of sorts, around people with the same mysterious tattoos. Perhaps tonight they are out for a social gathering, or perhaps they're hoping to find answers about their condition by interviewing other victims.

## TRUANTS:

*Goal: Explore the city*

The PCs are a group of school age friends playing hooky, emboldened by the recent rash of truancy in the city's schools. With all of the absences from the flu epidemic and students ditching classes, the schools feel empty and dead anyway. They figure it's time to do a little urban exploring, or break curfew to go clubbing, or even just to hang out and smoke someplace quiet.

