Sins

Name _____ Player _____
Faction _____ Shaping _____

Attributes

Body	Conviction	Cunning	Passion	Reason	Prowess
Rating: ☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐

Fate ☐☐☐☐☐

Focus Base [ ] Current [ ]

Skills

	Name	Rating 6+ 5+ 4+ 3+
Natural	Athletics	■☐☐☐
	Authority	■☐☐☐
	Logic	■☐☐☐
	Panache	■☐☐☐
	Perception	■☐☐☐
	Resolve	■☐☐☐
		6+ 5+ 4+ 3+
Learnt	Crafts	☐☐☐☐
	Keening	☐☐☐☐
	Knowledge	☐☐☐☐
	Medicine	☐☐☐☐
	Stealth	☐☐☐☐
	Survival	☐☐☐☐
		6+ 5+ 4+ 3+
Combat	Archery	☐☐☐☐
	Fight	☐☐☐☐
	Marksmanship	☐☐☐☐
	Melee	☐☐☐☐

Specialities

Qualities

Motivations

Maximum Motivations: [ ]

Passion + Conviction: if 5 or less = 1, if 6-9 = 2, if 10 or more = 3

Foundation: _____ Achievement Points: ○○○/○○○/○○○
Drive: _____
_____ Invoked ○○○

Foundation: _____ Achievement Points: ○○○/○○○/○○○
Drive: _____
_____ Invoked ○○○

Foundation: _____ Achievement Points: ○○○/○○○/○○○
Drive: _____
_____ Invoked ○○○

Foundation: _____ Achievement Points: ○○○/○○○/○○○
Drive: _____
_____ Invoked ○○○

Arietta

Notes

Creed

Name: _____
Permanent Creed: ☐☐☐☐☐☐
Temporary Creed: ○○○○○○

Spite

Hollow Nature: _____
Permanent Spite: ☐☐☐☐☐☐
Temporary Spite: ○○○○○○

Anima

	Max	Current
Light Anima		
Neutral Anima		
Dark Anima		

Vitality

		TH
Injured	○○○○○○○○	
Mauled	○○○○○○○○	
Critical	○○○○○○○○	
Deadly	○○○○○○○○	
Resistance	Over Kill ○	

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SECOND PRINTING

This book is the second print run of Sins: the Roleplaying Game core rule book, which fixes some minor graphical and textual errors with the original printing. Eagle-eyed readers will spot a few changes here and there, but it isn't a new edition and doesn't invalidate the original book; it simply adds a little more polish to the product and allows us to fix a few glitches that slipped through in the original print run.

CONTENT WARNING

This book is intended for mature audiences and discusses topics and themes which may be uncomfortable for some readers. It's important to keep in mind that this book is a game and that means it's ultimately about having fun; no-one should be forced to deal with topics that they find distressing, nor should a game bring up issues that are likely to cause real-world arguments or distress to one or more participants.

To best forewarn readers of the content in our games, we've divided content warnings into two categories. The first of these are Primary Themes. These are topics which are prevalent throughout the book and the game world; as such these topics are unavoidable when reading the book and are almost certainly going to play a part - small or large - in any game using this book. For Sins, these are;

- Graphic Violence
- Existential Horror
- Body Horror
- Psychological Horror

In addition to Primary Themes, this game also has a number of Secondary Themes. 'Secondary Themes' should not be taken to mean these issues are less important or "lighter" in subject matter, but rather they are topics and themes that, whilst discussed within this book, are not major core themes, and games using the book can easily be structured to avoid or downplay these topics if any of the participants would prefer to avoid them. Largely by association of its genre and Primary Themes, we identify the secondary themes of Sins as the following:

- Religion
- Slavery
- Warfare
- Supernatural Horror
- References to Sex and Sexuality

This is by no means an exhaustive or definitive list of the topics that may come up during the play of Sins. At its core, Sins is a high-octane, super-powered post-apocalyptic roleplaying game with prevalent themes of choice and morality - but you should take care to read this list and be mindful of the mature themes that can arise in bleak, post-apocalyptic narrative scenarios.

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.

–Friedrich Nietzsche

SINS

You open your eyes, and find the whole world broken; the past you knew washed away in blood and fire, and the world all but consumed by the children of nightmares.

The dead, denied their rest by the Song of the Mother, howl for the communion of all flesh - the end of mankind. Slavers scour the wastelands looking for the unfortunate and unwanted, wars of faith consume what remains of mankind's precious resources, and the cults of long-forgotten gods rise to prominence and proclaim their bloody dominance once more.

By all rights, you should close your eyes again; let the comforting darkness, or Mother's Song consume you. However, you, and those like you, are different. Against all odds, for better or for ill, you hold on to what it is that makes you human. Against the onslaught of the coming darkness, you refuse to yield, refuse to die, andchoose to live.

The path ahead isn't easy, but your rebirth grants you strength few beings can match – the power to drive back mankind's enemies, and power to rule, to be saviour or destroyer.

Will you redeem mankind's Sins, or draw us forever into the Darkness? Only one thing is certain; your story has just begun.

WHAT IS SINS?

At its heart, Sins is a narrative role-playing game, specifically focused on telling the stories of powerful entities known as Nemissaries, in a bleak post-apocalyptic world inhabited by a form of walking dead known as the Brood, and a great many mysteries.

Sins is a game about choice, and the consequences which come from wielding great and terrible power. It's also about horror and survival in an unforgiving world fraught with danger, where even the Nemissaries' great power won't necessarily protect them.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GAME

Sins is an exciting game which crosses several genres, and contains quite a lot of information to absorb. To help you get to grips with this, you will find below an overview of the game's core concepts and setting.

- **A Dying World:** Sins takes place in our own world, albeit about a century from now. The world as we know it is gone, replaced with a bleak post-apocalyptic wilderness. Some areas of the world have been scorched by nuclear weapons, and others have returned to their natural state, but the one constant is that mankind is no longer the master of the world.

  Large nations or civilisations are rare and most contact takes place primarily on a local level between nomadic groups and small settlements. There are exceptions however, and one of the themes of the game is the re-emergence of civilisation.

- **A Monstrous Enemy:** Another major aspect of the setting are the Brood, which are best described as a vast horde of highly mobile animated dead who share a dim collective consciousness and have the capacity to evolve into more dangerous forms.

  It's a mistake to view the Brood as simply the walking dead, because as their numbers grow, they begin to hear a strange, shared song, which lends a frightening degree of coordination to their actions.

- **Forgotten Horrors:** A major part of the world's history, and one of the reasons for the fall of civilisation was the emergence of seven individual beings with almost godlike destructive capabilities and the capacity to control the Brood. These creatures, now most commonly known as Reapers, slaughtered their way through the largest concentrations of military might, and personally took a hand in the murder of many of the world's leaders.

  At the height of their reign of terror, their victory seemed certain, but after a succession of surprising setbacks, including the death of one of their number in China, they seemed to disappear utterly. The Reapers now represent one of many unsolved mysteries for players to potentially stumble upon.

- **Dark Heroes:** The beings which players portray were originally individuals consumed by the Brood, who managed to retain a sense of self-awareness, and as such regain their human forms. Striking out against the Brood, they became known as the Nemissaries, after the ancient Greek goddess of retribution.

In a way, the Nemissaries sum up everything about the setting. They are at once monstrous, forced to survive as parasites, feeding on human emotion, but also incredibly powerful, capable of leading the way into a new future, and even opposing the Reapers, should they re-emerge.

Nemissaries have many powers at their disposal – not least of which are the five primal Songs of Blood, Bone, Flesh, Will, and Brood. Collectively, the Songs, along with their impressive physical abilities, allow Nemissaries to overcome most opposition, particularly when they choose to work together.

Nemissaries have a dark side as well, however – a strange wound in their soul, perhaps a side effect from their rebirth, or the lingering power of the Brood. In any case a Nemissary contains their own worst enemy inside them, in the form of their Hollow, a representation of everything they hate about themselves; a monster that just wants to watch the world die.

- **The Judges:** The end of the world began with a phenomenon known as the Black Rain, where a great number of crystalline objects, most roughly the size of cars, but many much smaller, fell to Earth. These objects have come to be known as the Shards, and represent one of the deepest mysteries of the world. On the one hand, most of the Shards seem to repel the Brood, but on the other, they often also have a damaging effect on the human psyche, forcing people to relive the mistakes of their lives, sometimes driving them to mutilation, insanity, or even suicide.

  Some of the Shards are also known to be more positive, offering a strange sort of oasis in the wastelands of the world, free from the Brood. It has also become common knowledge that the tiny fragments of the Shards – also known as Voidglass – are extremely damaging to the Brood.

  The Shards themselves are also capable of communication, often giving out cryptic advice to the Nemissaries, along with spiritual guidance, but anyone who spends prolonged time communing with one will soon begin to suspect that the Shards know far more than they are willing to tell.

  Shards are also indirectly responsible for the creation of the Nemissaries, as each new Nemissary must seek out a Shard and be judged, in order to free themselves of the Brood's corrupting influence. This is part of the Nemissary's Second Breath, and gifts them with their Creed – a spiritual anchor linked to one of five ancient philosophies with roots in the fragments of lore extracted from the Shards.

- **Great Conspiracies:** We've mentioned that in the world of Sins, civilisation as we know it has fallen. The existence of the Nemissaries has offered new hope, but also brought about new conflicts and pain. Across the world, new powers are emerging. Some extol the nearly forgotten virtues of Democracy and Freedom. Others are authoritarian dictatorships. Behind it all however, is the influence of the First-born – the eldest of the Nemissaries – who have begun to use their powers to build their own visions of the future.

  The Nemissaries themselves, along with mankind as a whole, have often fallen in with the factions these powerful individuals have woven about themselves. Their gathered followers preach their ideals and cooperate with one another, rebuilding human civilisation but also setting the stage for the horrifying conflicts to come.

- **Hope and Despair:** The world of Sins is pretty bleak, and even considering everything we've just mentioned, it gets worse. The Brood is not defeated, the factions of the Nemissaries are at one another's throats, and the Reapers are still out there somewhere, licking their wounds. Worse still, powers long asleep have begun to take an interest in the mortal world for the first time in millennia.

  The truth though is that Sins is really about hope. The people you play, for the most part, are those individuals who want to change the world for the better. They are people who aren't content to let their loved ones die, or to be the pawns of mad gods. They mean to make the world a better place, or die in the attempt. This is the choice each player will make – the choice each character must make – to stand and fight when the dawn seems furthest, or to be just one more collaborator in mankind's demise.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Just to clarify, there are a couple of basic considerations which anyone about to use this book should take on board.

Firstly, this is just a game – it's not real, and don't allow what happens at the tabletop to spill over into real life. It might certainly fun to punch holes in concrete walls and run around slaughtering monsters in the context of a story, but trying to do these things in real life will at the very best get you on a fast trip to an emergency ward.

Just remember, playing morally ambiguous characters can be cathartic and a great deal of fun, but that doesn't mean you should let it intrude onto real life.

Secondly, Sins is a game about choices, and at times deals with some dark subject material. Dehumanization, slavery, and graphic violence are never things which should be taken lightly, and some people may dislike the concept of them being discussed in games at all. If that's the case, don't force anybody to deal with something they don't want to. Both Storytellers and player, should always respect other people's feelings.

What is Role-playing?

If you're picking up this book and have never played a role-playing game before, you might be wondering what on Earth all of this is about. A role-playing game, at its heart, is a kind of group storytelling, where a group of people come together to help create a story.

Specifically, role-playing games are descriptive, with one player taking the role of a storyteller, whose job it is to present the world and the situations in which the game will take place, very much like a stage manager or director.

The other players take the roles of characters in the story, and are a lot like actors in a play. The primary difference though is that rather than working from a script with a defined end, the game uses dice to determine the outcome of situations.

This means that in a role-playing games, the players control the actions of their characters, but the dice determine whether they succeed or fail, and the storyteller's job isn't to beat the players, but to help build the story and provide interesting challenges for the players to overcome.

You will find plenty of help and information, as well as a detailed description of how to run a game in chapter 7.

What Will I Need?

Like most role-playing games, you don't need a great many supplies to play Sins. At the most basic, a set of about 10 6-sided dice, a couple of pencils, and some paper will serve you well. If you have a bit of time on your hands however, it also helps to reproduce the character sheet and play-aids from the back of this book – either by photocopying them or downloading a copy from our website, http://www.sinsrpg.uk

If you are a player, it wouldn't hurt to familiarise yourself with the basic rules, character creation, history and any powers you think your character might make use of. A storyteller however should take the time to read the whole book, and chapter 11, in particular. If you are a novice storyteller, or just looking for a helping hand to start a campaign, you might also like to visit us at the above website, to check out some free adventures and aids to help you with your first session.

The Layout of this Book

We've tried wherever possible to lay out this book in the most logical and consistent manner. To help you with this, we've set out various aspects of the book in particular ways, some important information about which you will find below.

Sidebars

In this book, you'll come across quite a few sidebars. These offer additional information on the topic being discussed, and take one of three forms depending upon their content.

The bulk of the sidebars you'll find are **Commentary** sidebars, which are designed to help elaborate on the section at hand, and to explain the specific meanings of rules.

In addition to these, you will also come across **Rules** sidebars, which offer additional mechanical information or add alternative rules.

Finally, the book also has sidebars dedicated to **Plot and Setting information**. These usually describe certain places and people, or events which could be used by storytellers or players to help with plotlines and character backgrounds.

Pronouns

Although we don't want to be accused of being biased, for the most part we've stuck with gender neutral pronouns when referring to characters.

There are a couple of notable exceptions however. Obviously when dealing with specific characters, we'll use the appropriate pronouns, and you may notice that the Brood and Reapers exclusively use feminine pronouns in their descriptions, whereas Nemissaries generally use male pronouns. This isn't meant to imply a bias on our part, or that all Nemissaries are male. It's rather a reference to the mythology used by the game.

Measurements

Sins as a game uses the metric system of measurements. If you're picking this book up in much of the world, this will be perfectly straightforward. If on the other hand you are in a country like the USA and thus more used to Imperial measurements, you might find these awkward to use.

To avoid this, just replace all references to metres with yards and kilometres with miles. Ranges may get a little larger but it ultimately won't make a meaningful difference to how the game is played or balanced.

Inspiration

Sins draws its inspiration from a great many sources, and we would like to take a minute to honour the people who have come before.

A great many roleplaying games have preceded this one, and love it or hate it, every role-player owes a degree of thanks to the Dungeons and Dragons roleplaying game. Without it, the hobby we know today might very well never have come about.

The journey of Sins also owes a great deal to many other roleplaying games, each excellent in their own way, that built upon that legacy to make roleplaying what it is today.

Books and Literature

Below you will find a short list of some of the sources of inspiration that we drew upon in making Sins and that we think you will find helpful in putting together your own stories and campaigns in the world we've created.

Dracula by Bram Stoker: The Granddaddy of Gothic Horror deserves a mention, as it is a great example of horror done well which helped to define a generation and brought the Gothic Horror movement to the forefront.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley: A moving and incredible work, it is particularly relevant as it describes the struggles of a created life form and tries to tackle in part what it is to be human.

World War Z by Max Brooks: While Sins isn't about zombies precisely, this book is still an excellent reference to anyone wondering what the end of the world might be like, and particularly is useful for an insight into why all our modern technologies might fail us in the face of an enemy like the Brood.

Let the Right One In by John Ajvide Lindqvist: A deeply moving and disturbing book which we recommend reading to anyone. Lindqvist's portrayal of the child vampire Eli is a wonderful insight into being alone and in pain. Though Sins isn't specifically about personal horror, Eli's story is still compelling and there are a great many lessons about horror that this book can teach.

Watership Down by Richard Adams: While it might seem to be a strange book to include in a list like this, its story of a journey is dark and compelling, and although the book's focus is certainly far removed from this one, it's actually a wonderful example of the kind of archetypes found in a roleplaying group. Either way, definitely a book worth checking out.

"It's Everyone's Game"

Roleplaying games are a collaborative exercise and everyone present should be comfortable in order to have fun. This means that everyone should be well aware of any potentially uncomfortable or distressing topics that might be broached. At a minimum, every player should read and be aware of the content warning on page 3.

If the Gamesmaster wishes to introduce themes not on that list then they should make it absolutely clear to everyone present what those themes are and should only proceed with them if everyone consents. If there are any concerns, the Gamesmaster should adjust their story to avoid those topics.

In the case of games where you are playing with strangers, it's even more important that the GM is clear about what content the game will contain. It's also a good idea to adopt a formal method for avoiding boundaries being crossed. For this purpose, we would recommend either using the "Lines and Veils" approach taken from Nordic Live Action Roleplay groups, and/or the "X-Card" tool.

In the Lines and Veils approach, the various topics which could be present in the game should be explained to all players, and players should then choose whether they wish a given topic to be a Line – meaning that the topic should be avoided completely – or a Veil – meaning they are alright with the topic occurring so long as it's not emphasised or featured heavily.

The X-Card approach was created by John Stavropoulos. The basic idea is that you place a card marked with an X at the centre of the table. Any player can touch the card, including the Gamesmaster, to signify that there is a problem with whatever content is currently being expressed. If it's a player's actions which are causing the problem, they should stop what they're doing.

If it's an issue with the story at hand, then the Gamesmaster should avoid the topic, either by bringing the scene to an end, or ceasing further discussion of the particular issue. If there isn't a simple way to resolve the issue, then it's best for everyone to take a short break and if the player feels comfortable doing so, they can work together with the Gamesmaster to adjust the story to avoid the topic in question.

This is a very abridged version of how to use the X-Card, and we strongly recommend that readers of this book look up John Stavropoulos's original document on the X-Card online for further information on the use of safety tools in your roleplaying games.

The Walking Dead by Robert Kirkman: This excellent series of comics showcases how in a post-apocalypse world stories are still about people, not the monsters that surround them. It's entertaining, engaging and dark all in equal measure, and is a wonderful source of inspiration. Also, it's definitely worth watching the new TV-series, which is equally amazing.

Film and Television

Perhaps it's the modern age, but we have often found ourselves more inspired by the works of television and film than traditional literary sources.

The Thing (1987 and 2011): The first, though a remake in a fashion, is a magnificent film centred on paranoia and suspense; not to mention some of the best monster effects ever committed to film. Certainly, The Thing itself possesses numerous qualities the Brood don't, but if you're looking for flesh-twisting horror, and an idea of what the more extreme Broodspawn might look like, the film is excellent.

Also the 2011 prequel, whilst not quite to the calibre of the original, is definitely worth a mention due to its stunning creature effects and more visceral horror over suspense.

28 Days Later: A huge inspiration for Sins, 28 Days Later defines in many ways the feel that was intended for the Brood. From a human perspective at least, it portrays the screaming heart pounding horror that the Brood are meant to invoke, and the film is a modern masterpiece of music and cinematography.

Mad Max 2: Nothing quite does post-apocalyptic madness like this film, and for representing the wastelands of the future it's an absolute must.

The Road: An incredibly bleak film, but it portrays wonderfully the sort of horror that people would be facing in a world with no tomorrow.

Teknoman or Tekkaman Blade: An old anime that unfortunately only made it to this country largely cut to pieces, it has numerous points of interest from a Sins perspective. It depicts entities on a similar scale of power to the Nemissaries themselves and a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by monstrosities somewhat similar to the Brood. Of particular interest is the main character's struggle with his twisted siblings, which draws some great parallels with the struggle with the Harbingers. If nothing else it has some pretty cool fight scenes in it and a very moving finale.

Dead Space: Downfall: Though not an amazing film, it bears the rare distinction of being based on a computer game and still managing to take itself seriously and come up with something that is at least watchable and entertaining, if not exactly a classic. Its visceral, nasty transformation scenes showcase what the Brood might be like in action wonderfully.

Life After People: A wonderful educational program, and an absolute must for learning what would happen if we weren't capable of maintaining the infrastructure which holds our civilisation together.

Contagion: An excellent film and though it deals with an outbreak of a far more natural nature than the Brood, it's still an excellent look at how governments and people all around the world might have reacted in the face of a horror they can't combat.

Computer Games and Other Media

Computer games can be a great source of inspiration, and at their best are just as valid an art form as anything else we've discussed here.

The Dead Space series: There's no point in denying that this was a big inspiration for the world of Sins, and although we come at it from a different angle, the visceral horror that Dead Space offers up at every turn is great inspiration. It's also useful for a look at mysterious religions, conspiracy and just a touch of the supernatural. The game's numerous spinoffs are also generally worth a look, not to mention its excellent sequels.

Prototype: If you want a game where you can play in a sandbox and see at least a little bit of what it would be like to have a Nemissary in action, you won't get closer than Prototype. Filled with conspiracy, a flesh-twisting virus, and an extremely potent central character, it might lack a little in core story, but it's still a great source of inspiration.

Fallout: Who could do anything in the post-apocalyptic genre and not at least give a nod to this classic and its sequels? Almost as much as Mad Max, they have solidified the concept of a post-apocalyptic wasteland in people's minds.

Glossary of Terms

Below you will find an overview of the many unusual words used in the setting and what their meanings are. A couple are also accompanied by a handy guide to pronunciation, and all are alphabetised for convenience.

Aenthir: (Ayn-theer) A term from the Prophecy of Ah'kesh for the Shard at the heart of a Nemissary.

Anima: Energy source possessed but not used by all living things.

Anima, Dark: This is Anima charged with negative emotions.

Anima, Light: This is Anima which has been charged with positive emotions.

Architects, The: A faction of Nemissaries dedicated to helping humanity from the shadows.

Aria: (Ah-Rea) An archaic term for a Nemissary.

Arietta: An individual power within one of the Songs.

Ark, The: A term used by groups which believe that "Pandora's Box" and the "Ark of the Covenant" were actually one and the same object.

Black Rain, The: A common term for the arrival of the Shards, it is also used as a way of referring to the death of the civilisation before.

Brood, The: The great horde of the ever-evolving animated dead. Usually used to refer to the whole of the Brood, as in "infected" or "zombies", but it can also be used to denote a group of Broodspawn.

Brood Mother: A powerful Broodspawn capable of drawing great hordes to themselves and breeding without the need for human dead.

Broodsong: The communal consciousness of the Brood. Also a dangerous if useful source of information on ancient history.

Broodspawn: An individual animated dead, and a member of the Brood.

Chosen: These Nemissaries are a new creation in the world, having being created by other Nemissaries as opposed to awakening from existence as one of the Broodspawn.

Circle, The: An enigmatic faction of Nemissaries dedicated to the destruction of the old world and reforging mankind's destiny into their own survivalist ideology.

Dark Anima: See Anima, Dark.

Defiled: Rarest of the Nemissaries, these individuals were created as a result of the Brood's attempts to manufacture Harbingers.

Fall, The: Another term for the fall of human civilisation; specifically it refers to the arrival of the Reapers and the destruction of the last concentrations of military might.

Fragment: Splintered pieces of a larger Shard, though distinct from Voidglass in that they often still possess a measure of power in their own right.

Harbingers, The: Nemissaries who have sold their soul to the Brood, becoming nightmarish creatures dedicated to the end of humanity.

Hive: A common name for a place where Broodspawn gather but can also have a darker meaning when used in the context of the Hive Spawn.

Hive Spawn: These Broodspawn do not originate from human dead and possess a nightmarish variety of forms; the bulk of which bear no resemblance to humanity.

Keepers, The: One of the factions of the Nemissaries dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge.

Light Anima: See Anima, Light.

Mai-a: An archaic term for Light Anima.

Mel-ai: A rumoured precursor civilisation drawn from fragments of the Broodsong.

Nemissary: (Nem-i-se-ry) Individual who has taken the Second Breath and re-emerged into the world as a powerful entity.

Prophecy of Ah'kesh, The: A fragmentary document constructed by early Nemissaries made up of information recovered from the Broodsong and the Shards.

Reaper: One of a number of beings which appeared during the Black Rain, each of which were incredibly powerful and responsible for untold destruction before their eventual disappearance.

Reborn: The most common of the Nemissaries, these individuals have passed through death and existed as Broodspawn before regaining their sense of self.

Saris: An archaic term for Dark Anima.

Second Breath: The process of an individual's rebirth through death, and becoming a Nemissary. Normally either a highly traumatic, or cathartic experience.

Shards, The: Mysterious objects with many unknown properties, sometimes believed to be responsible for the Brood.

Silent Ones, The: A term from the Prophecy of Ah'kesh which refers to the various Shards that existed on Earth before the Black Rain.

Song, or Songs: When used with a capital S, Songs refers to the powers wielded by Nemissaries, and to a lesser extent all other supernatural powers.

Thrones, The: The oldest Nemissary faction, they are a group dedicated to making themselves the rulers of a new age.

Twilight, The: Supposedly the spirit world and Aetheric reflection of Earth.

Voidglass: The physical substance from which the Shards are composed.

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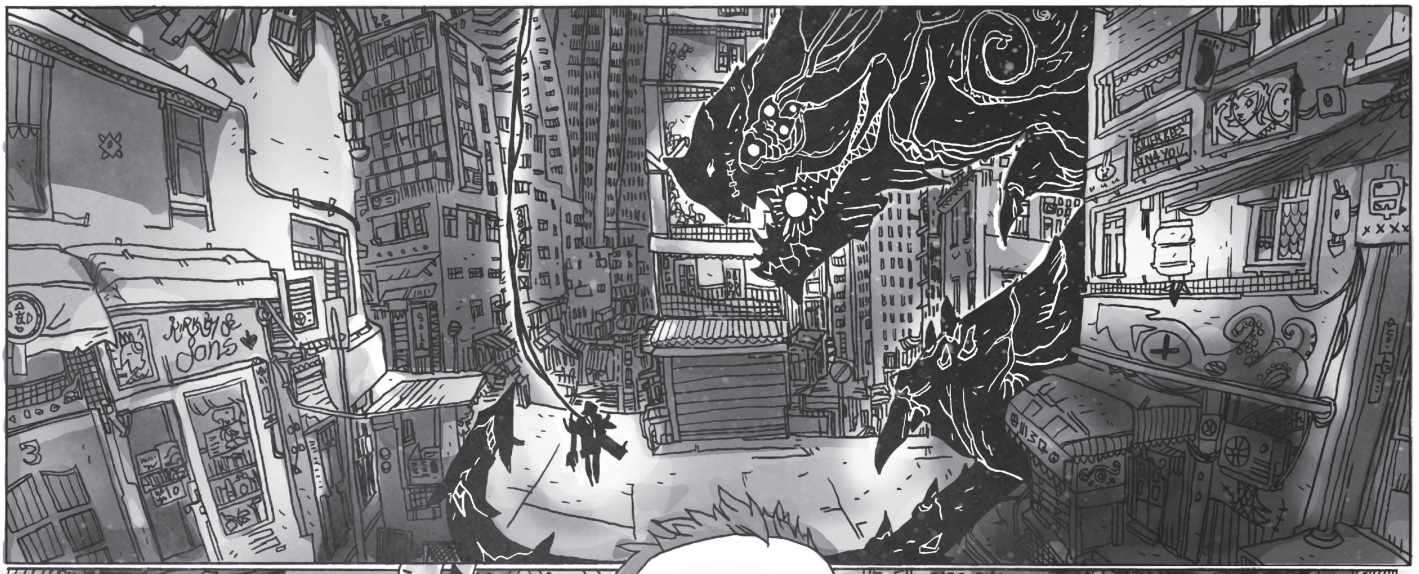
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GUNS YOU!

TEATHER 01
KILLER NO THRILLER

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A Painful Lesson

"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of the infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far."

- H. P. Lovecraft

The story of Sins takes place primarily in the 22nd Century, but the tale of the world itself begins much earlier, in the midst of the 21st Century – or arguably even earlier than that, in the depths of pre-history.

The people of the modern world know a reasonable amount about the Fall of civilisation, but their specific knowledge is normally somewhat sketchy. History is written by the victor, after all, and the war for mankind's survival has by no means ended – some even say it has only just begun.

The World Before

The Fall of the past civilisation and the loss of access to vast repositories of information have made details about the 21st Century sketchy at best; what is known is that the world moved steadily towards crisis. Many established oil reserves were faltering, and the long standing economy of the world teetered on the brink of collapse, but these weren't the only problems facing the civilisations of the Old World.

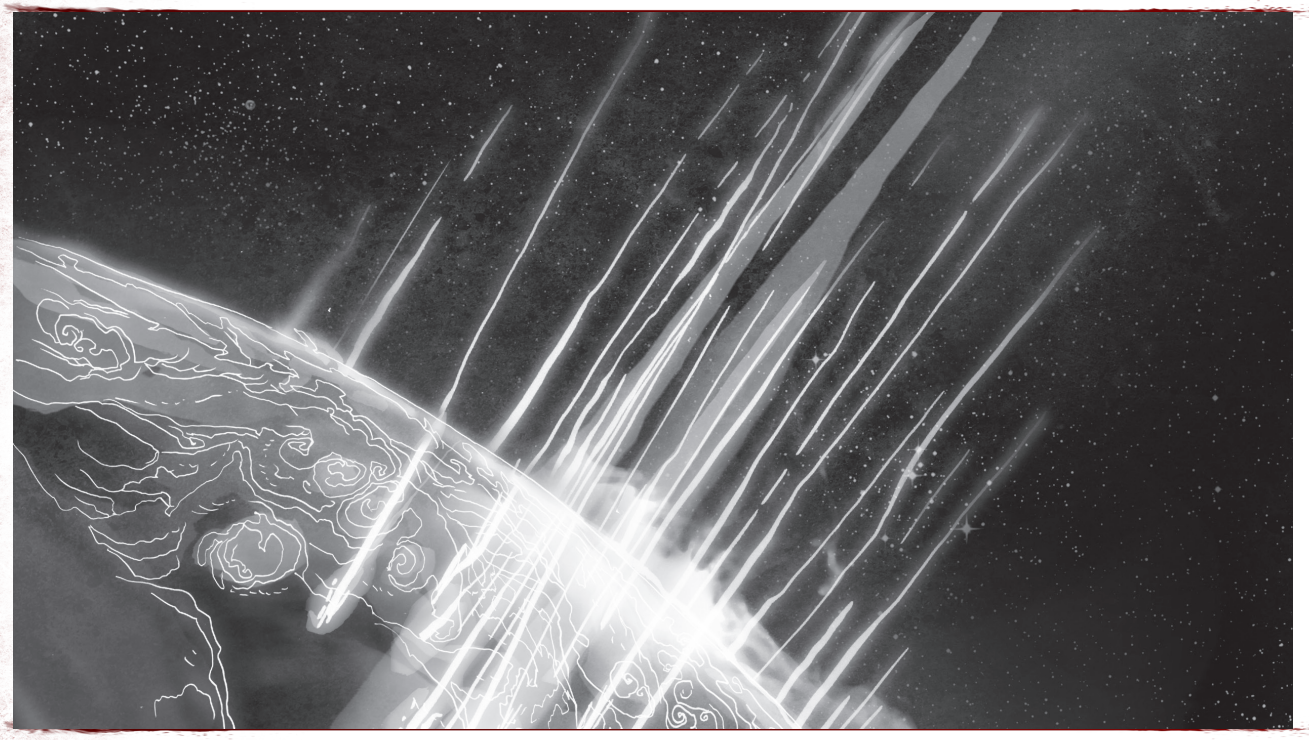
Medical advancement and social progress had led to far more subtle issues which threatened to strangle governments mired in tradition and unwilling to change in the face of an evolving world. It's a historical irony, then, that all these combined pressures led to what is now remembered as something of a golden age.

The Death of the Old Powers

As the 21st Century progressed, technology changed the way people lived their lives. It lead to a greater awareness amongst people of the crises facing the world. More and more people became aware of the impending collapse of our way of life. Governments, as always, were slow to change in the face of a new world. Their dependence on antiquated systems and their refusal to accept the imminent crisis brought about social anarchy.

As the world economy first entered recession, and then collapse, the old superpowers were brought down with it, bringing untold misery across the globe. Every step forward seemed paralysed by the mistakes of the past. War swiftly followed collapse and the world's dying nations set upon one another to fight for ideals and property which, if only they had stopped to see what could be achieved with peace, were irrelevant. For all the carnage, though, somehow the restraint of nations held, and those dying superpowers never unleashed the nuclear apocalypse which was so feared.

The chaos of the collapse, coupled with the freedom of information which the internet provided, began to bring about massive social reform, as disillusioned populations all over the globe began to fight for a new way of life. For a time, at least, it seemed as though mankind collectively had looked to the heavens and seen a future devoid of war. This period of history is now often known as the Second Renaissance, and although its birth was filled with pain, it brought wonder to mankind once more.



THE SECOND RENAISSANCE

For the first time in a century, mankind made true progress. Rather than allowing new technologies to become a burden, the new governments formed in the chaos of the Collapse looked to new sources of energy and turned their eyes to the stars. It wasn't long before mankind once again walked on the Moon, even establishing a permanent presence there.

It seemed that a true rebirth had spread across the globe. Stable genetic modification had led to a reduction of world birth rates, and more efficient crops had all but put an end to world hunger. It seemed for a time that nothing was beyond our grasp. The future was truly bright.

Our pride though, it seems, is always greatest before the end.

THE FALL

One of the greatest achievements of the Second Renaissance was an extensive network of space observation satellites, created as a side effect of the infrastructure which was to take mankind to the stars. It was through this that a strange astrological phenomenon was detected. It became apparent that barely detectable fluctuations in the orbits of many stellar bodies were occurring within the star system.

THE BLACK RAIN

As can be imagined, the result was panic. The greatest minds came together to put forward a solution. In the end, it was concluded that the distortions were caused by fragments of Dark Matter passing within the solar system.

The scope of the discovery was massive, either confirming or destroying the reputations of astrophysicists across the globe. It soon became apparent that several hundred objects or more were expected to impact with Earth.

Governments all over the globe began preparations for an apocalypse, hoping to save the best and the brightest in sealed bunkers throughout the world. Meanwhile, looting and rioting broke out across the globe. Panic spread, and before long government control was stretched almost to breaking point. In a few short weeks, much of the progress of the Second Renaissance was lost to panic and terror.

The apocalypse never came; the shards that fell were tiny compared to what was feared. They tore through the atmosphere like darts, impacting all across the surface of the Earth.

The exact date of the current setting is generally not known, and varying different cultural groups have markedly different opinions on the subject. Most agree that the date is somewhere between 2093 and 2101.

Far from the apocalyptic horror which was predicted, the Black Rain caused relatively little actual structural damage. Most of the shards which fell were no more than a few metres in length, and some, as yet unknown, phenomena caused the shards to slow during their descent.

Speculation was rife as to the nature of these strange objects. It quickly became apparent that they were not what scientists had predicted. Whilst in space, the objects had generated a massive gravitational field relative to their sizes. Once on the ground, however, they seemed to be fairly innocuous objects, composed of an unidentified substance; similar in appearance to polished obsidian, but seeming to absorb light everywhere except for their outer extremities.

DATING CONVENTIONS

Throughout the book we have used the term CE, for Common Era, and BCE for Before Common Era, to describe particular dates. This may cause confusion amongst some readers, used to the classical AD and BC conventions for years.

The Common Era is analogous for AD, and BCE for BC. We've used these naming conventions first of all because it is now the international standard, and secondly because it is free of any religious connotations.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Although no timeline can be perfect and there are a great many disagreements on exact dates, most people in the world can at least agree on a rough series of events as presented below.

2020 – 2030: The Death of the Old Powers.

2030 – 2049: The Second Renaissance.

2049: The Black Rain.

At this point all dates become uncertain and times are given in approximations of years after the Black Rain, expressed as AR.

1 week AR: Broodspawn emerge.

1 month AR: Reapers emerge.

2 months AR: Reaper killed in China. The Burning begins.

4 months AR: Last major world government falls.

6 months AR: Reapers disappear.

1 year AR: Broodspawn become less expansionist, though mankind still teeters on the brink of collapse.

5 years AR: The first elements of civilisation begin to re-emerge.

10 – 15 years AR: First Nemissaries emerge.

44 – 50 AR: Current date.

A Reaper Speaks

Perhaps the most famous event of The Fall occurred in Times Square, New York. It marks the one and only time a Reaper spoke, or communicated directly in any way.

The events now scarred into memory occurred when one of the Reapers, now known as Seraphim, attacked an extraction centre in Times Square. During the attack, a solitary child screamed at the Reaper, "Why?", to which, surrounded in fire, and with much of the World as its witness, the Reaper replied;

"Because as a God, I have the right to judge; not a god like your fallen Yahweh, or your pale, broken pantheons – but a god that lives, and has the strength to judge... And I judge you unworthy."

Within moments, a bright light consumed much of central New York, and when the dust cleared, all that was left was a vast crater and the bodies of the dead.

The Brood

After the disappearance of the Reapers, the Infected were no longer united as a single horde, but seemed to turn inwards, gathering into smaller, isolated groups.

Although the process of mutation and evolution within the Infected was still observed, the rate at which they changed was massively slowed. It soon became apparent that as individuals, the Infected – whilst highly aggressive – lacked any capacity for planning or higher reasoning.

As time passed, a curious phenomenon was noticed. Concentrations of Infected seemed to grow more intelligent as their numbers increased, becoming highly territorial and aggressive in nature. These groups of Infected were even observed to attack other Infected to consume them, creating more powerful evolutions and organising in a way not seen since the disappearance of the Reapers.

Over time, a new word became associated with the Infected, more fitting with their ever-changing nature; The Brood.

Most described the shards as beautiful, in a curious sort of way. Some suggested they were vessels of some kind, but to all outward appearances, the shards were simply natural pieces of stone, albeit with extremely curious properties. No doubt without the events to come, all the science of the age would have been directed at the shards; mankind might have even learned their secrets. With the damage assessed, governments began the long process of restoring order that would prove ultimately futile in the days to come.

The Coming of the Brood

When the newly dead began to wake, most considered it a joke, or a hoax at best. The destruction of much of Earth's satellite network and the sheer chaos caused by the Black Rain paralysed most governments. Without accurate reports, peacekeeping forces mostly refused to accept the initial rumours. By the time that governments began to respond, the infection had spread well beyond their ability to contain it.

It wasn't fair to call these creatures 'dead' – not precisely at any rate. All initial infections seemed to take place in the victims at the moment of brain death, and were then followed by violent changes in the body's physiology, cumulating in massive cellular re-growth, the strengthening of muscle tissue and bone, and the development of additional teeth, more suited to a pure carnivore than a human being.

The infected were vicious, highly aggressive, and seemed to possesses none of the stupidity people normally associated with the common idea of a 'zombie'. They hunted in packs, shrieking and bringing down everyone and everything they could. Within moments of receiving what should have been fatal injuries, their victims would rise equally as vicious as the creatures which surrounded them. The only small mercy in this process was that the infection seemed to have difficulty spreading to animal life, and although there were reports infected animals seemed infrequent.

In all, the death toll was horrific. Some countries fared better than others, but it's generally accepted that somewhere between 20 to 30% of the world's population were infected before a concerted effort could be launched to contain the situation.

With all the military power available to mankind and the intervention of army and police units, it should have been possible to contain the infection; after all, the infected may have been fast, strong and extremely difficult to kill, but in the end, they didn't possess artillery, surgical strikes, and railguns.

As horrific as the outbreak was, no one was prepared for what came next.

The Reapers

During the early stages of the conflict, it seemed that many governments would likely regain control of the situation. Large concentrations of infected were either obliterated by artillery or firebombed to ash. Strategic analysis would have suggested the total loss of life worldwide might have been

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ONE WAY
ONLY

as high as 35 to 40%, but despite the sacrifice, it seemed the infection could be contained.

The emergence of the Reapers came as a complete shock. Their first attack was on a large military outpost in southern Europe. The soldiers barely had time to transmit a message consisting primarily of screams and a desperate cry for help, before long range surveillance picked up a bright blue light which scoured the base, destroying everything within several hundred kilometres.

After that, the Reapers seemed to strike across the globe simultaneously. At first, it was assumed that the new enemy numbered in the hundreds, but to their horror the assembled government realised they were only facing seven entities.

Descriptions of the Reapers varied but all possessed certain traits in common. Each was large, standing between 7 and 9 feet tall and possessing one or more sets of wings with a span of approximately 12 feet each. Each seemed to possess a hard outer armour, very similar – if not possibly identical – to the construction of the shards which had fallen during the Black Rain. Although the specifics varied, each one also seemed to possess a sort of inner fire which shone through the cracks in what could loosely be called their skin.

To make matters worse, the Reapers had a strange effect on the infected. Where before they were a ravening horde, they now grew organised, attacking concentrations of civilians to boost their numbers. It also seemed that their nature was changing, and they engaged military forces cautiously. At first, all the infected had been basically human in appearance, but soon reports began to emerge of bodies fused into one another along with armour and weapons.

Within days of the Reapers' emergence, almost every major military shelter on Earth had fallen. Mankind was desperate; it seemed that if sacrifices were not made, the Reapers and the infected would wipe out every last human being alive.

The Burning

For all their might, history proved the Reapers were not invincible. The first to fall occurred as part of an act of heroism in southern Asia. During an attack on a military facility, personnel witnessing the slaughter manually detonated a nuclear warhead in its silo, destroying everything; themselves and the Reaper included.

Almost immediately the infected began to fall into disarray and not just in the immediate area either. This brief window of respite led to perhaps the most debatable act of the entire war; the death of the Reaper prompted other nations to unleash their nuclear arsenal.

The fires consumed millions, and the wastelands they created would consume billions more. Arguably, the nuclear strikes did succeed in stalling the infected but to the horror of those who ordered the strikes, the other Reapers emerged unscathed.

For a time, the Reapers' assaults continued without ceasing; although they could no longer control the infected, they were still a terrible force but one that now seemed blunted. In the end, the Reapers' attacks seemed to end, and one by one they faded into history and myth...

The Aftermath

With the disappearance of the Reapers, and the somewhat reduced threat from the Brood, mankind began the long and painful process of rebuilding.

Virtually all the great nations of the world had fallen amongst the maelstrom of battle and the madness which followed. The infrastructure which once supported mighty nations simply didn't exist any longer. To compound matters the Reapers and the Brood had managed to destroy almost every concentration of military might in the world.

During this time, the most powerful groups to emerge were mostly organised scavengers, grown out of military or law enforcement personnel originally sent to try and restore order. These groups provided for the safety of a great number of people, albeit not without cost. They were forced to abandon most of the trappings of the modern world, sacrificing democracy and academics for the sake of survival.

Other groups of survivors had more long term goals in mind. A precious few communities managed to cling on to what farmland or infrastructure they possessed. These communities quickly threw up walls and defences and became the new trading towns of the day, bargaining with scavengers for specialised goods, food, and the ever-precious commodity of fuel.

Across the world, a handful of governments and cities managed to maintain their infrastructure. These groups remained rare, and their large size tended to mean that they came under almost relentless assault by the Brood, slowly wearing away at their defences.

Almost 50 years passed, and the pattern repeated itself; small communities and even city states would rise, only to be consumed by civil war, or the Brood. As the century grew to a close most of mankind had adopted a nomadic lifestyle rather than attempt to weather the near-constant assaults of the Brood endemic to the larger cities.

Rise of the Nemissaries

It became apparent during the Aftermath that every living thing was in some way infected by the Broodspawn. Race, creed, age; none of it mattered. In the end, everyone would rise again.

Their rebirth was a lie; the Broodspawn were purged of what they once were. All they seemed to possess was a basic predator's instinct. The most you could hope for was

a moment's recognition before your former loved one tore out your throat. It seemed as though the Broodspawn were truly lost; animals at best and a cruel reminder at worst.

The transition from the dead to the Broodspawn was not the end. Of the infected, a tiny few – perhaps initially one in a thousand or less – retained something of their mind; something of the person they once were. At first it was irrelevant; even this small glimmer of hope seemed nothing more than a painful joke. Eventually these pitiful creatures would succumb to the voices of their fellow Broodspawn, or give in to their insatiable hunger.

Eventually – through either fate or blind luck – one or more of these creatures stumbled upon the long-forgotten Shards, and there they were reborn.

The Shards burned away doubt and confusion, and placed in the heart of each the knowledge of what they were, and what they could accomplish; and thus the Nemissaries were born.

At first the Nemissaries were too rare to make a vast impact upon the world, but soon their numbers grew. The Nemissaries could identify the newly-risen and direct them to the Shards, preventing their degradation into monsters.

Only one single fact seemed to unite the diverse Nemissaries; each was wilful in their own way. They had drive, and either alone or in small groups, they set out to change the world.

A New Order

The Nemissaries' growing powers were immense, and to some their similarities to the Reapers were terrifying. Seeing this, many of the Nemissaries chose to hide, using their powers, particularly their ability to control the Brood, to protect, or control, mankind from the shadows.

Others, though, stepped forward into the light. All across the globe, groups that otherwise teetered on the edge of destruction found new life. New nations and new factions emerged, and with them a new threat.

The First Council

Isolated in a world filled with horrors, the Nemissaries reached out to one another, gathering in small groups known as **Cabals**. As the power of these groups grew, many sought greater meaning to their existence. Risking the dangers of travel and communicating with one another, they slowly began to build a network of correspondence across the globe. This process was not without cost or setbacks, and what began as an ideological dream splintered across global lines into various fragmented ideologies.

From the strife of these first pioneers emerged old secrets. The whispered wisdom of the Shards was shared and Nemissaries gained some idea of their standing in the world. It was from this wisdom that the Nemissaries learned much of their nature but it also set them apart from one another. Over time, as they learned, five great ideologies emerged.

The Five Paths

Constructed from the fragmented lore of the Shards and the collected wisdom of the Nemissaries, the five great factions that emerged dominate the ideologies and beliefs of the great majority of Nemissaries. Each faction is more a philosophy than an organisation; a collection of individuals driven towards a loosely defined goal, and a shared belief in how the world should work.

The first of these factions to emerge – the **Keepers** – make up those Nemissaries who first set out into the world to learn and to understand their place in it. As a whole, these Nemissaries are unified by a desire to understand the true meaning of the world. Rather than spending the bulk of their energies to combat what they see as a symptom of the world's problems, they choose instead to search for the root of the problem, hoping ultimately to end the plague once and for all.

There are many who saw the goals of the Keepers as a waste of time that humanity could ill afford. These Nemissaries chose to reveal themselves. Known as **the Throne**, they took the roles of warlords and kings. Using their newfound positions, these Nemissaries began the long process of strengthening humanity and rebuilding the civilisation that many of them still remembered.

Initially, the Throne encompassed the great bulk of the emerging Nemissaries; its ideology was simple, effective and something many would gravitate to on their own; but like all things there was a catch. In the minds of many, the reins of power could never be put down again. Fearing this, and taking to heart dire warnings given by the Shards, they chose to distance themselves from the Throne.

As the Throne splintered, its detractors took the title of **Architects**, and chose to define their beliefs in guiding rather than ruling humanity. In their minds, standing in the roles of kings and gods would only make humanity weak. What was needed was a guiding hand, to shape human civilisation and protect it from the worst predations of the Brood.

While the Throne splintered and the Keepers searched for new knowledge, there were those sought elder law. They began to search the fragments of human history, looking for reasons to the world of today in the distant past. Combining their knowledge with that of the Shards, they came to the conclusion that all existence was a cycle of life and death, and that the only true virtue worth standing for was balance. Taking the mantle of the Circle, these Nemissaries determined that humanity had broken and perverted the cycle, and that the Brood was nothing more than a reaction to the world's sickness.

The Circle set about destroying the remnants of the old world to make way for a new form of civilisation; one that under their guidance would restore the Great Cycle, finally ending the threat of the Brood.

For all the purpose the factions sought to give, there were those for whom their promises rang hollow. Having survived long enough to emerge in the world, they found their existence a pointless one. They saw nothing worth preserving in mankind and no hope for the future. These Nemissaries chose willingly to return to the comforting embrace of the Brood.

Countless Nemissaries have fallen back into the song, but a handful were different; something of their individual nature remained. These creatures saw the Brood not as an enemy, but the solution to mankind's suffering. To their minds, all life unified in the Broodsong would be a paradise. A twisted black hope was born, and these

creatures, known as **the Harbingers** began to gather the swarms of the Brood, and just as the Reapers had done long ago, prepared them for war.

Ah'kesh

Whilst factions of Nemissaries emerged and feuded for dominance, one group made its home in the remnants of eastern Europe. Amongst them was a woman , known only as Ah'kesh, who would shape the future of Nemissaries everywhere. Under her guidance, her group fought as brothers and sisters, carving out a kingdom for themselves, and setting down the stones that would transcend their bloody roots to become the great mortal faction known as the **Dominion**.

As their power grew, they feuded. Eventually, one of their number and the lover of Ah'kesh, A'tun, was murdered. Soon, events spiralled into a cycle of violence. Ah'kesh, watching everything she had loved fracture and burn, set out to find a better way.

Her dreams and hopes lead her to Shard after Shard. She plunged deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the world, carving away at her soul piece by piece to do so. Soon, her revelations brought new meaning to the Creeds and their powers. Every faction amongst the Nemissaries courted her attention, but she turned them all aside.

The normal sources of knowledge exhausted, she attempted to do what had not been done; from the fragments she had learned, she underwent a ritual. In the ruins of the Holy Land, before the greatest of the known Shards she peered deeper into the Shard's knowledge than any had done so before. There, her body was destroyed but her mind called out to her former kin. Her brother and sister A'sha and Na'tira came before her. She gave them all the knowledge she had received. Finally succumbing to her Hollow, she was devoured before their eyes.

A'sha was so horrified by the visions, and so burdened by his guilt that he took his own life, willingly falling into the darkness of the Well. Na'tira, perhaps stronger, chose a different path.

Like Ah'kesh, she sundered her own soul; not to gain knowledge, but to grant it. Ah'kesh's revelations were distributed to every known Shard. The tragedy is that the gift was not complete. Each Shard now possessed only fragments and pieces of what Ah'kesh had seen – enough to guide new Nemissaries and to enshrine the ideas of the five great ideologies, but not enough for any one person to see the truths that Ah'kesh, her brother and her sister had seen.

The world over, Nemissaries have scrambled to assemble these prophetic and enlightening visions into a text; a sort of holy book known most commonly as the Prophecies of Ah'kesh.

This book serves as a catch-all source of wisdom, but also possesses dire warnings of the future, and glimpses supposedly into the distant past. In a curious way it both divides and unites the factions, cementing their existence but forever setting them apart in their interpretations of Ah'kesh's dream. What chills most of those who have read it is that if Ah'kesh is correct, a worse horror than the Brood is yet to emerge, and the Nemissaries, fragmented as they are, are powerless to stop it.

Hope

As a new age dawns, mankind stands on a precipice. The first generation in more than a hundred years has been born into a world with some semblance of order. For the first time in living memory, they could tell you the emerging nations of the world.

But in mankind's arrogance, we have forgotten, or perhaps chosen to ignore, that the Brood readies itself for a new offensive. Under the guidance of the Brood Mothers, and with humanity in its weakened state, they might succeed where the Reapers failed.

Those Who Survive

Life in this broken age is a difficult thing. One of the hardest things for readers of this book to visualise is likely to be the sheer practical difficulties of surviving in the world of Sins.

People take for granted a great many things; food, shelter, warmth and safe drinking water are not things we normally worry about in the western world - yet all over the world, people do manage to survive without what we would consider basic amenities, but they don't always survive well. This isn't even considering living in a world where being eaten alive by constantly-evolving monstrosities is a distinct possibility.

How people survive is dominated primarily by environment, and the factions they choose to affiliate themselves with. As previously noted, some areas of the world have recovered better than others, but the fact remains that many things we take for granted, particularly supply lines and communications, either do not exist or are at best erratic.

COMMERCE AND ETHICS

A notable aspect of Sins which readers may have to get their head around, is a general lack of money as a medium of exchange. Although some areas of the world such as the east coast of America, or the Dominion in Europe, have their own monetary standard, people in general don't trade in cash as we understand it. They tend to barter for their goods, exchanging various valuables for what they need.

Some items, though, are more useful for a prospective trader than others. There are certain commodities, such as water or ammunition, that almost anyone will accept as a medium of exchange. A far grimmer practice, as mentioned before, is also slavery, and if one absolutely must eat, sometimes selling another human being is preferable to starvation or cannibalism.

Of course, in the modern western world we have a fairly robust system of ethics, and from a small age most people are taught what is right and wrong. The dark truth is that most of our sense of ethics grows out of a society which lacks real dangers or the real possibilities of starvation or death at any moment. It's easy for people sat in comfortable homes and with stable jobs to talk about right and wrong, but for those whose life is a daily struggle to survive, the only measure of good is the ability to prosper and to protect one's family and children.

This can lead to people doing things that we would find abhorrent, and slavery is a particularly good example of the pragmatism associated with a painful existence, and how quickly the need to survive will overcome any moral imperative.

REALITIES OF SURVIVAL

The thought of surviving without access to any of our modern conveniences is daunting at best. People need access to a significant quantity of both food and water each day to remain healthy and fit. Depending upon where you are, water is not necessarily difficult to obtain, but safe drinking water is another matter entirely.

Food also is a particular issue, as while a prepared and experienced individual could have survived comfortably in many regions of the Earth, the spread of the Brood and the death of most natural wildlife has made even obtaining basic food difficult at best.

For more information on day-to-day survival, seek out good survival manuals for inspiration, such as the various SAS Handbooks that are out there.

In the end, all know that this is a time of change; either mankind will learn from the lessons of its past and the Nemissaries will guide us into a new future, or the age will be drowned in blood. For better or worse, we must now face our Sins.

THE WORLD AT THE END

"When it comes to controlling human beings there is no better instrument than lies. Because, you see, humans live by beliefs. And beliefs can be manipulated. The power to manipulate beliefs is the only thing that counts."

- Michael Ende

The world of the 21st Century is long gone, replaced with a time of struggle, strife, and unending conflict. Not only does mankind have to deal with its traditional evils but also the horrific reality of a world populated by monsters, and torn apart by the whispers of the Shards.

Amidst this world of pain and suffering, the Nemissaries walk like the demi-gods of old, forging petty kingdoms and feuding over the remnants of a broken world.

A POISONED GLOBE

Vast tracts of the world lie devastated by nuclear fire, and even after more than a hundred years, some areas remain wastelands, inhabited only by the Brood. In other places, forests and vegetation have reclaimed much of the land. Farmland is scarce, and grain and rice are some of the most valuable commodities available.

The oceans and coastlines of the world that might otherwise have supported human life have nearly all fallen to the Brood as the proliferation of aquatic Broodspawn makes shipping of any kind exceptionally dangerous. To compound matters further, vast quantities of radioactive fallout and the Brood's poisoning have killed off much of the plankton upon which the sea's ecosystems are dependant, resulting in the destruction of an estimated 70 to 90% of known sea life.

Many of the resources of the past age are long gone. The oil industry in particular no longer exists in any meaningful fashion. The stores of gasoline kept by countries evaporated within years of the Fall and almost all offshore oil rigs have either been consumed by the Brood or fallen into disrepair. All of this means that the few pumping stations left are incredibly valuable, but as a result people have had to learn to do without oil-based products such as fuel and plastics.

In all, it's estimated by the larger nations to remain that approximately 1 to 2 billion humans remain alive in the world today, and given the grim situation estimates place the death rate in many places to be much higher than the rate of births.

This isn't to say that no hope exists in the world of the 22nd Century. Some communities have begun to thrive,

as isolated pockets of mankind have begun to reassert their dominance. Nations and people have proven that with careful planning and resolve, the Brood can be pushed back. Across the world people still hope, love, and live in the hope of a better tomorrow.

Climate

The nuclear holocaust unleashed during the Fall did the ecosystem no favours. As a consequence of everything that has occurred, the world's climate has shifted dramatically, becoming ever more unstable and violent as time has continued.

In the northern regions, a new ice age has begun; summers are brief and winters are long. The weather patterns in these regions are extreme, alternating between freezing rain in the summers and blizzards of terrifying intensity in the winter. In the equatorial regions of the world these changes have sometimes been more beneficial, potentially turning deserts to farmland.

Still, the threat of radiation is ever-present. So much radioactive material remains that the storms that frequent the planet can render areas inhospitable in a matter of days, visiting the horrors of radiation sickness on the population.

These regions become known as Blight Lands, and the radiation sickness they cause is most commonly referred to as the Blight. Treating it is beyond the ability of most people, and so there is usually little choice but to abandon or avoid these lands altogether. The one saving grace of these poisoned regions is that the Brood seem to avoid them for the most part, but this is little comfort considering the certain death that awaits most who enter.

Flora and Fauna

Between the perils of the world and the Brood, only the hardiest species of life have survived to the current age. Rats, insects and small hardy mammals dominate the ecosystems of the world. Few large creatures have survived and creatures such as elephants are now extinct.

Horses persist in most regions of the world due to humanity's constant protection. Likewise, dogs continue to survive in great numbers in the modern age; both as feral animals and as companions to humanity. Some large predators such as bears and lions still exist in their natural environments, but their existence is a tenuous one, always on the edge of starvation.

The seas have fared little better; their poisoning from fallout and the long twilight after the Fall have decimated the oceanic food chains. Some isolated ecosystems and species do survive, even thriving in some regions, particularly where the Brood is weaker.

For the most part, the world is in a sorry state where animal life is concerned. Even if the Brood is ultimately defeated and life begins again, likely the world will see a scale of change in natural life not seen in millions of years.

The Edwards Family – Wastelands Nomads

Having survived now for a good twenty years, the Edwards family has grown to an impressive, if daunting, thirty members. Originally the family survived primarily through scavenging and trade, but the family's success has made feeding so many mouths a difficult task. Now the family relies primarily on raiding and mercenary work to feed its members, and after almost ten years in the business, the family has garnered a fearsome reputation.

In combat, the Edwards family tend to rely on ambush tactics, using their superior knowledge of the terrain to their advantage. Because they lack vehicles, they are also unlikely to retreat and are often willing to sustain heavy casualties to emerge victorious in a battle. This edge of desperation means that few merchant groups or traders are willing to fight them, and will normally just hand over their goods rather than face a battle with grim and determined combatants.

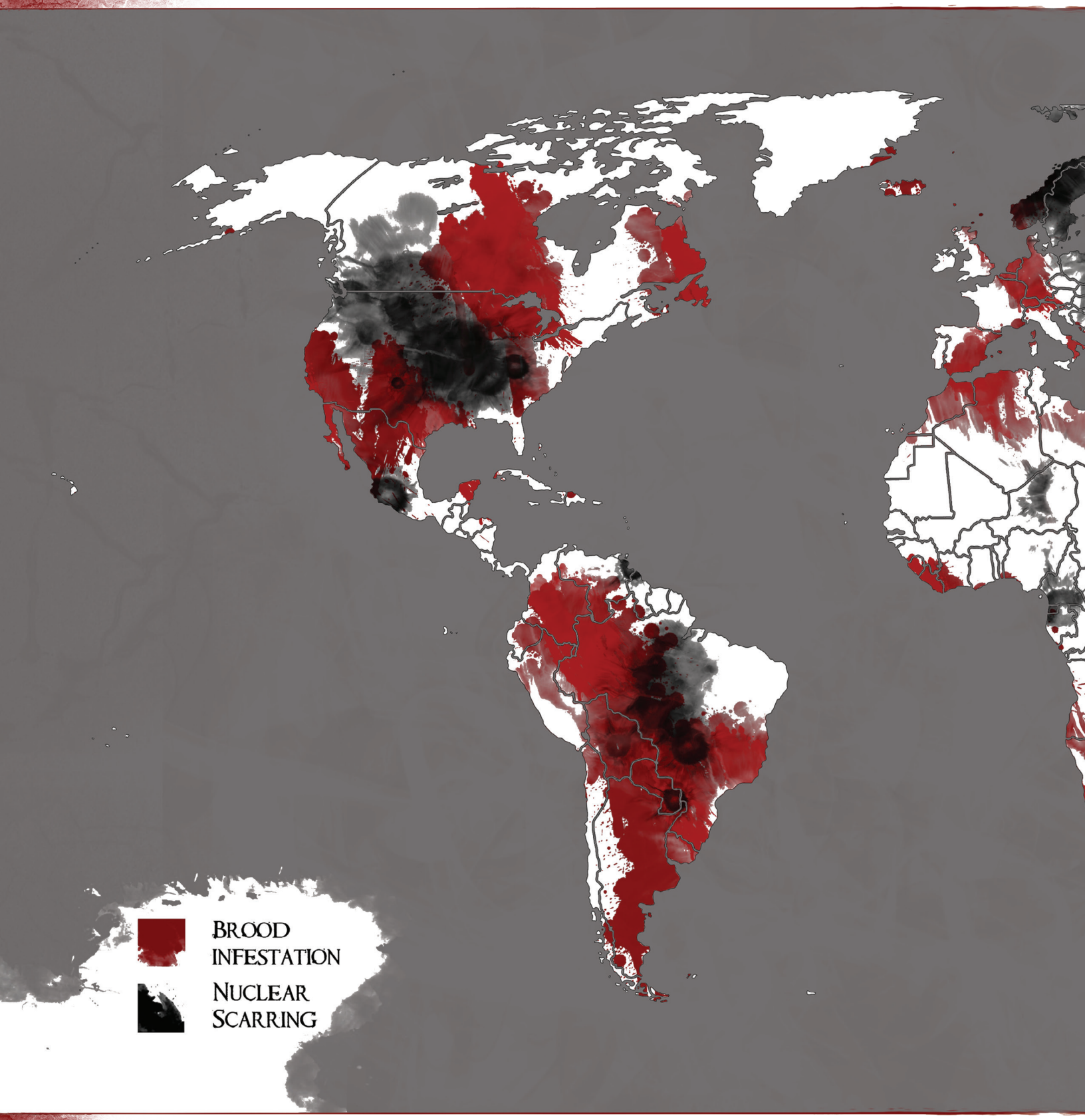
In Play: *The Edwards family can make an interesting antagonist for a group of humans, a community, or Nemissaries who have just taken the Second Breath. They also provide an opportunity for a more ethically complex opposition than the Brood. After all, the Edwards family might be raiders, but at the end of the day they're just people trying to survive in a harsh world.*

Humanity

Humans still carve out their niche in this world but their existence is a tenuous one. Times of plenty are a forgotten dream and for most people of the world day-to-day existence is a struggle to survive against seemingly impossible odds.

The old boundaries of race and social class stand almost obliterated by decades of mankind's desperate struggle to live. Few people in the world live well as we would understand it. Many spend their lives moving from place to place; hunting, scavenging and scratching an existence off the scant resources to be found in the wild. Others have clustered together, defying all the dangers of the world and restoring some of the amenities common to civilisation.

Only in the largest communities do the hierarchies common to modern day exist. Concepts of democracy, justice and freedom have been replaced by the survival of the strong and the old law of an eye for an eye.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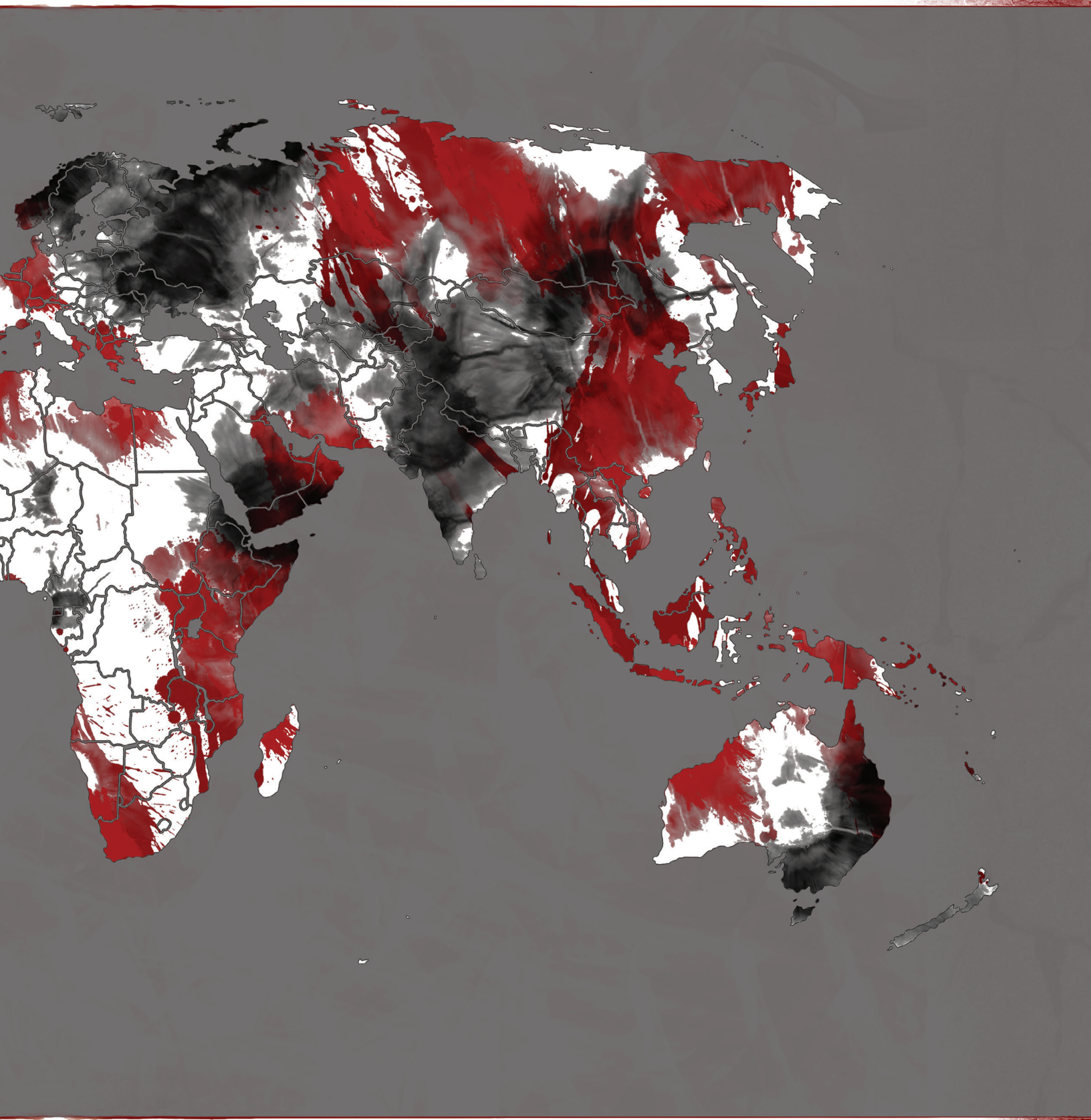

Hell Pit - A Notable Ruins Location

Hell Pit is nothing less than a living nightmare manifest upon the Earth. This relic of the past age has been devoured completely by the Brood. Where once city streets and buildings spanned, now sickly strands of sinew and flesh cover the city. Bands of predatory Brood scour the place, fighting with one another for dominance in a dark mirror of human evolution. Only the strongest and most deadly of the Broodspawn survive.

For all its dangers, Hell Pit still draws outside attention. Scattered throughout its ruins are abundant fragments of Voidglass along with a small fortune in high quality salvage. Only the most foolhardy or experienced scavengers dare even breach the outer reaches of the city and most often the outcome of such trips is being torn apart by a pack of frenzied Broodspawn. Occasionally, however, travellers emerge with enough salvage or Voidglass to justify any risk, and so infrequent attempts to explore this deadly location continue.

Another mystery that the city presents is the reports of strange behaviour of the Brood near its core. Rather than the rampaging monstrosities of the outer city, these Brood seem focused upon a deadly three-way struggle for dominance. Those that claim to have seen them describe their battles like highly mobile and well coordinated armies clashing. Others who know the Brood better describe it like three separate but immense organisms struggling to overcome one another.

In Play: *Hell Pit provides a late game area for mortal characters to explore, and possibly a challenge even for experienced Nemissaries. A storyteller could have players enter the city as part of scavenging, or to rescue another team dispatched to the site.*

Alternatively, the site could also be used as a much larger threat if a storyteller decided that the internal squabbling amongst the Brood here had ended, and that the horde now turned its attention to the surrounding settlements. Even an experienced group of Nemissaries would struggle to combat that threat, and the only hope might be a pre-emptive strike.

Technology

It is a mistake to assume that the death of the Old World has rendered mankind ignorant in regards to technology. In fact a great deal of technical knowledge has been passed down generation to generation. The problem lies in the ability to manufacture to exacting specifications.

Whilst certain technology such as guns, lanterns, radios, and basic circuitry are still fairly common, computers, mobile phones and aeroplanes are all generally impossible to manufacture. It is not that the knowledge to do so doesn't exist – after all plans and blueprints still exist – it is just that creating such items requires a vast amount of infrastructure beyond simply having all the components. Just imagine how many separate factories and manufacturing processes are required to assemble an aircraft. In comparison, a single person with the proper knowledge and tools can fairly easily manufacture firearms.

Cottage industries do still exist for the manufacture of many common goods, and the various larger factions have set up numerous small factories, but in general the more sophisticated technology of the past age lies temporarily outside mankind's reach.

Scavenging

Until very recently, scavenging was the only way for most communities to survive. Population was small and the world was littered with the relics of the past age. So long as groups continued to move and evaded the Broodspawn, some quality of life could be maintained. Scavenging couldn't provide everything a community needed and was often unreliable, but it was these very traits that allowed civilisation to begin the process of rebuilding.

Meetings between nomadic groups were often tense affairs; the fear of violence was always present, but trade was essential and it was the meeting of such communities which helped build the first permanent settlements.

Recent times have not been so kind to scavengers. The bulk of sites have already succumbed to other scavengers or the ravages of age. The few remaining prime locations often now lie in areas controlled by the Brood or abandoned to nuclear scarring. In either case, the death toll required to gain anything of value has become enormous. It seems that with every passing year more and more scavengers are either forced to join permanent communities or to become raiders.

Agriculture

As the benefits of scavenging have waned, farming and agriculture in general have gained ever more importance. Initially, farming was beyond the abilities of most communities; tilling fields and fertilising soil left people dangerously exposed to the Brood. This coupled with the difficulty of acquiring useful grain stocks meant that for a long time, traditional farming was simply impossible.

The first pioneers relied on ancient hunter-gatherer techniques, slowly building up protected herds and allowing more systematic cultivation of livestock over time. As larger communities have emerged, it became possible through careful construction and localised firepower to re-establish farmland. The death toll was still high but many areas have succeeded in establishing their own food supply.

One unfortunate side effect of all of this is the growth of slavery in many areas. Most communities lack the ability to completely defend their own farmland and cannot sustain the loss of life incurred. For this, they turn to the outcasts and unwanted of the larger cities and settlements, and these unfortunate people often give their lives to keep these small communities alive.

Slavery

In the world after the Fall, the ancient practice of slavery has become the norm in many areas. People often speak of it in other terms, such as "indentured Servitude", or "forced integration", but despite how people wish to pretend it isn't the fact remains that the practice of slavery is alive and well. The reasons for its re-emergence are many, but the simplest explanation is the need for manual labour in what would otherwise be horrifically dangerous conditions.

Most slaves are either sold by the communities in order to hopefully ensure their survival, or people who sell themselves willingly into slavery to escape the horrors of the wastelands. The other situation which brings people into slavery, as it has done throughout human existence, is war.

When one side wins, the issue of what to do with the defeated always raises its head. Simply put, in a world without the conveniences of modern life, you can either kill them, or put them to work. The last thing people will do is compromise their own ability to survive for the sake of a defeated enemy.

Rule of Law

Wherever great numbers of people gather, leaders will emerge. The resurgence of mankind has brought with it a wide variety of leaders and rulers to the globe. In smaller groups, these people are often chosen by popular consent. They take many forms and serve to guide their communities. Often such groups have fairly ill-defined laws, if any; they look at everything on a case by case basis, usually dispensing popular justice.

Some small groups also take the form of extended families with a patriarch or matriarch at the head. These families are normally similar in outlook to other small groups of survivors, with the exception that their leader's rule tends to be more absolute.

In larger communities, rulership and justice tend to be more complex affairs; the need to delegate tasks quickly creates public offices of one form or another; the rising of complex bureaucracy creating a better-defined sense of law and custom.

Some customs are reasonably common and some social taboos are shared across the globe. Cannibalism and pederasty, for instance, are reviled in almost all communities, and certain customs of common sense such as burning or destroying bodies and avoiding antagonising Nemissaries are shared by most.

Convoy - Wilderness Nomad Group

The Convoy are a group of scavengers who long ago managed to secure access to a great many vehicles of the past age, and have managed to use their advantage to good effect. The Convoy comprises some fifty individuals, and around a dozen vehicles at any one time. They stay on the move as much as possible, scavenging when necessary but primarily trading goods and transporting travellers.

Life is hard for the Convoy, and they are routinely forced to engage in practices they prefer not to. As much as they trade, they are also well armed, and willing to raid whenever fuel or supplies are running low.

The family tend to stick to predetermined routes, moving from one area capable of supplying them with fuel and supplies to another. They are well known, and tend to produce a kind of carnival atmosphere when they approach settlements. In fact, many members of the Convoy also maintain several circus skills to squeeze out an extra little bit of coin from any settlement they visit.

In Play: *The Convoy can be set anywhere where gasoline is a possibility, and where the terrain is still suitable for vehicles to rove. They can be useful if the storyteller needs a quick, temporary settlement, or if they want to shake up the atmosphere of an existing place. Alternatively, the Convoy could also be used as a fairly dangerous group of antagonists, hunting the characters through the Wilderness, mounted in vehicles with high powered rifles.*

New Haven - A Settlement

Situated in a remote valley region, mostly devoid of life, New Haven supports a population of about a thousand by fiercely guarding the remains of an old highway. They survive by means of a well and extracting a toll from those wishing to pass; usually asking for food or other useful goods.

The settlement also holds a market at least once a month for groups of nomadic traders and scavengers in the region to sell their wares. In addition to this the settlement makes a tidy profit from entry fees.

For defence, the settlement has used old scavenged vehicles, concrete and wood to make an impressive barrier, and its population is both heavily-armed and well-prepared to deal with the Brood and any other threat which presents itself.

In Play: *New Haven can appear pretty much anywhere in the campaign world that there are hills, a major road, and a need for trade. With a bit of fleshing out, it could serve as a great base of operations for starting player characters.*

Of all things likely to twist these social norms are the presence of the Nemissaries themselves. These entities can be just as varied as any other human, but possess immense personal power and the ability to hold back the Brood, so can throw all the normal concerns of a community into chaos. Often, communities will welcome the presence of Nemissaries in their midst, treating them with a respect that borders on reverence and giving them almost anything they want. In return, such Nemissaries are expected to drive away the Brood and operate at least to some extent within the community's existing morals.

Not content with this, some Nemissaries style whole communities or regions after their own particular whims, setting up small scale paradises, strange theocracies, or dystopian and feudal hierarchies.

Beyond these generalisations, communities are infinitely variable. With the limitless variety of humanity spread across the globe, it's possible to find almost any model of human society.

Faith

The Fall was particularly harsh upon mankind's faith. Quite aside from the logistical destruction wrought upon the faiths of the old world, many felt betrayed or abandoned by their gods, or refused to believe they existed at all in the face of the horror of their day to day existence.

Some have held on to their beliefs; isolated communities and practitioners still cling rigidly to ancient practices. Many such groups found themselves becoming more and more extreme in their practices, whereas others have changed with the times, creating entirely new faiths based on the religions of old.

The current age has also given birth to faiths with no pre-existing origin, the bulk of which centre around the Nemissaries themselves. Some proclaim them to be deities given flesh, others that they are the messenger of the heavens.

One such powerful and pervasive faith was created by The Circle. Known now as The Covenant of Thorns, or simply the Thorns, it has strong similarities to ancient pagan faiths, preaching a nomadic existence, attempting to live in harmony with the world and deifying Nemissaries either as guardians of the natural order or decrying them as monsters that need to be hunted.

Surviving the World

Mankind's greatest gift has always been their perseverance in environments which are utterly inhospitable, and despite everything the Fall has thrown at us, despite the predations of the Brood, mankind still tenaciously clings to survival.

The Wastelands

The most common terrain remaining on Earth are vast expanses of wasteland. These areas take many forms, from deserts and savannah, all the way through to tundra. The common feature they share is the fact that they make poor arable land.

Before the Fall, most areas of wastelands had been reclaimed in some fashion. Only in the Third World and extremely inhospitable places had wastelands prevailed. Unfortunately the lack of human agriculture coupled with nuclear fallout and the proliferation of the Brood has combined to undo almost all mankind's work in reclaiming these wastelands.

Despite all of this, people have managed to survive in these inhospitable environments, though doing so is a daily struggle. The groups who survive in these regions are by necessity nomadic. Most of these groups survive by keeping small herds of livestock, moving them from area to area to graze, and living off both the meat and by-products of these precious animals.

Other nomad groups have up until recently survived by scavenging, but as time has passed this tactic has become harder and harder. The best sites have long since been picked clean, or claimed by powerful and organised factions.

The Brood is always of concern to nomads, but their primary defence is simply to move on. Broodspawn rarely pursue beyond their immediate territory, and so in this regard nomads capable of evacuating an area quickly often survive. This isn't always practical however. There are times such as during childbirth, or excavations, where the group simply cannot leave. In these awful cases, often groups will have to make terrible sacrifices or be consumed.

A small minority also live in the wastelands by choice, choosing to wander as independent traders. In most countries these groups have often grown into larger, more powerful factions as their willingness to place themselves in danger to establish lines of communication and trade makes them extremely valuable to more settled communities, and this often allows such groups to prosper. A good example are **The Breakers** of North America.

Ruins

No single environment in the current world is more deadly than the decaying cities of the Old World. Nearly a century without maintenance has turned what buildings remain into death traps – not to mention the fact that the Brood thrives in the ruins of the old cities. These places are often the very charnel houses where the Fall began.

Brightwatch - A City State

Brightwatch stands on the ruins of a now flooded city of the past age, suspended amongst the ancient carcasses of the buildings, resembling a spider-web of wood, twisted metal and concrete. The town's greatest resource is the dormant Shard which lies at the centre of the ancient city. This mysterious edifice keeps the Brood at bay, and allows the community to convert the flooded ruins of the city into vast rice fields and fisheries.

With such abundant access to both food and water, it is no surprise that this ramshackle community has grown to a significant size, topping out at around a thousand permanent residents, with many more traders and transients passing through.

Despite this settlement's prosperity, it's not without its problems. Although the Shard holds back the Brood from the immediate area around the settlement, the rest of the ruins are still infested, making travel to and from the town dangerous. Further compounding matters is a persistent dark reputation. Traders whisper that the Shard is far from dormant, and that the Brood is only held back by bizarre rituals held in the dark beneath the town.

In Play: *Brightwatch represents a useful stopping point for player groups seeking to explore a ruined city, and potentially a great site for adventures of a more subtle nature, involving intrigue, mysteries and eldritch cults.*

Many things draw people to the cities of old, not least of which is the possibility of acquiring rare and valuable technology; particularly items which have weathered time well but for which the knowledge of their manufacture has been lost.

There are also groups which, for varied reasons, have chosen to cling tenaciously to urban dwellings. The cost for doing so is high. Those who stay generally have found some compelling reason to do so – otherwise the dangers of their surroundings would have already driven them away, or consumed them. The most common reason that groups stay in such hazardous areas involves scavenging. Many materials can be salvaged from the dead cities, such as iron or steel, not to mention valuable reserves of copper and potentially salvage of a more directly useful kind, such as weapons or tools.

In the long run though, these communities have tended to evolve into heavily defended trading posts rather than bases of operation for scavenging. Some have even evolved into small city states of their own, using slave labour and their comparative wealth to establish stable farmland, and provide for long term habitation. Even so, such communities must be fortified to an incredible degree, as the Brood often attack such sites relentlessly. Over the decades, it is a certainty that more enclaves of this kind have been consumed than any other.

Wilderness

The disappearance of large-scale civilisation in some places has allowed the natural environment to thrive. Swamps and forests have begun to reclaim their original habitats. These areas, although often lush, are far more dangerous to live in than they might seem.

Perhaps the greatest danger inherent to these areas is the uninterrupted growth of the Brood which seems to thrive in such regions. This is further compounded by poor sight lines, meaning that most engagements must take place at close ranges, where the Brood reign supreme.

Despite all this, these areas do see human habitation as the potential natural riches that lie in these regions are too great to ignore. Potential supplies of food and water, along with the possibility of reclaiming useful farmland are a continuous draw to human populations. There are rumours however of things other than the Brood rising in the resurgent wilderness. Some people tell of strange shapes and beings not matching common descriptions of the Brood moving in the depths of these areas. They also point to the suspiciously accelerated growth of forests in certain areas of the world, and begin to wonder whether a second great horror awaits.

Settlements

Human settlements in the world vary tremendously, but practical necessities require them to have certain features in common. Firstly, almost all modern settlements exist in regions between the extremes of the world's environments. They also tend to be built on the ruins of small towns or earlier habitations.

Almost all settlements also have access to an all-important source of water and are usually fortified to an impressive degree. Piles of rubble, iron, and the remnants of the last age are used to make impressive barricades, manned constantly by armed guards ever alert for the threat of the Brood.

Due to the dangers of the Brood, most settlements must possess some useful resource to justify the danger of their existence. Most either possess access to reclaimed farmland, oil or some other highly useful resource. Some settlements also exist for the sake of trade, occupying strategic positions between other settlements.

Whereas nomadic groups tend to be suspicious and isolationist towards outsiders, most settlements have a more cosmopolitan view. The need for a great many able-bodied people to aid in the settlement's defence or maintenance, and generally better access to food and water, allows settlements to be more accepting of strangers.

Unlike most nomad groups, which are used to living without law and order beyond adherence to their family and elders, people living within settlements have usually adopted a patchwork of laws and customs to govern their day-to-day existence. These laws will often seem very harsh to the average reader, but they are designed to not just keep order, but also to keep the settlement alive.

Prisons are a luxury that people simply cannot afford, and so by necessity, punishments are normally limited to humiliating ordeals, or fines for smaller crimes. For more serious issues, generally the only options available to a community are to exile, execute, or enslave the criminal. Mutilation and other such punishments are rarely practiced for petty offenses, since in the long run they tend to diminish the community. In general though, if a person takes up thievery or consistent bad behaviour, communities will have no mercy in the end – even children are subject to these harsh laws and punishments.

Another major draw of settlements are the existence of small scale factories and cottage industries churning out a variety of useful goods; the most common of which being weaponry designed to combat the Brood, or the tools of day to day life. These things tend to be expensive but are usually more reliable than scavenged tools and most communities which wish to encourage trade normally charge a fair price.

The City States

City states represent the largest gatherings of humankind in the world. They are normally heavily defended and defined by access to considerable local resources, or by

occupying an important strategic location to allow them to function as trade hubs for potentially dozens of settlements.

There are two primary types of city state. The first are the surviving cities of the Old World. Similar to the ruins noted above, they are usually in an advanced state of decay, but also intermixed with new, haphazard constructions. These places were normally bitterly fought over, and tend now to be in a precarious state as most such cities have used up nearly all the resources left behind by the Fall of the Old World. This results in a city state which has likely either already become, or is about to become, very aggressive in seeking out the resources it needs to survive.

The second is fairly new in the world, having grown out of successful settlements, and tend to be based around trading and offering limited military security to other nearby settlements. These city states tend to be on the upswing, and have less need to be directly aggressive, tending towards more defensive policies as their growth normally comes from trade rather than conflict.

In either case, these places are bastions of the civilisations of old, and tend to fluctuate between extremes of political ideology. Some take the form of autocratic monarchies, others military encampments; a few even flirt with the idea of democracy. In any event there is usually a strong trend towards law and order.

Cities also offer the closest thing to a way of life readers might identify with that is left in the fallen world of Sins. There are people who make their living out of manufacturing, and people who work long hours in factories in exchange for wages or food and security. This means that many such cities tend to have amenities such as shops or civic buildings, although even the greatest cities rarely have the resources to squander on things such as museums or libraries.

What Remains

Scarred as the world is many landmarks of the past age still survive, and the old nations have not entirely faded from memory. Across the world, as many variations on survival exist as there are people left in the world. Each continent offers unique challenges and threats. Below, you will find an overview of the world's current state, in terms of specific sub continents.

North America

The states of North America were hit particularly hard by The Fall, and doubly so by the intervention of the Reapers. It is believed that the death toll in the early years of the conflict was astronomical. Cities with high population density, combined with a great deal of overseas military deployment resulted in almost unchecked growth of the Broodspawn.

The Harbingers

The Harbingers represent a minority of Nemissaries who have dedicated themselves to spreading the influence of the Brood. What surprises most is that the great bulk of the Harbingers have not actually lost themselves to the Broodsong, and are in fact acting independently to bring about mankind's final demise.

The true motivations of the Harbingers are almost entirely individual. The only thing which unites them is a shared use of the Brood to further their own agendas and, in general, a distaste for the remnants of human civilisation. Also, the great bulk of them seem obsessed with a mysterious entity known only as "Mother".

Seven Reapers?

There remains debate as to the exact number of Reapers which appeared upon Earth. Most surviving sources do agree that seven Reapers made an appearance worldwide, although this can hardly be certain, as it relies on secondary visual and behavioural identification. Considering that the Reapers were highly intelligent, and possessed many of the same abilities inherent in Nemissaries, it is quite possible that the Reapers were able to change their shape. This throws into doubt estimates of their true numbers, as it is possible that there were as few as three Reapers on Earth.

Another theory is that there were more than seven Reapers, but that only a handful of Reapers allowed survivors to escape their attacks. Either possibility remains valid, and Storytellers should feel free to adjust the details to suit the needs of their own campaign.

The government reacted as best it could to maintain order, but by the time they accepted the reality of the situation, the public had already begun to panic, further adding to the casualties inflicted.

The United States in particular suffered terribly at the hands of the Reapers. In the early days of the conflict, a Reaper designated by the name "Blacklight" assaulted and destroyed the Presidential bunker, throwing the American defensive strategy into chaos.

After one of the Reapers was stopped by a nuclear detonation in modern day China, the remaining chiefs of staff agreed to deploy America's nuclear arsenal against the worst concentrations of Broodspawn, and the Reapers.

The results – despite the country's best intentions – were decidedly mixed, stopping the Brood temporarily but rendering vast tracts of the American interior uninhabitable.

Canada initially fared better, mostly due to its low population density and its low priority for the Reapers' strikes, but the scattered population were incapable of forming any large-scale opposition to the Brood. As environmental conditions have worsened, the ever-encroaching ice has forced those remaining to abandon their homeland or face a lingering death as food becomes ever more difficult to find.

A number of powerful and independent factions dominate the modern landscape of North America. Perhaps the most powerful, and without a doubt the most driven, of these is the **Pyreflame Crusade**; a vast, militant army dedicated to the restoration of America in the name of God.

The second largest group to have emerged after the Fall is a powerful alliance of scavenger lords known as **The Breakers**. Although despised for the tacit support of slavery and their brutal tactics, nobody can deny that the Breakers are one of the main reasons civilisation still stands. They are also the group whose future is perhaps most in doubt. Scavenging has become less and less profitable, as almost all the resources of the old world have either been consumed or begun to decay in some form or another, forcing the Breakers to become increasingly militant and dependent upon the slave trade to survive.

The third large power is the Independent Republic of Florida, or **The Republic**. During the Fall, several generals responsible for the United States armed forces deployed in Florida seceded in the middle of the chaos. Rather than waste their forces on what they saw as fruitless attempts to retake the lost northern cities or fight the Reapers, they concentrated on holding strategic locations in Florida, and managed, albeit at great cost, to maintain some semblance of order throughout the Fall.

The Republic is powerful, but faces an uncertain future. It still possesses a great deal of military might, and a reasonable amount of unspoiled farmland. It has also slowly readopted some of its ancient democratic traditions, and has perhaps the highest standard of living anywhere in mainland America.

All of this comes at a price. The Republic is heavily dependent upon scavengers to provide the goods it needs, and on indentured workers to farm. The change in attitude of the Breakers means that the Republic's future is uncertain. Cracks are beginning to show, as people realise that the Republic simply lacks the infrastructure to maintain its current population without external support.

Another rising power, further to the west of North America, is the resurgent Texas, or **The Lonestar State**. The western American states were, in essence, totally overrun by the Brood. Recent times, however, saw a large influx of nomads, and a combination of interested parties, including a large sub-faction within the Breakers, managed to restore the immensely valuable oil refineries and through them, along with a healthy dose of firepower, secured a new future for the people moving to the area.

The Lonestar State has become a symbol of traders everywhere. Wealth and power have flowed as trade is slowly re-established, and the ability of the Lonestar State to field large trucks and move heavy loads has given them a considerable advantage. For the time being, at least, the future is bright for these people. Envy, though, is a terrible thing, and it remains to be seen whether, in the long run, the Breakers will tolerate the dominance of the Lonestar State over the oil industry. It is ironic that after all the horrors of the Fall, the people of Texas now fear war more than the Brood.

The last major power on American soil is also perhaps the most enigmatic. The followers of **The Thorns** have come to worship the Shards as icons of the Living Earth, and have found a way to counteract the negative psychological effects of the Shards, allowing them a strange protection against the Brood.

The followers of the Thorns are primarily a nomadic group, moving from place to place, and for the most part they rely on more primitive technology. The Thorns don't specifically dislike technology, so much as they simply don't possess the infrastructure to maintain complex machinery. They also seem to have acquired a great many Nemissary protectors, and although the Thorns lack the numbers and organisation to challenge the other great factions, the individual abilities of these nomad groups is something that the other factions cannot ignore.

Aside from the great powers, there are many smaller groups which have managed to carve out a place in the world for themselves. Perhaps the best known of these is **The Dominion**. A relatively new faction, the Dominion is also one which causes a great deal of concern.

This organisation originated on European soil and has recently retaken the city of Boston from the Brood, along with contesting the Pyreflame Crusade for control of New York. What causes more concern over anything else though is the open rule of the Nemissaries and the strange new faith the Dominion is trying to spread.

Another faction steeped in mystery, but far more welcome, are the **Artificers**; a peculiar group who specialise in the maintenance and construction of the Old World's technology. The Artificers as a group are one of the most poorly-understood factions in America, not helped by their intense desire for secrecy. It is rumoured, albeit unconfirmed, that the Artificers still have some access to what remains of the global satellite network, along with a quite terrifying number of stored weapons.

Europe

Initially Europe suffered horrific loss of life during the Fall, but ultimately managed to weather the storm better than North America. During the initial outbreak, most of Europe's nations turned inwards, isolating individual cities, and fighting with great tenacity to protect their homelands. The loss of life was monstrous, but numerous organized militia and government agencies managed to survive and preserve their way of life.

A major defining feature of Europe is its lack of nuclear scarring. Although several nuclear power plants have long since gone into meltdown, and Eastern Europe is still marred by fallout from the Russian detonations, no great wastelands cover Europe – in fact, quite the opposite is true. More than a half century with humanity bottled inside fortified holdouts and cities has allowed Europe's plant life to thrive. The landscape of the modern Europe resembles not so much a post-apocalyptic wasteland, but rather a bleak, empty wilderness, made up of vast scrublands and deep foreboding forests. For all its remaining beauty though, Europe now struggles more under the threat of conflict between emerging civilisations than it does from the Brood.

The single greatest power by far in Europe is **The Dominion** – an incredibly powerful institution resulting from the gathering of a great many Nemissaries intent on spreading its new and militaristic faith.

The Dominion rose slowly in the years after the Fall and came to power through the personal might of the Nemissaries who founded it. These powerful entities, now known as The Seven, were amongst the first of their kind and many suspect the first to achieve a significant mastery over their capabilities. At the very least, they collectively possess enough personal might to dispatch with every attempt to kill them by the remnants of the French, German and the Czech Republic governments.

The Dominion rules through a feudal structure, replete with many of the trappings of the knights of old, albeit with Nemissaries serving in place of the lords and common soldiers made from tamed Broodspawn.

All in all, the Dominion either represents a great hope, or a militaristic nightmare state. Its supporters say that it has brought about a degree of civilisation, learning, and safety, not known since before The Fall. Its critics point out that the Dominion has committed systematic genocide in its extermination of political and spiritual opponents, along with propping up the institution of slavery and reducing people to little more than serfs in a feudal hierarchy, ruled not by kings, but by mad self-proclaimed demi-gods. Some even whisper that the Dominion's use of bound Broodspawn to attack their enemies – be them humans or the Brood – represents a more insidious plan to spread the Broodspawn even further throughout the world.

Another force rising to challenge the might of the Dominion, but perhaps no less terrifying in its own way, is the Reformist Church or more simply **The Reformation**. This theocracy has spread its armed might throughout Italy, Spain, and North Africa, and holds true to the belief that God turned His eyes away from the world in despair, and with God's gaze turned away, Demons slipped the gates of Hell and emerged into the world.

The Reformation believe the only way to end the Brood is to restore the world to proper worship in the eyes of God. What the Reformation lack in term of supernatural might, they more than make up for in fanatical devotion. Having already completed a massive armed build up, the Reformation prepares for a crusade to salvage the world from darkness – either the guilty will bow before the might of God once more, or the Reformation will purge every last sinner and false god from the Earth.

Meanwhile, in the north of Europe, the former United Kingdom stands as another emerging great power. United by a faction of Nemissaries known as **The Society of Lions**, the United Kingdom has begun to restore Her population and recover Her lost cities. The process is painfully slow, hampered by both internal conflicts and limited access to mainland resources. Many amongst the people of those isles feel themselves united now in a way that they have never known throughout history, and stand defiant against the Dominion, the Brood, and the Reformation.

For all its troubles though, the lands dominated by the Society are not without hope. Compared to the Dominion, the Nemissaries within the Society of Lions have chosen to protect and guide, rather than rule. While this has prevented them from achieving the same absolute strength the Dominion has, there is certainly a moral victory in the path that was chosen, and in many ways the populace possess perhaps the best standard of living remaining on European soil.

Another faction operating in Europe that shares many of its similarities with its American brethren are **The Thorns,** often known in Europe as the Old Faith, and they

are far more powerful than their American counterparts. The Nemissaries who follow The Circle built the Thorns here just like their ideological counterparts crafted the Dominion. To do so, they gathered followers and powers quickly after the Fall, working to establish the dominance of their ideology in a far more efficient manner than most factions managed.

Whereas the North American 'branch' of the Thorns has remained reactive and remote, the Thorns in Europe launched what amounted to an outright Crusade to reclaim what they perceived to be the sacred sites in Europe.

The Nemissaries backing the Thorns are also known to have displayed curious abilities not seen frequently elsewhere. Particularly of note is a powerful ability to control plant life. It isn't a huge jump in logic to realise that the vast and rapid re-growth of Europe's forests is at least in part the Thorns' doing. As for their ultimate motives, as ever, the Thorns remain elusive. They have gathered a great many followers and seemed to pay homage to the Shards, but having recovered their sacred sites, they seem to have little direct interest in conflict with anyone but the Harbingers.

Besides these giants, a number of prominent minor factions exist within Europe; one of the most prosperous being **The Baltic League.** The League represents an attempt by various city states of Norway, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania and most notably St Petersburg, to create a combined front to resist the Dominion and hang on to their nations' traditions and customs.

Against all odds, numerous cities managed to survive the Fall, and form a series of independent city states which are now generally referred to as the Free Cities. **The Free Cities** are mainly confined to the former nations of Germany, Poland, and Spain, and do not represent a faction in the sense that they cooperate between one another, but that they are notable for their fierce independence, standing like islands in the storm of the European conflict.

Another minor faction with significant influence, but no territory to speak of, is the **Pauper's Crusade** - a collection of like-minded individuals from the former protestant denominations of Europe, dedicated to stopping the spread of the Reformation at any cost. The Crusade lacks any formal territory, and exists principally as an ideological faction within the surviving nations.

Middle East

The nations of the Middle East, like most, fared badly during the Fall. The various dictatorships which made up the bulk of the middle eastern countries fell rapidly to the Brood's onslaught. Some nations fared better than others but in the end it didn't take long for almost all national identity to be washed away, eclipsed by renewed faith or ethnic identity.

The followers of Islam, for the most part, regarded the Brood and the Reapers as abominations before their god, choosing to label them as Ghuls. They reacted far quicker to the real threat of the Brood, and in doing so, managed to preserve a great many holy sites from the Reapers' onslaught. All of their dedication and faith could not stop one of the Reapers, whom they would give the name "Blasphemy", from levelling the city of Mecca. It should be noted that at least one small ray of hope came from this horror. The Reaper did not emerge from the attempt unscathed and the fact that it was a simple young woman who managed to harm the previously assumed invincible Reapers would change the face of the Middle East forever.

In the aftermath of these events, Islam found a new beginning. As millions flocked to its banner, reacting quite the opposite to how the Reapers had hoped. This new power known as **The Pure** set about the rebuilding of Mecca and the restoration of holy sites throughout the Arab world.

The movement set out to peacefully reintegrate the nations and bring about a new world through cooperation and faith set against a common enemy. To do this, they re-established trade routes and fortified communities, asking for nothing but understanding and common aid in return. The result is a rare beacon of progress and hope in an otherwise dark world.

Another power to rise in the Middle East are the secretive, and terrifying **Sand Eaters**. Similar to the Thorns, this enigmatic cult worships the Shards and draws its mythology primarily from the ancient gods of the region. Like the Thorns, they make little use of complex technology, but rely heavily on the strange gifts the Shards have bestowed upon them, and the support of likeminded Nemissaries, known for their own peculiar traits and abilities – not least of which being the ability to seemingly control the desert sands.

Next to these great powers, **Zionists** seem a doomed faction. Made up of those children of Israel that survived the horrors of the Fall, they continue to endure and cling to their ancient faith in the ruins of the holy land. Time has done nothing in this area to stem the tide of hatred, and despite the insistence of the Pure on peaceful methods of reclamation, old conflicts are still very much alive. As ever, those who cling to the Jewish faith seem beset not just by the Brood but by the remnants of human hatred as well.

The Middle East is bitterly fought over by the great powers amongst the Nemissaries. This isn't just because of its theological significance, but rather it seems to possess some of the strongest Shards in the known world. The valley of Gehenna itself near old Jerusalem is remarkable for being the last site that anybody saw the prophet Ah'kesh alive.

Asia

In all the world, no single area has suffered greater damage than Asia. High population densities lead to the Brood reaching uncontrollable numbers, and the vast horde was only brought to heel by the deployment of nuclear weapons. Combined with these twin tragedies, Asia was also the subject of attack by not just one, but four confirmed Reapers – one of them believed to be the aforementioned "Blasphemy", and the other three being given the titles "Guei Lung", "Akuma" and "Searing Wind".

The combination of these disasters has left Asia largely a nightmarish wasteland overrun by the Brood and spoiled by nuclear fallout and the relics of a dead civilisation. Life is tenacious however, and against all odds, some pockets of human civilisation do remain, hidden by the sheer size of this vast region of the world.

No great factions have yet arisen from Asia, but that may yet change with the rise of the **Hell Eaters**. This previously obscure faction has emerged, led by a series of powerful Nemissaries, to conquer numerous territories surrounding the former nation of China.

Asia's Nemissaries also stand apart. A curious breed, they operate on a very different set of understandings than their western counterparts. The factions familiar to most western Nemissaries simply don't exist here, and with the rise of the Hell Eaters, a new order is coming. China's Nemissaries may have to deal with a largely dead nation, but their power seems great, and before the world's story is done, the Dragons of the East will play their part.

Russia

Russia stands as a gutted shadow of itself; her fall was long and painful, drawn out by a determined people desperate to hold on to what little they had. Just like in China, the Brood dominate the continent, swarms numbering in the thousands routinely moving through the region. Nuclear scarring and hostile weather make this whole region particularly hazardous to human life.

Even here, humanity clings on desperately. No nations have risen but groups of survivors still cling to life. These people survive by adopting an almost totally nomadic approach; hunting, gathering and moving, always trying to stay one step ahead of the Brood. The days of these groups seem numbered, even with the support of Nemissaries; their lives like that of all scavengers become harder with every passing year.

Amongst these desperate people a new force is rising. Led by powerful and charismatic Nemissaries, many of the nomad tribes have begun to gather under the banner of **The Legion**. Together, they ready themselves to sweep into the crumbling ruins of Europe and take from the Dominion and other great powers what they need to survive. With luck, and the powers of the Nemissaries behind them, they may yet prove a force to be reckoned with.

Despite the nomadic nature of most of Russia's population, a few scattered groups have managed to cling on to their old ways of life and fortify regions against the Brood. Most such communities have retreated to subway networks, military bunkers and other remnants of the old Russia. These groups rely heavily on the nomads to provide them with trade, and in turn provide manufactured goods which could be acquired nowhere else. Many such communities have become renowned for their skill in particular areas of manufacture; some even going so far as to restore old factory complexes. They have even begun to prosper as the Legion expends precious resources to arm itself for the war to come.

Russia can be singularly inhospitable where Nemissaries are concerned. Some spiritual malaise seems to permeate the region which causes Nemissaries to develop a strange sickness; their Hollows growing stronger while they grow weaker. For most, this forces them from the region prematurely, or consumes them utterly.

A few have managed to adapt in the face of these conditions. Taking the bitter cold to heart, they call themselves **The Frostborn**. These strange Nemissaries work to alien goals, seemingly commanding the fury of winter. They seem to have a curious need to engage in riddles and to play out elaborate games with their prey.

For all their dark aspects, the Frostborn are also honourable creatures. Whilst they demand terrible sacrifices, they also place their lives on the line for those who obey them, taking a role similar to the Architects and guiding the nomadic tribes and isolated communities like the wise ones of old.

Rivalling this new power are the Nemissaries of the Circle. Like the Frostborn, they have adapted to the strange powers of the north, taking on something of the relentless cold into themselves and have become a dark mirror of their faction's ordinary views. With the bulk of the population already existing in a state the Circle finds pleasing, they have become almost like wolves playing at herding sheep. They find themselves teaching harsh lessons as often as fighting the Brood, and have become in their own minds hunters, culling the weak and preserving the strong.

Africa

The cradle of human civilisation was the first region to suffer the wrath of the Reapers. It holds terrors unlike the rest of the world, but also holds the hopes and dreams of humanity in its dark heart.

Before the Fall, Africa had become central to much of the world's political climate. The construction of the orbital elevator had transformed many African nations from impoverished states to First World powers.

When the Fall came, these new nations suffered terribly, but a great many interests acted quickly to preserve what they had. This coalition of powers survived the bulk of the Reapers' initial assaults by hiding and when those terrifying powers disappeared, they gathered their forces and entrenched themselves around the site of the elevator's construction.

Forcing access to what remained of the satellite infrastructure of the old world, and gathering technical data and specifications, this loose coalition soon formed into the great power known as **the Artificers**. Now, the reach of this organisation is felt across the globe.

Yet the Artificers don't exist without challenge; the Brood is as pervasive as ever. Particularly in the central and north eastern regions of the continent, the Brood's power has traditionally been unstoppable. Recently however, this status quo began to change. Though it baffles even the Harbingers, the Brood seem to be fighting a civil war in the birthplace of mankind, and further reports allege some terrible change has been visited upon the creatures. There are those Nemissaries who whisper that the Hive has arrived here in full strength, and others who claim to have seen Broodspawn with no discernable human shape, and armoured in the very substance of the shards themselves. Of the cause or reason however, none can say.

But between these overwhelming powers, numerous small nations have emerged. The shifting of the world's climate along with the general lack of nuclear devastation in the region has made it possible for specific nations and city states to rise from the ashes. If it weren't for the old hatreds that still incite the conservative people of the region, a great unifying power would no doubt rise. Unfortunately, many communities tend to be xenophobic and isolationist out of fear and suspicion, if not practice and tradition. Burdened with abundance, these communities define themselves along tribal and ethnic lines, choosing to stand apart from their neighbours.

With all the powers gathered in the region, it's not surprising that Nemissaries flock from across the world. Competition for resources is fierce, and Nemissaries here find themselves at odds with one another here more than anywhere else on the globe.

For newcomers, Africa is a continent filled with great promise and mystery, but for those who think its treasures can be taken easily, it proves time and time again to be one of the deadliest regions in the world.

South America

South America stands silent and empty of humanity, as far as the handful of visitors can tell. Not one human being survives alive in this region. Its plains, mountains and jungles seem to have become host to a perverse mirror of evolution. As Broodspawn murder one another in countless numbers, new-born Brood emerge from the corpses, and the twisted cycle begins anew.

Everywhere the land seems choked with death and blood; every single settlement that should contain life is a twisted echo of itself. Even Nemissaries, for all their powers, find this place incredibly deadly, as if the countless dead were screaming at them from past the veil, attempting to drive the would-be intruders from their resting place.

Those few who have endured here for any length of time have found that the Brood congregate amidst the ruins of the ancient civilisations of this land. There the Harbingers rule without question, their armies slaughtering one another to the laughter of these malignant would-be gods. Rumours circulate that in these vast ancient cities, tribes of humans are kept alive for the amusement of the Harbingers, and to provide raw material for their armies of Broodspawn.

Despite all its dangers, South America might hold the true secrets of the Brood and even the Hive. The Prophecy of Ah'kesh seems to imply that certain sites in the region hold great significance to what is to come. Certainly, more than a few look at the ancient practices and vanished civilisations of the region, and wonder whether or not the Brood are truly new to this world.

Australia

Always a harsh and deadly land in its own right, it's fitting that Australia has become a battleground, its people clinging to life in the face of the Blight and the Brood. The region is a particular flashpoint of conflict amongst Nemissaries, which serves as a dark vision of things to come. Here, the Harbingers have organised themselves, put aside their feuds and begun the systematic extermination of every living thing on the continent.

In the face of this, a ray of hope has emerged. Driven by desperation, the Nemissaries there have banded together, fighting a constant desperate battle to survive against overwhelming odds.

It seems that the conflict could go in either direction. The Nemissaries' efforts, whilst ensuring survival in the short term, are quickly depleting the fragile resources available to the mortal factions of the region. If some form of help doesn't come soon, a slow war of attrition will overcome the determined defenders of the region.

No single great nation has emerged, but dozens of city states and fractured principalities now dot the continent. Many such groups based themselves off the old territorial boundaries of the world before. If it wasn't for the relentless assaults of the Brood, this might have allowed the nation of Australia to re-emerge; indeed, there are many, despite all the challenges, that hope this could still be accomplished.

A growing movement that calls itself simply **The Union** has begun attempting to unify the various city states. Their challenge seems an impossible one, particularly when the Nemissaries who might otherwise aid them are clinging to life by a thread. Still, humanity has proved again and again that it's capable of the impossible, and a great power might rise from the region yet; indeed, it might be Australia's only hope.

The Oceans of the World

Once the oceans and the coastlines provided succour to mankind. Sea trade and harbours were essential to the great cities of old. Now, however, the coastlines and the oceans of the world represent an unrelenting nightmare, surrendered almost entirely to the Brood. As mentioned, the Brood infects animal life rarely, but even considering that only one in a thousand animals might rise as Broodspawn, the horror that this statistic presents when applied to the teeming life in the oceans should give anyone pause for thought.

The Atlantic Ocean represents one of the areas most lost to mankind. With the fall of the Old World, large-scale shipping has become impractical; not to mention that the ever-present threat of oceanic Broodspawn has lead to the near-total abandonment of the Atlantic Ocean as an area of human interest. The coastlines, however, are more settled when compared to the rest of the world; particularly along the eastern seaboard of America, and the western regions of Europe and Africa, which are fairly safe. Although the Broodspawn breed in the Atlantic Ocean, its great depth and vast size stem the growth of the Broodspawn to somewhat manageable levels, allowing reasonable settlement and some isolated fishing in the ocean.

Perhaps the most deadly ocean in the world is the Pacific. Warm, shallow seas, teeming with a great variance of life, has lead to the totally uncontrolled growth of the Broodspawn, and the total collapse of the oceanic eco-system. Even the coastlines of the Pacific are incredibly dangerous. Without consistent manmade flood defences, storms and natural disasters routinely destroy great areas of coastline, and what nature doesn't claim, the Brood consumes.

Similar in many ways to the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean is almost as dangerous, albeit for different reasons. The weather is calmer here in comparison, though still volatile compared to the world's cooler oceans. Like the Pacific, the Broodspawn pose a continuous threat, and are particularly known for aggressive assaults on the shorelines, though their total number is certainly smaller than the ocean's neighbour. The greatest problem is that the Indian Ocean is all but devoid of life, being still poisoned from the horrific fallout from central Asia.

The two regions in all the world perhaps most free of the Brood, are the Arctic and Southern oceans. Both these regions remain some of the last unmolested regions of the Earth, and neither mankind's, nor the Broodspawn's, presence is generally felt here, barring a few small structures which tell of the achievements of a lost age.

Chapter II

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The Shadows of the World

"I have seen the dark universe yawning Where the black planets roll without aim, Where they roll in their horror unheeded, Without knowledge, or lustre, or name."

- H. P. Lovecraft

On this scarred Earth the shadows deepen. Mankind picks through its ruins and attempts to rebuild, beset at every turn by the menace of the Brood and given cruel hope through the actions of the new-born Nemissaries. In truth, it isn't these obvious threats that threaten to bring about mankind's final ruin, but rather the hidden secrets of the world; the legacy of our own sins, eons in the making.

The Shards

Mute sentinels watching over a dying world, the Shards were there when our Fall began and may very well be the only things remaining to see it end. For decades, mankind and the Nemissaries have studied these enigmatic objects but for all their efforts few hard facts have been determined.

Silent Witnesses

Most accept that the Shards came to us from the darkness of space during the Black Rain. Not all are convinced; a few dispute this extra-terrestrial origin, claiming that the Shards fell from a more literal heaven or hell. Either way, little to nothing is known of the Shards before they came to rest upon the Earth.

Whatever their origins, certain things are known about the Shards' natures. First of all, each Shard is composed of the material known as Voidglass and are for all intents and purposes utterly impervious to harm. Every attempt to penetrate their surface has met with failure. The most powerful lasers, Voidglass tools, and even a direct strike from a nuclear warhead have all proved useless.

Nearly every Shard known stands somewhere between three and ten metres tall, resembling jagged crystals, tapering towards one or more points at their ends. The surface of the Shards are essentially featureless, absorbing almost all light save that which strikes its edges, and remaining unaffected by the ravages of weather or time.

While the bulk of the Shards are massive, some are quite small, capable even of serving as weapons and tools. Each of these fragments has all the power of its larger cousins and is quite distinct from the inert fragments of Voidglass scattered across the globe.

The weight of each Shard seems to vary tremendously and often fluctuates if an attempt to move them is made. At times, the smallest of them seems to weigh relatively little but at the first attempt to move them, their weight grows exponentially, sometimes reaching weights in the hundreds of tonnes.

Dark Whispers

Exactly what the true purpose is of the Shards is a subject of much debate. Many believe that they are either directly or indirectly responsible for the Broodspawn and, more specifically, that they brought the virus which began the Brood's onslaught with them from the Void.

The subject of the Shards' purposes is rendered all the more obscure by the extreme variance in their capabilities. By far the most common are the active Shards. These silent sentinels seem to repel the Brood and possess a curious ability to lay bare the contents of a human soul.

It is this ability, more than any other, which prevents people from living near to these Shards. When humans come into close proximity with such a Shard, they find guilty memories drawn to the surface of their consciousness. The Shards seem to draw forth every sin, every perceived guilt and misdeed, laying them all bare to the conscious mind.

The intensity of this effect varies between Shards. With a rare few, it's a gentle reminder where the experience often proves cathartic. Often, but not always, people find themselves weighing their lives and are generally made better by the experience. As a result, the areas surrounding such Shards are a rare prize. An ironic side effect is the bloody conflict which often follows the discovery of such a benevolent watcher, sometimes resulting in a slow but inevitable slide towards far more harmful effects.

Most Shards, whilst not malevolent, are not so benign. Although the average person initially has little to fear from such a Shard in the short term, the psychic barrage eventually becomes an unbearable onslaught, every sin drawn to the surface and made into maddening pain. Under this assault, for all those without a clear conscience it is only a matter of time before the Shard claims their sanity and their life.

These people, bound to the Shards and consumed by self-loathing, often refuse to leave the presence of their judges, mortifying their flesh and making grisly and disturbing shrines around the Shard. Ultimately, only the guilty need truly fear short-term exposure to Shards of this type. That said, no community can prosper nearby as sooner or later, even the most innocent person would eventually succumb, though in their case it is a matter of weeks or months rather than days. For all the dangers, these Shards do make a good temporary shelter, and more than one escaped slave has found their freedom when their pursuers attempted to chase them into the presence of such a Shard.

A few Shards exist with a far darker reputation. These rare entities can only be described as malevolent. They drive people into madness and despair for no discernible reason, inflicting their unique brand of torture on even the most innocent souls. They also usually either lack the power to, or choose not to, repel the Broodspawn. These

Shards, rightly feared and avoided, are dangerous in the extreme and seeking one out is tantamount to suicide.

Not all Shards are active. Some demonstrate no power whatsoever, standing mute and inert in the world. Most speculate that these are merely large pieces of Voidglass, but attempts to recover them are often dissuaded by the fact that on at least one occasion, such a Shard has awoken both powerful and with an extremely malevolent disposition.

Whispers of the Past

The thing that draws many to the Shards – particularly Nemissaries – is not their capacity to judge but rather the knowledge they contain, not to mention the fact that every Nemissary must seek one out imminently after their creation to balance the nature of their soul and grant them a Creed.

Most Shards are quite capable of granting visions and often do so with some frequency, particularly to individuals and Nemissaries who linger in the location. For the truly brave, touching a Shard brings one into direct communion with it. In the case of mortals, this can be incredibly dangerous as the full weight of the Shard's judgement falls upon them. Most are broken under the strain but a few gain an incredible sense of peace, achieving a state approaching enlightenment and sometimes gaining strange powers and insight.

Nemissaries on the other hand, having already journeyed to a Shard at least once in their lifetime, never seem to face this judgement again; at least not for simply being in the Shard's presence. Instead they enter a dream-like state, very much like the one they faced at the moment of their Second Breath. There they wander a strange landscape composed of elements of the Shard's knowledge and their own mind.

In this place, it's possible to learn much. Myriad secrets are hidden in these places, from fragmentary lore about the Nemissaries' nature to the knowledge of the Songs and the Brood. It should seem then that the Nemissaries would know much of themselves, but the fact remains that these excursions are not without dangers.

The Shards may not be able to directly pass judgement on a Nemissary in this instance but those who seek to gain knowledge are sorely tested and it is not outside the realm of the Shard's power to destroy a Nemissary who fails its particular brand of twisted trials. Not only that but the Shards never give knowledge directly. Rather they convey information through metaphor and the use of memories from a subject's mind. As a result, the true meaning of any communion can be difficult to decipher.

The Wisdom of Ah'kesh

To many Nemissaries, the most sought-after thing that the Shards can grant is the Prophecy of Ah'kesh. No Shard has ever given a complete version of the Prophecy and no two Shards reveal this in exactly the same way. Despite this, a great deal of wisdom has been pieced together and collected into a series of writings and scripture common to the Nemissaries.

The written Prophecy talks first of the past. It seems to most to be a collection of fanciful mythology, some of which ties indirectly with fragments of human history and religion across the globe. Other sections seem entirely alien, and cannot be ascribed to any particular point in human history.

The beginning of Ah'kesh's writings deal heavily with creation mythology. These texts have some parallels with existing religions, but certain details are entirely unique. They speak of a cryptic "time before", and a war in the heavens. It implies that the world as we know it was created as a form of peace offering to end a terrible, seemingly endless conflict. Whatever resolution was achieved, it seems it was done so through betrayal. The texts speak of the war in Heaven being ended by mortal hands, and the rise of a king known as the Eternal One.

Voidglass

This extremely useful substance was created during the time of the Black Rain. Each piece of Voidglass is a fragment of the Shards which fell to Earth, but lacks their great power. These fragments still have a myriad of uses, as they are one of the few materials which the Brood seems to intrinsically fear. For this reason, many individuals fashion these small fragments into lucky charms, though their effectiveness is dubious at best.

Most pieces of Voidglass don't make excellent weapons, being only a few inches across. Some however, can be fashioned into crude knives or rudimentary axes. Used in this way, Voidglass can be devastating as it makes a mockery of conventional armour and sears flesh, leaving wounds similar to that inflicted by a cutting torch. As a result it serves as a very effective means of overcoming the regeneration of Nemissaries and the Broodspawn. This harmful effect is best harnessed with simpler weapons as while small fragments of Voidglass generally can't be turned into useful bullets, they can certainly form arrowheads.

Some amongst the Nemissaries are also capable of reshaping Voidglass into new forms, manufacturing highly effective and deadly weaponry. The most powerful Nemissaries are also capable of creating Voidglass from mundane materials, making them some of the most sought after individuals in the world.

Many Nemissaries have struggled to make sense of these first sections. Some believe they are literal, intended to be an actual true creation of our world or the cosmos. Others hold that these are parables, designed to teach lessons rather than give direct information. Some even hold that these are no less prophetic than the rest of the text and refer to events yet to come. They believe that the war in the Heavens is a parallel for the struggle occurring now, and the tainted peace is a reference to the Fall.

The Creeds

Later, the writings discuss the Creeds. This information is laid out as stories which tell of events bringing wisdom to a particular entity. These texts while certainly helpful to new Nemissaries provide precious few clues; a situation which is made worse by the tales being inconsistent in referencing past and future events. This has led to wildly different interpretations as to their intended use and value.

Most see them as a kind of commentary; effectively wisdom gained from the rest of the text by Ah'kesh and spoken in haste as an observation rather than literal revelation. To others, the wisdom contained is no less relevant than the rest of the text. They analyse every line believing that there is real history and secret lore hidden in the stories. They often put forward the idea that the confusion in tense is entirely deliberate, meant to allow the tales to be interpreted differently by each reader.

As always, there are some who take things further. They choose to see the stories as literally true, representing events that occurred during or after the war in Heaven. They explain the contradictions in the text by simply stating that if one accepts that primordial dragons and gods have slaughtered one another in a world without structure or time, then why should people be concerned over the correct use of tense in a story meant to relate events of that era?

Dark Inheritance

After speaking of the Creeds, the text shifts dramatically. It breaks flow and begins to describe in prophetic terms various events which may have already occurred, or are yet to take place.

The various narratives continue in this way until their end. They speak of the rise of a civilisation built in the image of the Eternal One. It speaks of monuments, power and of creatures like men placing themselves above the gods of old, raising effigies to their own magnificence.

This civilisation is declared to be both magnificent and flawed. Inch by inch, it succumbed to hubris and pride and was consumed by a darkness of its own making. Scattered to the winds, it existed as a shadow of its former self, pursued relentlessly by the evils it had unleashed.

Most who read the text tend to believe this parallels some events from biblical mythology, pointing out as a particular example the Tower of Babel and certain references that are disturbingly similar to the tale of Pandora's Box.

There is also a dissenting view, common amongst Nemissaries, that this civilisation was extra-solar in nature, and certain elements in the text do seem to back up the idea that this was a galaxy – or even universe – spanning civilisation. Although not specifically mentioned by the texts, few can fail to connect the fact that the Black Rain did originate from space with the idea of an extra-solar civilisation.

What has Passed

The text fails to answer what became of that elder civilisation in direct terms, instead shifting onto a new narrative, representing things that have already come to pass in our own world. It speaks of the young and the weak recapturing the majesty of those who were once gods. It tells of the rise and fall of kingdoms, each on the bones of the old, the coming of great plagues and a war which would be both the end and the salvation of mankind.

It then goes on to state how a second, more terrible, war would emerge from the first, and that the impure would declare themselves righteous and attempt to purge those who stood before them.

It speaks of the oppressed harnessing the sun, and the impure reaching to touch the heavens, screaming at the horror of their creation. There is little debate that these events refer to the rise of western civilisation, and particularly the first and second World Wars. Most go as far as to connect harnessing the sun with the creation of the atomic bomb, and those touching the heavens as the Third Reich scientists conscripted for the American space program.

The prophecy again grows cryptic. It speaks of many events without focus, most of which are difficult to pin to actual occurrences. Its final segments, though, are clear for all to see. It talks of a Second Renaissance, and of mankind reaching out to glories undreamed of, only to call forth the Watchers in the Dark and our damnation.

It plainly states that the Black Rain would come, and the world would burn before the horrors of the Reapers. It then speaks of the emergence of the Nemissaries, and of mankind's survival, despite the fact that our due day and extinction had come. With all this said, the Prophecy turns to the future.

What is to Come

No single section causes as much division as the last. At best, it's difficult to interpret its meanings, and only a few signs seem to be recognisable at present. Most agree that the Prophecy references the emergence of the greater factions of the Nemissaries. It also covers an ancient threat, a primordial darkness most Nemissaries connect with the Hive. It seems to hint also that the Reapers are not dead, but doesn't explicitly state in what form they still exist –

only that their reach is long and extends well past their deaths.

It speaks of the emergence of new Creeds as time moves on, and seems to hint that Nemissaries are not the only supernatural creatures wandering the Earth. It speaks of something known as the Raven Kin emerging in the end of days and of an older force still, slumbering beneath the earth. It indicates that the "darkness", whether it's the Hive or something else, will emerge with enough strength that if the Nemissaries can't find a way to win, mankind will succumb to a fate far worse than death.

The Prophecy's last words seem to indicate that there is still hope remaining and that the Nemissaries will ultimately be either the Damnation or Saviours of mankind. As the Prophecy says, "We are our fathers' sins; for better or for ill, we draw our swords and stand before the oncoming end."

Nemissaries

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

-Abraham Lincoln

From the moment of their appearance, the Nemissaries have proved an enigma to the survivors of the Fall. Redeemer and destroyer both, no single group has done so much to both save and damn mankind. They have in their possession all the tools needed to end the darkness of the Age of Sins, but with a single missed step they might plunge it forever into suffering and tyranny.

For all their power, the Nemissaries are still creatures of flesh and bone and, in a very real sense, are still human. Each Nemissary possesses a number of incredible characteristics, but not least of them is the fact that after everything which has been done to them, and every trial they have endured, they still retain a human soul.

Rebirth

Nemissaries vary wildly in their powers and capabilities, but all of them share a single immutable beginning; each Nemissary has died at least once, and in the world of Sins death isn't always the end. Most who die are reborn as mindless Broodspawn, but a few endure even beyond death, and the Brood's curse becomes the catalyst through which the first Nemissaries emerged.

Every Nemissary was born like the rest of humanity, but even from birth there was something different; each and every one possessed a spark of creativity or will. This gift took many forms, but all who possessed it were exceptional in some way. Many of them gave in to despair, passed over by a world which despises those who are different, but a few persevered.

In the past age, these people were the great scientists, artists and musicians, and countless other amazing people ultimately forgotten by the turning of ages. By the time of Sins, they are the survivors, the community leaders, people who endure, lead, protect, and struggle. Whether they are intelligent, creative or brave, each possesses a strong, wilful soul, and although the light can be dimmed – even snuffed out – those who know to look will always see.

Life is fickle, and in this world death is everywhere. This is the single common thread each Nemissary shares. Each one of them died and each one of them chose to live again.

"It's all too much to take in!"

Sometimes, it's best to begin from a clean start. The long sleep of the Reborn can be very helpful for players who don't know the setting well or who prefer to play characters without a deeply entrenched background. For instance, if you played the free preview adventure, "Sins: Dead City", you could have your character wake up quite literally in the future, having died and spent the better part of half a century as a Broodspawn.

Of course, in the setting, this phenomenon is pretty rare, but ultimately there's nothing wrong with a whole group taking this option, and it can provide a great way of jumping into the setting and preserving an air of mystery and danger to the antagonists the characters will face.

The Reborn

Every Nemissary remembers their death. For most, it came at the hands of the Brood, hungering for victims to increase their numbers. Each one of the Reborn remembers the pain of their passing; the anguish as they felt their lives slip away, and then each one heard the Broodsong. Many describe it as a wondrous thing, like a lover's embrace. Even as they die, most reach out to it. A few refuse it, seeing its darkness and corruption. They pass to whatever reward awaits them and their bodies lie dead as was intended.

Amongst those seduced by the Broodsong, individuals with a strong soul often retain a semblance of who they are. In turmoil, they watch their new body move, and kill. Distraught, but powerless, they still feel the influence of the Brood screaming at them to give in – most don't last long at all. Normally, the best they ever achieve is perhaps to force their new body into gunfire, or to hesitate just long enough to save a loved one – one final spit in the eye of the Brood before they fade into nothingness.

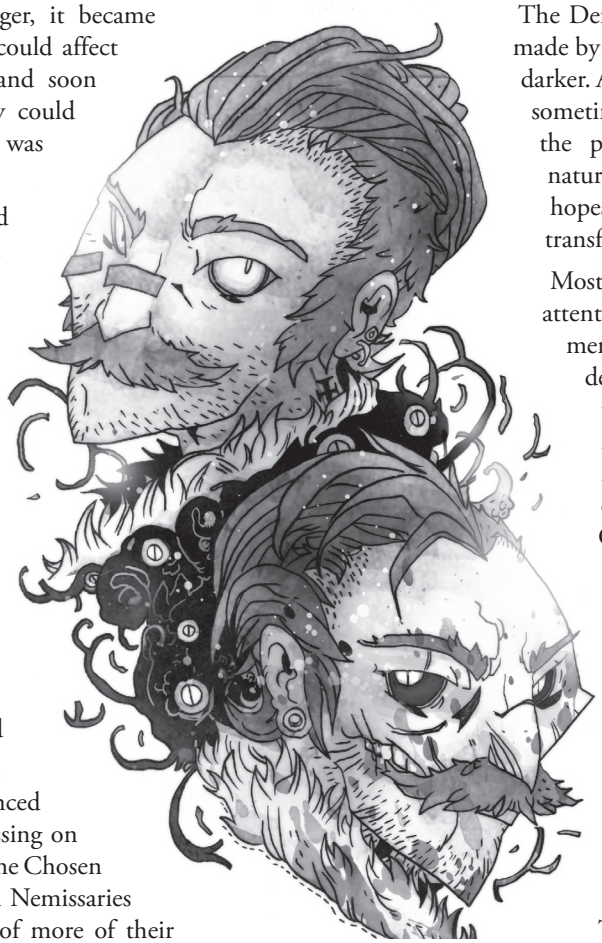
A precious few, though, are stronger. It might take hours, days or even years, but they gather their strength and their will. Clawing in despair at their own soul, their consciousness shifts, rising to the surface and regaining their body once more, tearing the corruption from their flesh. It takes every ounce of their strength as they pull

themselves free of the song, and are baptised in the fire of the Second Breath.

The Chosen

As Nemissaries grew stronger, it became apparent that many of them could affect humans with their powers, and soon the question of whether they could make more of their own kind was answered.

Some Nemissaries discovered that by seeking out an individual which carried a similar spark to themselves, and willingly sundering a fragment of their own soul, it was possible to ritually kill that individual, and all but guarantee their transition into a Nemissary. The vast bulk of these new Nemissaries, known as Chosen, were fully aware of what they were to become. Only a tiny percentage had their Second Breaths forced upon them.



Only relatively experienced Nemissaries are capable of passing on their gift, and thus at present, the Chosen are quite rare – in fact, not all Nemissaries even know that the creation of more of their kind by their own hands is even possible.

Death for the Chosen is a far less traumatic ordeal. In most cases, their creator chooses some relatively painless method in calm surroundings. If the would-be Nemissary hoped their Rebirth would be painless however, they find themselves surely disappointed. Even for the Chosen, the process of Rebirth is painful and terrifying. Memories from their creator and the Broodspawn flow through their minds.

Just like with the Reborn, the Broodsong encroaches upon their mind, threatening to consume them. The primary difference is that the connection to their creator provides a kind of beacon, allowing the new Chosen to better resist the power of the Broodspawn. In addition to this, the Chosen learn quickly, developing their powers at a faster rate than other Nemissaries.

This process has downsides, however. First of all, the cost to one who would create a Chosen is dear. Ultimately they must sacrifice a piece of themselves to complete the ritual. In addition, having cheated their way to Rebirth, the Chosen have a permanent stain upon their soul, giving greater strength to the dark whispers in the dark recesses of their mind.

The Defiled

The Defiled, like the Chosen, were not made by accident but their creation is far darker. As the Brood grows in strength, it sometimes seeks out people that possess the potential strength of will and nature to become a Nemissary in the hopes of enslaving these beings and transforming them into Harbingers.

Most that come to the Brood's attentions simply find that the one mercy granted to them is a quick death as the Broodspawn's attempt to force the transformation into a Nemissary often results in a soulless creature that sinks quickly back into true death. Occasionally, it succeeds in a fashion, and a Nemissary is born. Of these few, a handful are either rescued or possess the strength of will and cunning to escape their captors.

These Nemissaries often find themselves tortured by their enforced immortality, often resenting this strange new life they were thrust into. This gives them strength – an iron-clad will that few Nemissaries can match – but also potentially a twisted body and soul as they often retain some of the physical characteristics of Broodspawn.

Even amongst their own kind, the Defiled are often feared or reviled, the lingering taint of their foul birth clinging to them. Most consider them only a hair's breadth away from becoming one more monster in a world that has plenty already.

Awakening

The first thing most Nemissaries feel is pain as their minds wrest control of their bodies once again. Weakened, they wander in a daze as their bodies rebuild themselves, defying the Brood and reshaping the Nemissary once again into human form.

When they emerge from this dreamlike state, perhaps days or months after their rebirth, many Nemissaries find that the world they once knew has passed them by. The lucky few find themselves amongst friends, or in the case

of the Chosen, their makers. Others, particularly those amongst the Reborn, sleep so long in the Brood's embrace that they find that years have passed – even decades in some cases. As time goes by, more and more Nemissaries are awakening sooner, the time shortening often from years to months, or even days.

At this point, a Nemissary is still vulnerable. Though their bodies have changed, retaining many of the properties of a Broodspawn combined with growing new powers, they possess a dangerous weakness; they can still hear the Broodsong. The new-born Nemissary cannot hold out forever without some kind of help.

Each Nemissary feels as if there is a literal hole within them and what soon follows is a powerful compulsion, driving them across potentially great distances into the presence of one of the enigmatic Shards to heal their wounded soul.

Judgement

The Nemissaries who make it before a Shard find themselves judged by it. Each Nemissary is plunged into a strange dream-like place, where they confront the sins of their past, and the horrors that they have overcome. These trials are not kind, and many fail, their souls blasted to pieces by the ordeal, found unworthy of the gift of the Second Breath.

For those who endure – those who justify their existence and more importantly those who find a reason to exist – the Shards heal the wounds inflicted upon their soul and reveal to the Nemissaries an ancient power and purpose.

The Creeds

During their ordeal before the Shards, a Nemissary sees many things. Most of them are fragments of their life, situations of their mind's own making. A few though can only be the work of the Shards – some strange memory or vision.

As each Nemissary approaches the end of their trial, they come across a succession of pieces of information. Few remember much at all of these, but all remember the Creeds.

Each Nemissary finds they face a choice. They discover that no matter how strong their will, they cannot escape the Brood alone forever. They must exist for a purpose beyond themselves. The Shards reveal to each that five philosophies or paths, known as the Creeds, are open to them, and each calls in its own way; though most find they are suited to only a few.

The Creeds act like a reinforcement to the Nemissary's soul, binding them with a strength beyond their own and increasing their resistance to the Broodsong many times over. Nemissaries find that as their understanding of their chosen Creed grows, so too does their direct supernatural might.

Tale of the Creeds

The knowledge gained from the Judgement is often subjective, and the information can be quite cryptic, but each Nemissary remembers clearly the following;

"From high above the world I gazed and there I felt a lost and terrible blaze. Seven once stood but five remain alone upon that fetid plane.

First stood the Shapers of the Black Tower, raised by oaths; Keepers of Earth and Heralds of Bone.

In the dark I found the Shapers of the Scarlet Veil wreathed in tears; Keepers of Water and Heralds of Blood.

As battle raged came the Shapers of the Blood Stained Sword, forged in hate; Keepers of Fire and Heralds of Flesh.

As madness took me I gazed upon the Shapers of the Shattered Mirror, broken in despair; Keepers of Air and Heralds of Will.

At the end of all else were revealed the Shapers of the Fools Mask, worn with pride; Keepers of Aether and Heralds of Brood.

Five Broken and Five Remade"

Enlightenment

Ultimately, the Creeds are more than just an aid to the Nemissary's soul; they are a philosophy and a way of life. No Nemissary has yet mastered their Creed, but the powers of those few who have advanced far along the path are terrifying to behold. Some have demonstrated the ability to command entire armies of Broodspawn or break the minds of mortals with little more than a glance.

What lies at the end of these roads remains to be discovered and it is increasingly apparent that most Nemissaries have only begun to understand the full scope of their power.

The Mask

You say I should be serious, that levity doesn't help the situation.
But I tell you this; the day you accept the truth of this world,
you'll wish you had my laughter,
because I'll guarantee you the truth will grant you none.

Some people, with their last breath, curse the world for all the things they've lost. They burn with hatred, pride, desire or curiosity, but those who seek the Mask are different. They put all these things aside and find a strange peace in their demise.

Each follower of the Mask accepts their death, deep inside, but chooses to live again; not to recreate the achievements of a former existence, nor fixate on what they were before, but rather to live a new life, with new promise, to complete that one and to move on yet again.

The followers of the Mask are well known for their curious perspectives and dark humour. They have a reputation amongst their own kind for making light of otherwise grim situations, and are often considered flighty and unreliable. In fairness to the Masks however, it's that they are often willing to acknowledge more possibilities than their fellows, seeing solutions that none expected and always being ready to meet the challenge in a new and different way.

Nickname: The Jesters or the Fools.

Ethics: The Jesters are a strange breed. Each gave up one life and chose to live a new one, free of the restraints of the old. For most, this makes for a difficult road. Learning to separate themselves from attachments and loved ones is often difficult to achieve at first. Learning to cherish their memories but yet move on as a more complete being is harder still.

Many stumble and find the pain of setting aside each life too difficult to bear. They resort to destroying what they love, burning away those things that they grow too close to. Perhaps these pained individuals even live happy lives for a time, but in the end they always descend into tragedy.

Some miss the finer point in a different way, seeking to use the cycle of life and death to change the lives of others. They insert themselves into communities, making them a better place, shaping them into models of perfection, using their powers to make perfect, happy safe havens for their adopted families. Just like their darker fellows though, these perfect worlds normally end in tragedy, either at the hands of the Brood, or their own Hollows.

Some manage to balance these two conflicting human drives, learning to separate hubris and accept the new lives that Fate brings to them, without seeking to change them. There, they learn important lessons, taking away a piece of wisdom with each life and allowing the connections to fade patiently with time. Some even go as far as to stay beside their loved ones, willingly forcing their bodies to age until they seemingly join with their companions in death.

The strangest part of all their nature though, is this Creed's intimate connection with the Brood. Something about their desire to live and their nature of change gives them power over those creatures in a way few Nemissaries can comprehend. They often find themselves strangely drawn to the Mother's song and flirting with disaster at every turn. They build perverse courts from the flesh of loved ones, keeping their memories close in a very visceral form.

Rebirth: Those who would take the mantle of the Mask require an acceptance of their own demise, but fundamentally a desire to live again. Most shift to one of the other Creeds, some internal aspect of their personality overriding every other concern, driving them to live their life again.

For the Jesters though, the drive is different. It represents a primal need to live, but an acceptance that one life has already passed. Very few find the strength to acknowledge this, and to accept that the life they knew is gone. Most turn away when the Mask is offered, but for those few who take it they often find themselves with a strange serenity.

In a way, this very serenity is a test. Those who accept it fail, for a true acceptance of their death simply allows them to fall back into the call of the Mother. For a rare few they emerge from that blissful abyss of their own free will; not the Shard's prodding. They take it, and clothe themselves in it, reborn through the power of the Mask.

Factions: The Jesters rarely choose sides; their nature is often to remain impartial in relation to others. Though they generally exclude Nemissaries from their need to sever old connections, they often still find it hard to settle on a single way of doing things. For people who live many lives, choosing a single point of view is often far too limiting.

One faction that does from time to time draw the Mask, is the Circle, as its primal focus on death and rebirth meshes well with the nature of the Mask. Those that do choose this path often throw themselves at it with a single minded fervour that worries even their own allies. Some become quite unlike others of their Creed, driven by the power of the Circle and its ideology to become something closer to a trickster god of old, testing and probing all those around them, seeking to open other peoples' eyes to new ways of life and beginning to regard themselves almost in the third person. These Nemissaries walk a very dangerous path indeed.

For a few, the ideologies of the Architects or the Throne hold some merit. Though rare, these Masks seek to utilise the resources of the two factions to help them establish their new lives, and often genuinely wish to see others learn from the fruits of their labour.

Curiously, not many of the Jesters are drawn to the Keepers. Even though their viewpoints align very well, the Keepers' nature isn't to discard. While on the surface it might seem that a faction dedicated to learning would suit these Nemissaries well, the reality is that their insistence on recording events makes it difficult for these Nemissaries to live with what they've left behind.

Finally, a disturbing number of the Masks ultimately fail in their journey, returning to that blissful oblivion from whence they came. They seek out the Mother's Song once again and find a final end amongst the Harbingers.

Traits: The Jesters vary a great deal. Like most Nemissaries they tend towards high Conviction, but beyond that their traits vary tremendously. They tend to avoid specialisation, gaining a wide range of capabilities, allowing them to more easily live new lives.

One trait in general which does seem to bind them is an absolute need for proficiency in Panache to facilitate their misdirection, and accordingly most also tend to possess high levels of Cunning.

Favoured Song: Song of Brood.

Failings: The Masks' failing is in many ways their strength too. Setting each life aside might teach them, but it also makes it difficult for these Nemissaries to accumulate long term power and connections. Outside of their Cabal they tend to be isolated individuals, easy to strike down if alone.

In addition to this, many of the Jesters are dangerously close to their Hollows; their acceptance of death means that they are only a hair's breadth away from failing in many cases, and perhaps more followers of the Mask have fallen from their Creed than any other.

Concepts: Actor, assassin, John Doe, psychotic criminal, sly seductress, wandering warrior, reclusive scholar.

Stereotypes

The Sword: "Wow, these guys cannot take a joke. Seriously, one bad comment about his mother and I'm missing an arm? What's he gonna do when he finds out what's in his backpack??"

The Tower: "All that order, like a house of cards. Gotta learn to live a little."

The Mirror: "So much seen, so much learned, so much done, but in the end are they any wiser for it?"

The Veil: "If it were anyone else I'd find what they did funny, but honestly I just don't feel like laughing."

The Throne: "Just like the Tower, they're so caught up in keeping their house of cards together they didn't stop to make sure nobody's about to blow on it."

The Architects: "It's a good thing to move through life without leaving pain, but the key thing there is to move. I don't want to spend an eternity trying to guide people that don't want my help."

The Circle: "All things begin, and all things end, so sayeth the Mother."

The Keepers: "In the end, you just don't get it. Knowledge taught is nothing compared to knowledge gained."

The Harbingers: "There's nothing funny here."

The Mirror

They say in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.
Let me tell you, you're all blind; each and every one.
You were blind when you chose to close your eyes, and you are blinder still when you chose to fear the past.
I'll teach you what you need to know to live, but you'll wish I hadn't before the end.

Sinister and secretive, the Mirror's Creed is a testament to the power of silence and knowledge. For these Nemissaries, no secret is too terrible to know; after all, knowledge is power.

Every follower of the Mirror is a scholar in their own way; each dedicated to a search for a perfection that cannot be. Each one is bound to seek out knowledge and driven onward by the memory of how small the humans' perspective of the world truly is.

Amongst all the Nemissaries that have re-entered this world, they have delved the deepest into its forgotten secrets. They have brought salvation and damnation to millions; whole generations that will never know the secret struggles that took place in the dark corners of the world.

This obsessive need for knowledge has driven them into conflict with their own kind more than once. Each time, though, the Mirrors pick up the pieces, steel themselves with the new knowledge they've gained, and forge onwards into an uncertain future.

Nickname: The Seers, or sometimes the Crones by those wishing to offend.

Ethics: For the Seers, knowledge is everything. Our ability to reason and to know are the single greatest achievements of mankind. For the followers of the Mirror, there is no greater achievement than to uncover the secrets of the world and the great mysteries of the universe.

The reasons differ from individual to individual, but each is drawn by a powerful need to know why. The followers of this Creed are rarely drawn to violence or rulership like others of their kind, but they are no less capable of causing terrible harm when their ideologies fail them. In the pursuit of their knowledge, many lose sight of ethics and humanity; they become willing to destroy anything which stands in their path, and unleash any horror if it leads to a greater revelation about the world.

Alone, this drive has sent more than a few Seers into the embrace of the Mother, simply out of the desire to understand that final enigma; but for the bulk of the Mirrors, a more balanced path presents itself. They see knowledge as the ultimate goal, but also see the application of that knowledge as equally important.

Each chooses to weigh the greater good against their personal feelings, trying to utilise the knowledge they glimpse responsibly. Even amongst these moderates though, there are those who stray, turning their newfound knowledge and power upon their colleagues, becoming obsessed with secrets as opposed to pure learning and taking very much to heart the saying "Only a dead man keeps his secrets".

Rebirth: The Mirror presents itself to a diverse range of individuals, all linked only by a desire to understand the changes wrought upon them and the world. Unlike many, these individuals find the birth pains of the Second Breath an enlightening experience, revelling in the new sensation and realising that so much more is open to them now than ever before.

Such people, in the face of the Shards, often find themselves tempted by experience rather than knowledge. Only those who truly question rather than accept begin the path towards claiming the Creed for their own. As the Shards begin

their tests, individuals often find themselves attempting to outwit their temporary captor. Rather than fighting directly against the horrors unleashed from their own minds, these Nemissaries attempt to push their fear aside and buy breathing room to analyse and overcome these problems.

It's this drive to find a solution, rather than to simply overcome, that pushes an individual towards the Seer's path. Those that chose to ask why the ideal was necessary, who chose to ask the Shards why they do what they do, were often disappointed by the lack of answers; nevertheless, each resolved to find them.

Factions: Of all the factions, the Keepers share a special link with the Mirrors. Their focus on studying the limits of the Nemissary's condition and uncovering the secrets of the world greatly appeal to the Seer's natures. However, after their initial fascination, many begin to chafe under the restrictions of a faction which is all too aware of the dangers that too much knowledge can bring. Many strike out alone in the end or seek the protection of others to continue their researches.

Many find themselves amongst the Circle; the mysteries it holds often draw the Mirrors to it. Their focus on the secrets of the Shards and of the ancient world draws many of the Mirrors, and those that stay are amongst that faction's most loyal supporters.

The Architects often hold some interest to the Mirrors, but usually only in the pursuit of specific goals, and few rise high in that organisation. Fewer still find themselves amongst the ranks of the Throne, often seeing its tactics as far too blunt for their tastes, though a rare few do make themselves very comfortable as something of an advisor in the courts of the Throne.

Of course, the Harbingers represent an enigma. No true Seer wishes to be consumed by the Broodsong, but the Harbingers in many ways represent a final sort of riddle and more than a few followers of the Mirror have become utterly consumed by the desire to know more about the Mother and her nature. Those that do fall often retain an unnatural degree of intelligence, becoming some of the most terrifying Harbingers to walk the Earth. Each one is a true tragedy, because in their fall, the Brood gains every secret they've collected.

Traits: The Seers tend towards high ratings in either Reason or Cunning, and quite often both. They usually possess learned skills in abundance and are rarely direct combatants. They often find themselves accumulating a great many languages, and high ratings in skills such as Academics are extremely common amongst them. A few also take on the roles of master craftsmen, gaining a great deal of satisfaction out of the practical implementation of their knowledge.

Like other Nemissaries, the Seers are not without supernatural might, and the power that comes easiest to them is the Song of Will, as its abilities to unearth secrets are invaluable. More than a few are also masters of a great many Songs, devoting themselves more fully to the Nemissary's primal abilities than any others.

Favoured Song: Song of Will.

Failings: They say curiosity killed the cat, and this statement certainly applies to the Mirrors. They often possess addictive personalities, and find it almost impossible to turn back from the promise of a secret. Quite often this leads them into sticky situations, and their need to uncover the truth brings destruction as often as it brings salvation.

Concepts: Sociopathic serial killer, wandering scholar, occult investigator, martial arts tutor, mad scientist, legendary smith.

Stereotypes

The Sword: "It's true they have a great deal of power, and frankly they're a type of person best observed from a distance. When you absolutely must have something dead though, there's no better place to turn."

The Tower: "Kings, they call them? Where would they be without us? What powers and secrets would they even have? At the end of the day, a King is only as great as those who serve under them, and it's all the more amusing when the King doesn't know that."

The Veil: "So close, so similar, but yet they miss the point."

The Mask: "Frankly, they worry me. To gain so much, and to give it away? I wonder how they keep themselves together, or if they even do."

The Throne: "Oh, for the love of power, how the mighty fall. I'll be nowhere near when they do, I'll tell you that."

The Architects: "If only good intentions could heal the world, there'd be no need for us."

The Circle: "This might sound strange, coming from me, but some secrets are best left unearthed."

The Keepers: "They choose to follow a similar path to us, and more than one of my kin has joined them. In the end they're just asking the same questions, and getting the same answers."

The Harbingers: "If only we could cross that bridge, and heal the Mother's Song without being consumed. Perhaps one day I'll know."

The Sword

Get up, coward. Death is too easy.
That's what they want; you to die here, cold and alone.
Far harder to stand, and to fight with me...
After all, to live is far harder than to die.

The followers of the Sword choose to see mankind's single most defining trait as its need for conflict. Not always a matter of simple violence, the followers of this Creed see conflict as the driving force of human existence and achievement.

On some level every follower of the Sword chose to embrace the idea that life is meaningless without challenges to overcome, and in their eyes those who refuse to fight for a cause or to defend their points of view aren't living at all.

Amongst other Nemissaries the Sword have a well deserved reputation for violence and hot-headedness. In the short time they've walked the Earth, the Swords have carved a bloody path before them, often expiring in a blaze of glory. Although individual members of this Creed have accomplished incredible feats, they built for themselves something of an ill reputation within their own kind.

The Sword's perceived need for violence and refusal to stand aside from an argument tends to lead them easily into conflict with their own kind. The reality though is that despite the feelings of their peers, the Swords nearly always prove to be a valuable asset, their focus on conflict tending to make them dedicated, proud, and fierce; no matter what anyone says, very few things can stand before the might of an enraged follower of the Sword creed.

Nickname: The Furies. Also sometimes known as Berserkers.

Ethics: The followers of the Sword Creed walk a dangerous path. It's easy for them to fall into a trap of seeing conflict as a means to an end itself, and becoming ever more dedicated towards victory at any cost. This can, in some Nemissaries, create a dangerous self-destructive spiral as they gleefully defeat opponent after opponent, but gain no meaning from their victories. With each meaningless conflict the Hollow rises stronger than before, until eventually it devours the Nemissary whole.

The alternatives are no less grim though. There are many on the Sword path that seek to do good deeds, seeing conflict as a means to change mankind for the better. It's all too easy for these people to forget that conflict often follows in its own wake, and when their works are undone these Nemissaries often fall far harder than their more visceral companions.

True success comes from learning to understand the nature of conflict; to engage in it without being consumed by it. The followers of this Creed which truly succeed will learn to harness their desires and come to a measure of balance in themselves, reaching out to new challenges and changing their own natures, but ultimately knowing when to stand aside and allow others to fight their own battles.

Rebirth: The Sword often calls to individuals who felt themselves powerless in life. Though it might be short-sighted, the opportunity to possess great power and to define themselves by triumphing against challenges they never could have hoped to achieve before appeals to a great many.

Curiously, characters with military inclination are not generally drawn towards the Sword. Since their whole existence is defined by violence and conflict, they tend to find comfort in defining themselves in some other way. Those individuals that led lives of violence that do now follow the Sword Creed are amongst its most terrifying and dedicated disciples.

A trait they all share is that their Judgement is never a calm affair. It is often amongst the more traumatic faced by any Nemissary. They often see there the faces of loved ones and the bodies of the dead they failed to protect. The Shards

throw at them every half-hearted decision made in their lives; every moment where they should have acted.

They drag this torment out, seeking to force the would-be disciple to accept that their greatest mortal failing was the refusal to truly defend their decisions and themselves. Those who buckle under this strain, the horrors of their own failings simply too much to bear, find themselves drawn to other Creeds.

For those who fight and defend the decisions they've made, or those who accept their failures, there is only the choice to accept the Shard's challenge, and in the face of destruction fight rather than shrink away. They alone truly claim the mantle of the Sword.

Factions: It is uncommon for a Fury to be drawn towards a particular faction. Their desire for conflict tends to make it difficult for them to define themselves by a single point of view. For those Swords that do choose a faction however, they tend to be loyal in the extreme, defending their faction's ideologies to the end, and further beyond.

The faction that perhaps calls the strongest to the Sword is the Circle. Its focus on change and rebirth aligns well with their ideology. In addition, its loose organisational structure tends to allow the Swords the space to do as they please and prevents many of the conflicts created by the Swords' opinionated natures.

In addition to the Circle, the Sword are also sometimes drawn to the Architects or the Throne. Both give the Sword ample opportunities to change the world and in many of their eyes simply represent two sides of the same coin.

The faction least likely to attract the Swords is the Keepers. Their focus on what may be and their reluctance to involve themselves in the world makes the Swords uncomfortable, though a few do manage to see the wisdom in the Keepers' point of view, and dedicate themselves fanatically to the search.

Perhaps rarest of all are those Swords which choose to heed the Dark Mother's Song, and stand with the Harbingers in their quest to bring about the dark reunion of flesh. To these Swords, no challenge is greater than the end of all conflict. They see a perverse ascension of their ideals in what they see as a perfect, unified world.

Traits: The Swords all tend to possess impressive ratings in Passion, along with an array of combat skills to rival any other Nemissary. They also tend to possess numerous Qualities focused on improving their physical body and in addition to their natural aptitude with the Song of Flesh, they tend to quickly master the Songs of Bone or Blood to supplement their combat effectiveness.

A rare few Swords on the other hand specialise in the social arena, possessing impressive ratings in Authority and the like, generally choosing a more subtle avenue for their conflicts.

Favoured Song: Flesh.

Failings: If the Swords have a true weakness, it's their refusal to stand aside, and the fact that the vast majority of them could best be described as hot-headed. Though not every Sword will happily walk into a trap, the fact remains that their drive towards conflict can sometimes make them easy to manipulate and this is a failing to which they must always be mindful.

Concepts: Bitter soldier, former slave, rabble-rouser, warrior monk, devout templar, psycho with a screw loose, gentle giant.

Stereotypes

The Tower: "You've gotta respect that determination, but ultimately a king's nothing without soldiers, and if he tries to tell me what to do one more time I'll show him just how much protection that crown provides."

The Mirror: "Honestly I've got better things to do than ponder over why the Broodspawn do what they do. At the end of the day, you set 'em on fire and they die like everything else."

The Veil: "Seriously; is chatting that guy up the only thing you're going to do today? What a waste."

The Mask: "Call me blunt, but I just don't get it. I've died once, why on earth would I want to go through it again?"

The Throne: "Honestly, we seem to fight enough as it is. What good is it going to do mankind if we're ruling over them?... Then again, there's something to be said for that battle."

The Architects: "Too much time doing nothing in my opinion. Nudging things along is all well and good when you've got time. Last I checked, the enemy's already right outside the door."

The Circle: "You know, I can just about see the old gods and hunger thing. What worries me isn't if you're wrong. It's if you're right."

The Keepers: "You know what, I take it back. The Architects are like frenzied busybodies compared to these guys."

The Harbingers: "Why anyone would want to go back to that nightmare, I'll never understand. As long as they line up though, I'll keep putting them down."

The Tower

You're telling me that I came through fire and death
to be told that a man like you will stop me?
If the Mother couldn't keep me dead,
no pissant slaver will stand in my way.

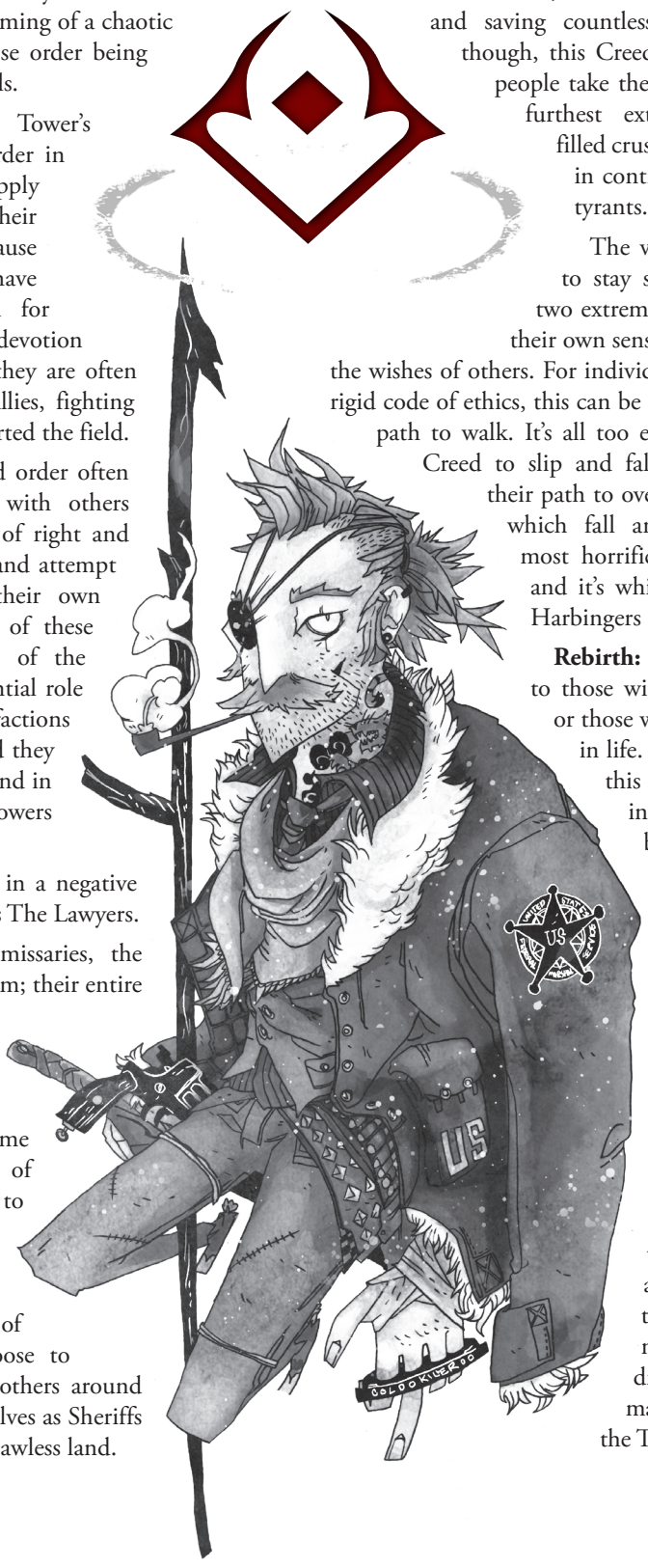
Those who follow the Tower exalt order beyond any other virtue of mankind. They see mankind's greatest achievement as the taming of a chaotic universe; the ability to impose order being what separates us from animals.

Those who choose the Tower's path seek to emulate this order in themselves, choosing to apply a rigid code of belief to their every action. Partially because of this, these Nemissaries have a well deserved reputation for stubbornness and dogged devotion to a lost cause. Conversely, they are often amongst the most loyal of allies, fighting long after all others have deserted the field.

Their need for control and order often drives them into conflicts with others as their own personal sense of right and wrong compels them to act and attempt to reshape the world in their own image. In part, it's because of these attitudes that the followers of the Tower have played an influential role in the evolution of many factions amongst the Nemissaries, and they have often taken a guiding hand in the emergence of the new powers amongst mankind.

Nickname: The Kings, or in a negative light, sometimes referred to as The Lawyers.

Ethics: Amongst the Nemissaries, the Kings possess a unique problem; their entire path drives them down a road of bringing order into a world gone mad. Not every follower of the Tower pursues this goal in the same way or with the same level of dedication. Some choose to apply their ethics only to themselves, trying to find a form of enlightenment in a rigid ethic or a specific set of religious tenets. Others choose to impose their viewpoints on others around them, trying to set up themselves as Sheriffs or rulers, bringing order to a lawless land.



The best of these individuals sometimes become revered heroes, founding successful settlements and saving countless lives. For every hero, though, this Creed births a monster. These people take their desire for control to its furthest extremes, launching hate-filled crusades or placing themselves in control as the most horrific of tyrants.

The vast bulk of the Kings try to stay somewhere between these two extremes, balancing the needs of their own sense of right and wrong with the wishes of others. For individuals that are defined by a rigid code of ethics, this can be a difficult and treacherous path to walk. It's all too easy for a member of this Creed to slip and fall, allowing frustration at their path to overwhelm them. The Kings which fall are perhaps some of the most horrific monsters in the world, and it's whispered that the first true Harbingers emerged from their ranks.

Rebirth: The Tower normally calls to those with a strong moral centre, or those whose beliefs defined them in life. Of course, like all Creeds, this nature needn't be evident in the life of the individual, but when placed before a Shard it's their decision to hold true to their convictions which pushes them towards the Tower.

The Shards of course are never kind in their attentions. Whether through malice or a strange desire to help, each Shard quite literally drags the Nemissary through hell and back, and it's in this confusing torrent of personal nightmares, hopes and dreams that the Nemissary makes the first step towards the Tower.

Amidst those fires, the would-be King finds themselves tempted from every direction, the Shards reaching out and attempting to twist their minds, offering them subtle compromises which would make their path easier, asking only that the Nemissary compromises their core ideology.

Only those who resist these temptations find the strength to proceed, and there the Shards show them that their very refusal to yield, their stubbornness and pride, are virtues of the highest order. Through them, they gain mastery of the self, and free themselves from the Mother's Song.

Factions: The Kings have been involved in the foundation of many of the great factions of their own kind. Their very nature drives them to create such organisations and order where none were originally found. It's no surprise then that a great many old and powerful Kings are found within the ranks of the great factions.

For the younger Towers, however, the choice is often more complex. Their need for individuality and their refusal to bow to the wishes of others sometimes makes it difficult for them to enter the formal hierarchy of the factions.

By far the two factions which draw the most of the Kings are the Architects and the Thrones, due to the fact that each in its own way seeks to impose its will on the world. This attitude appeals to many of the Towers, and some of the most bitter conflicts amongst all Nemissaries lie amongst those members of the Tower Creed on either side of the theological gulf between these two factions.

A substantial group amongst the Tower also belong to the ideology of the Circle, seeing it as the perfect vehicle with which to reshape the world. Often these Nemissaries feel that the old world has had its time, and that a new age is dawning, even if they must plunge mankind into fire and blood yet again to achieve it.

A handful also cling to the ideology of the Keepers, choosing to see the search for knowledge as the ultimate form of self-perfection. They often believe that imposing their will on the world represents a form of hubris best avoided.

Of course no-one has the luxury of forgetting that a great many Kings have forsworn their personal ideologies and given up in their struggles, embracing instead the Mother's Song, and choosing to see order brought forth through the annihilation of the self, and mankind's ascension as a single unified being under their Creator.

Traits: The Kings nearly always possess exceptional Conviction and Resolve ratings. They are also quite likely to possess reasonable social skills, and are often fairly able combatants. Many also specialise in a specific area, becoming truly exceptional but often falling behind in other areas.

From a supernatural perspective, they master the Song of Bone with gratifying ease, learning to turn their bodies into terrifying weapons or to craft arms and armour with which to supply their cabal and their followers.

Favoured Song: Song of Bone.

Failings: By definition, the Tower are stubborn, and their greatest weakness is often their refusal to relent or to turn back from the decisions they've made. For some, this can be a deadly weakness, as a clever enemy can exploit it and draw the Tower into verbal or physical traps simply by their refusal to change their minds.

Concepts: Warrior king, wandering sheriff, town leader, road warlord, mechanic, artist, lawyer, religious fanatic, cult leader.

Stereotypes

The Sword: "Violence is all well and good when it serves a purpose, but what do you achieve by throwing yourself into every conflict before you? In the end, I'll be the one standing; not you."

The Mirror: "Knowledge is power. If only they understood how to wield it, they'd be worth my respect."

The Veil: "Your indulgence is maddening. You'll never have back all the time you've wasted. You can have your women and your fine living, and I'll have my kingdom thank you very much."

The Mask: "Why would anyone throw away what they've spent a lifetime accumulating?"

The Throne: "You've got to love honesty. Sometimes it is better that people know when they're truly ruled..."

The Architects: "...Of course, sometimes it's better that people not know. Personally, I'm for either, as long as it gets me what I want in the end."

The Circle: "They're certainly right that the old world is gone, but I don't intend to bow to anyone; least of all dead gods looking for lap-dogs."

The Keepers: "I worry they know too much. A part of me fears that they'll damn us all in the end. That is, if they ever decide to do anything."

The Harbingers: "I was a slave once. I will never bow again. Let them come; I'll give them the unity they so crave – Unity with fire and death."

The Veil

Honestly, I don't have words to describe it.
I've never seen anybody quite blush that way. It's endearing, truly.
Hold onto that feeling; the first time of anything is always the most important one.
It defines so much, and it's the most beautiful gift.

Cherished and reviled, the Veil are perhaps the most socially active of any of their kind. They died unfulfilled, or lived lives of excess. To them, to feel and to live each day is what it is to be human.

Each chooses to be human in the most primal way, refusing to see themselves as a dead thing come to life, but rather a person whose eyes are now open. They try to treasure each day and to experience all things in life.

The Veil have a distinct reputation that follows them. They tend to be regarded as hedonist and sometimes even depraved by their fellow Nemissaries. Sometimes this is out of genuine concern, but often it's a mark of the other Creeds' jealousies. They see the Veil as an easy path to walk – a coward's way out – without ever realising the razor's edge each Veil walks along.

To the Veil though, the others are simply ignorant. To live is hard enough, and to balance pleasure, pain and experience even more so – but each one wouldn't trade that challenge for the world.

Nickname: The Dancers, or The Craven.

Ethics: The Path of the Veil is a difficult and misunderstood one. To an outsider it's simply an excuse to wallow in excess and decadence. To those who seek to master it however, it's so much more. Each Dancer must learn quickly that the purpose of the Veil is not to merely experience everything, but to live, to learn and to grow. For beings who are essentially immortal, this can be a daunting prospect and many lose focus from the path altogether, slipping into an endless cycle of excess which leads ultimately to their own self-destruction.

A few take their Creed's message to be an issue of opening the eyes of others. They see themselves as facilitators, teaching people how to truly live in a world as cold as the one they find themselves in. They find their purpose in the smiles of young lovers, in families reunited, or an artist bringing a thing of beauty into the world again.

Most tend to find such altruistic motives too difficult to follow, settling on a more balanced path. They try to live their lives as they wish them, without causing harm to others. They seek out like-minded individuals, hosting unforgettable parties and engaging in adrenalin-fueled acts of daredevilry to simply brush with another end.

All of this revolves around the concept of life, and it's something every one of the Veil struggles with. Their focus on sensation sometimes makes them lose track of the reasons why they are taught to feel in the first place. They have to learn how to balance the paradox of being a complete being with a sense of self and restraint, but also existing without true limits, experiencing everything the universe has to offer – the dichotomy presented by this choice has driven more than one Dancer to their destruction.

Rebirth: The Veil ultimately calls to those individuals who want to experience more from life. Some were people who were powerless, weak or penniless when alive, or those who had a hollow and sheltered existence. Others were already hedonistic in life, but died having never found the fulfilment they sought so desperately. In the

madness of Rebirth the Shards offer many possibilities. It's those people who cling to a tenacious desire to live to which the Shards offer the Dancer's path.

Each person is confronted then with the hollow nature of their own existence. For those who have never lived at all, they are shown all that which they could have had, and yet failed to grasp, and for those who lived lives of debauchery yet gained no purpose the Shard shows them just how meaningless their existence was.

Many turn away, broken at the promise of what could have been or what was thrown away. Some spit in the eye of Death; at any cost they wish to live again. Their hearts burn with passion and that desire to feel, to breathe, to touch – in essence, to be human – drives them to reclaim what remains of their soul and emerge a member of the Veil's Creed.

Factions: The Veil are heavily involved in the politics of their kind, their social natures tending to drive them to seek out other Nemissaries, and their desire to experience meaning that they make friends and enemies at an impressive rate.

Of course, settling down into a faction isn't always easy for the Veil. Many drift through various ideologies throughout their lives, but most do eventually settle upon a faction which suits them.

Some are drawn to the Architects, seeing them as a useful way to indulge in experience and to balance the needs of mankind at the same time. They tend to be of the philosophy that people need to be shown how to live again, and in general those Veils in the service of the Architects are amongst the more benevolent of their kind.

Of course this doesn't always hold true, and more than one member of the Veil has used the resources of the Architects to play mind games with whole communities, enjoying a game of cat and mouse with humans scrambling about them.

To some, the ways of the Keepers appeal strongly, their focus on the proper acquisition and application of knowledge often meshing well with the viewpoints of the Veil. The Dancers bring their unique perspective on life to the Keepers, and tend to concentrate on more physical mysteries than their fellows, but they are often no less intrigued by exotic lore, and are known to make some of the best speakers and debaters in the entire faction.

Though less common, a number of the Veils also follow the philosophy of the Circle, finding the concepts of the cycle of birth and death, and the Circle's almost obsessive need to cherish life to be very much to their liking.

In general, the rarest faction for the Veils to join are the Thrones, as their need to experience and to live tends to chafe at the restrictions the Throne would place upon its adherents – though more than one Veil has found the position of a king surrounded by courtesans and courtiers to be much to their liking.

Traits: The Dancers almost without exception possess high Passion ratings. Cunning and Prowess are normally a close second. In general, they tend to rapidly attract social skills such as Panache and Authority.

In terms of the supernatural side of their nature, they possess an innate proficiency with the Song of Blood which lends itself well to their reputation as beguilers and manipulators of the highest order.

Favoured Song: Song of Blood.

Failings: The weakness of the Veil is their own indulgence, and a distinct tendency to possess powerful Hollows. Though not always ruled by their passions, they can easily be drawn into unfavourable situations by their need to experience new things.

Concepts: Midwife, adrenaline junkie, martial artist, Casanova, black market dealer, musician, slave-master, daring scout.

Stereotypes

The Sword: "I love a good argument, I really do; but honestly sometimes you just have to let it go. It's not always wise to kill people who disagree with you."

The Tower: "And I made it sound like the Sword were stubborn! If only they could get off their high horses they might see that the world doesn't need the order they're so obsessed with."

The Mirror: "I understand, I really do. I love knowing things, but in the end what good does it do you? I knew what a kiss was like long before my first, and it still never compares."

The Mask: "Alone amongst the Creeds, I think we are similar. You live many different lives, and I choose to live one. Perhaps your way is right, but I think I'm having more fun with mine than you will between all of yours."

The Throne: "I've never really understood why someone would want to be a king. Ordering people about is all well and good but I never really got my kicks out of making people do things out of fear."

The Architects: "You know, I love the subtle touch. It's nearly always better to show people the way than force them."

The Circle: "Life and Death; now that I get. I'm just a little more into the life part, thank you."

The Keepers: "Climb out from the books, and live a little. You'll thank me in the end."

The Harbingers: "Never again."

Anima

Although Nemissaries are without a doubt physical beings tied inexorably to flesh, blood and bone, their rebirth gives them an altered perspective on life. All Nemissaries gain the ability to perceive the energy inherent in living things and under the Shards' guidance they have come to refer to this energy as Anima.

Nemissaries perceive Anima in a variety of ways. Some visualise it while others describe it as a soft buzzing sound or a particularly unusual scent. They also learn quickly that they possess a large reservoir of this energy inside themselves and that their entire existence is now intimately intertwined with it.

Nemissaries observe that in humans Anima replenishes at a fairly consistent rate, but amongst themselves there is a great deal of variation in how quickly they are capable of recovering their Anima. The greatest fault of their nature it seems is that they fail to replenish Anima naturally, necessitating a great deal of effort on the Nemissary's part to recover it once spent.

Resonance

Anima takes different forms depending upon what created it. The Nemissaries call this phenomena Resonance. The most basic form of Anima is known as Pure, or **Neutral Anima**. This forms naturally and is contained in virtually all living things. Animals, plants, and to a certain extent the environment itself all possess this Anima, and it is surmised that without the presence of humanity or the Brood, all Anima would remain in this state.

Emotion – specifically powerful emotions – taints Anima, transmuting its basic nature. To a casual observer these changes don't seem all that dramatic, but as Nemissaries learn to utilise Anima to fuel their powers, they quickly realise that this "tainted" Anima, unlike pure Anima, can only be utilised in specific ways.

By far the easiest form of Anima to find in the world is that linked to suffering and the dark aspects of the human psyche. For simplicity's sake, the Nemissaries refer to this energy as **Dark Anima**, though the term can be slightly misleading, as Dark Anima itself isn't evil – rather it focuses its energies inwards, aligning them towards entropy. For this reason, some of the older Nemissaries, and those of a more scholarly bent prefer to refer to Dark Anima as Entropic Anima. Although something of a mouthful, they find the term more accurate.

To an outside observer, it seems to coil slowly, warping within its container like ink or tar, and Nemissaries find that Dark Anima responds only to abilities which draw upon their capacity to harm or to destroy – an irony considering that those abilities can be just as easily used to save lives, showing that it can be misleading to judge anything too quickly in this world.

Somewhat harder to acquire, but arguably more potent, is Anima fuelled by positive emotions, such as hope or joy. Nemissaries refer to this energy as **Light Anima**. Again though, the term shouldn't be taken to mean that this Anima is inherently "good"; rather, that it represents vibrant, creative energies. It often is perceived as strands of brilliant light of an ever-shifting hue and as such some choose to refer to it as Radiant Anima.

Nemissaries find this type of Anima far more efficient for the use of abilities which heal or create rather than destroy. The irony is that the items created and the things healed can easily be used to bring about the very pain and suffering which are so against its own nature.

The Aenthir

Nemissaries quickly find that unlike human beings, the Anima contained within them is static. Specifically, whilst like humans Nemissaries contain a small quantity of Pure Anima, they also hold within them stores of both Light and Dark Anima.

This is highly unusual, because whereas the Anima within a human being shifts between Light, Neutral or Dark anima as their moods dictate, a Nemissary's Anima remains in the state it was acquired, regardless of their current feelings. Part of this stems from the unique way in which the Shards repair the Nemissaries' wounded souls.

At the core of each Nemissary lies a unique fragment of Voidglass, known as an **Aenthir**. This acts like a repository for the energies contained within their soul, and its physical shape grows proportionately ever more complex as the Nemissary grows in power and learns to absorb greater quantities of Anima.

This object literally replaces a Nemissary's heart, and allows them to store vast quantities of Anima compared to a normal living creature. It is also the seat of their greatest vulnerability, because if the Aenthir is shattered, a Nemissary loses the ability to control the Anima inside their body. It bleeds from them as a mortal would lose blood, and leads to almost certain death, as eventually even their own body begins to consume them.

Feeding

Although Nemissaries do, for the most part, regenerate Anima, their unique status imposes several restrictions in this regard. First of all, Nemissaries only regain Neutral Anima. They absorb this through a process known as **Ambient Feeding**. In this way, a Nemissary recovers a trickle of power, but can hardly bring themselves to their full might simply from this.

Most quickly learn that is possible to use Ambient Feeding to gather Anima safely when in the presence of those feeling particularly strong emotions. Through this method, a Nemissary can gather Anima without harming anybody, and the mortals involved don't even seem to lose the Anima stored inside them.

Feeding in this way only provides a trickle, and there are times when a Nemissary needs more Anima, at a more rapid pace. In such a case, some Nemissaries resort to a practice known as **Serenity**. This method of feeding allows a Nemissary to draw Anima out from a mortal target directly, without causing any harm beyond draining the target somewhat.

Serenity requires the Nemissary to maintain physical contact throughout the feeding, and generates a highly pleasurable sensation for the Nemissary in question, though the target might not feel the same way. Some Nemissaries also choose to disguise the act of feeding in this manner by seducing their would-be "victim". The advantage of this is that not only can the Nemissary absorb the euphoric high associated with sex, but also the target feels no discomfort and will usually write off any strange feelings as simple fatigue.

One downside is that this method of feeding is capable of generating only as much Anima as the target actually possesses, and the type of Anima absorbed is entirely dependent upon on the manner in which the Nemissary approached this method of feeding.

Sometimes, even more power is required. Most draw the line at Serenity, but even then other methods of absorbing Anima via physical contact remain. Knowing that new Anima can be generated by strong emotion means that a Nemissary can potentially combine Ambient Feeding and Serenity. This rarely succeeds however, as the two tend to confuse one another and leads to unhelpful results.

Only two exceptions are known. The first occurs when a Nemissary shares an intimate and sincere bond with an individual. In this case, Nemissaries are able to draw more Anima from the process of Serenity than actually exists in the target, and quite far from causing harm, both parties normally describe an intense feeling of euphoria.

The other possibility is far less intimate and much more violent. Opposed to Serenity, a Nemissary may take Anima through combat, via a supernatural act known as **Defilement**. Most Nemissaries, upon beginning this act, are gripped with a powerful sense of revulsion, and regardless of their need for Anima, very few persevere save for when men with the most reprehensible of opponents.

Rather than simply maintain physical contact, the Nemissary supernaturally reaches out to withdraw their victim's very essence. As this process continues, the Nemissary's soul, or specifically, the dark place within it known as their Hollow, begins to feed upon the victim's soul. This process releases massive quantities of Anima, and causes horrendous spiritual damage to the victim. Few victims ever recover. Most kill themselves soon after this power is used, and the unfortunate survivors remain scarred and changed individuals for the remainder of their lives.

The flipside to Defiling is **Rapturing**. This difficult and time consuming process allows a Nemissary to build up the strength of a human soul and to act as a muse, channelling those energies into a performance or a work of art. The Nemissary can then feed from this physical embodiment of passion, potentially for months.

Rapturing has a dark side however, and a Nemissary who stumbles in the process or even deliberately twists it can create a demented killer or psychopath as easily as a gifted artist. A few come to the realisation that these twisted works can create a source of power no less nourishing than this power's less sinister aspect.

Finally, one last means of obtaining Anima is open to the Nemissaries; the practice of **Consumption**. Nemissaries know that ultimately, Anima is contained within the flesh of living beings and even though at death it begins to dissipate, if a Nemissary feeds soon enough upon the flesh they can absorb the Anima contained. This method wouldn't be so abhorrent other than the fact that animal flesh provides no true sustenance, and so the only route open to them is cannibalism.

Human flesh is not the only source of Anima available to a Nemissary though. A less morally dubious source, albeit no less distasteful and gruesome, is the flesh of the Brood. Few Nemissaries engage in this practice, since for most consuming the Brood's tainted flesh is dangerous as it draws them into deeper communion with "Mother". There are powers available to Nemissaries which can neutralise this problem, and some amongst them take a perverse pleasure in hunting the Broodspawn down to feast upon them.

"Wait a minute, what?"

When Neutral Anima is converted into either Light or Dark Anima within a mortal's body by strong emotional stimulus, a Nemissary is capable of duplicating the converted Anima within themselves. Exactly how this is achieved baffles most Nemissaries, and tends to particularly annoy those with an understanding of the Laws of Conservation of Energy.

Specifically, for all intents and purposes, the Nemissary seems to be creating energy from nothing; an act which in itself flies in the face of all established scientific law – but then again most people who worry about this issue are reminded by their companions that they are in effect walking, talking corpses, who just happen to be able to survive gunshots, and quite possibly bench press small trucks.

The Songs

Another application of Anima the Nemissaries are all intimately familiar with are the five Songs of Being; specifically the Songs of Blood, Bone, Flesh, Will, and Brood.

Learning Songs and Arietta

Advancing the Song favoured by one's Creed is normally an instinctual process. The power grows inside without a great deal of conscious thought. Learning the other Songs however is a more complex matter.

Generally speaking, Nemissaries can pick up the basics of a Song on their own, and it is surmised that a certain amount of knowledge regarding all five Songs exists in all of them. More advanced knowledge, and specifically the more powerful Arietta require a tutor; either another Nemissary or a Shard.

From the perspective of a starting group of players, it's perfectly reasonable to assume that they have shared their knowledge of the Songs, and this is a great way of explaining how groups of Nemissaries came together in the first place.

Each Nemissary is drawn by their Creed to a great proficiency in one of these Songs, but this doesn't prevent them from mastering the others as well. The Songs themselves provide many diverse benefits, each of which is broken down into what the Nemissaries refer to as the **Arietta**. These powers make up the bulk of a Nemissary's arsenal, and are fuelled by their supplies of Anima.

At first, Nemissaries have only limited access to the Songs, and a handful of Arietta. To advance, they need to seek out others of their own kind and the Shards for more knowledge of their capabilities. Most though can learn a great deal purely on their own, and through experimentation, and trial and error, a Nemissary can improve their mastery of the Songs and learn new Arietta. There are however limits to what they can accomplish alone.

The Hollow

Deep inside, each Nemissary carries within them a critical flaw – a malign consciousness, which is a manifestation of their self-loathing and doubt. Each of them, then, is in a way doomed to spend their existence locked in a struggle with this monstrous inner self.

The strength of the Hollow varies from Nemissary to Nemissary, and like many of their capabilities can be as much a blessing as it is a curse. For all the Hollow's malice, it also represents a terrifying and dangerous source of power.

The Destroyer Within

In times of dire need, a Nemissary is capable of drawing upon their Hollow to warp their self-identity and change the nature of their flesh temporarily into a terrifying killing machine. The Nemissaries call this state **The Destroyer Shape** or the **Angela Noctis**; either way the powers it provides are immense.

Their strength and speed are magnified to obscene levels, and their regenerative capacities increase to match that of the Broodspawn. Further still, the Mantle draws on the power inherent in the Nemissary's Songs and Creed, using them to increase their strength still further.

The Destroyer Shape varies in appearance from one Nemissary to another, but it is always certainly impressive, standing at least three metres tall. In nearly all cases, the Nemissary gains considerable mass but maintains a lithe, predatory grace. In addition to the physical increase in size, the Nemissary's body also gains sheets of Voidglass armour, giving the impression of a massive armoured knight.

This armour growth tends to obscure the Nemissary's features, who often possess multiple eyes, usually manifesting as a series of intense pinpoint glows from rents in the Nemissary's face. A few do possess mouths but this is rare and no known Nemissary has ever maintained a human face in this form.

One other curiosity is that its final appearance is determined by how the Nemissary pays the price to bring the Destroyer Shape forth. As the simplest way by far is through the Nemissary's darker self, these forms are normally terrifying in the extreme, but occasionally those with sufficient self-discipline and enlightenment can bring forth something that, whilst still terrifying, also has a certain beauty, akin to that of a deadly bird of prey.

For all its terrible might, the strain of maintaining the Destroyer Shape is immense and the physical alterations often leave a Nemissary's body ravaged once the transformation has come to an end. Not only this, but the process of assuming and maintaining this form requires vast quantities of Anima, and the most dangerous price of all – in acknowledging this dark place, the Nemissary allows their Hollow to grow in strength.

Hollow Nature

No character's Hollow is exactly the same. Each represents the darkest and most terrible aspects of that person; the selfish desires that drive each of us. Each is the sort of being that would gladly watch the whole world burn in exchange for a single moment's additional life. In a similar way to how Nemissaries have Creeds, Hollows seem to possess a strange echo of that power. Generally, this is known as the Hollow Nature, and in a similar way to Creeds, they fall into five broad categories.

The first is **the Monster**. Though these creatures differ from individual to individual, they are always somewhat feral and impatient. Their greatest joy is to murder what stands before them. Nothing truly sates them but violence. They exalt the thrill of battle and the adulation of victory.

Such a Hollow will continuously whisper to the character, driving them towards ever more daring feats, and alone amongst their kind, is often willing to risk its existence to challenge greater opponents simply for the sheer thrill of it.

In the end these creatures are difficult to bargain with, and although unsophisticated in their ploys, their effects can be devastating when they eventually manage to gain control. The character might have to deal with the after effects for months, as the sheer devastation such a Hollow can leave in its wake can destroy whole communities and place hundreds of victims at the character's feet.

Very different to these raging beasts, **the Tyrants** are far calmer creatures. Ultimately vain and selfish, they desire nothing so much as to see every living thing bow in supplication to the character. They will always urge their host towards petty acts of dominance, striving to make them assert their power over everything in reach, whether it would be necessary or not.

The greatest danger these Hollows represent is that they are patient creatures, capable of deceiving others when they are in control, and they are often willing to rely on subtle tactics and misinformation to get what they want. They will offer the character power freely, but the moment the Hollow perceives an insult, it will withdraw its assistance, launching into a vicious tirade against the character for their perceived weakness or inadequacy.

Of all Hollows, these creatures tend to be deceptively easy to make bargains with, and their very nature tends to mean that they adhere to the letter of what they have agreed. Many Nemissaries have been undone in the end, though, because they grew overconfident, believing they had the better of the deals that were struck, coming to realise only too late that they were walking into their Hollow's plans all along.

A wholly different creature, **the Defiler** is not blunt in the least. These Hollows whisper subtle suggestions to their "Masters", always driving them towards new manipulations and experiences, pushing them little by little to abandon all pretence of morality in the pursuit of experience.

Nothing gives these creatures more joy than opening the eyes of others to their depravity, and if in control, the consequences can be horrifying, and difficult for a Nemissary to bear. Where other Hollows might leave death and destruction in their wake, the Defiler leaves broken and ruined individuals, taunting and delighting when their hopes and dreams are taken from them – often forcibly at the hands of this creature.

Of all Hollows, **the Deceiver** is usually the quietest. A character that plays host to such a creature will not be bothered by endless streams of abuse, nor pointless discussions about their actions. Instead they will normally find themselves with a cold silence in its place. These creatures choose to speak and act only rarely, but normally marshal their strength carefully for when they do.

Not the Only Way

The power of the Hollow and a Nemissary's Spite isn't the only way to draw forth the Angela Noctis. Though the cost is great, some Nemissaries have learned to call upon their own enlightenment, sundering a fragment of it to bring forth something less terrifying and more glorious in appearance.

When channelled through the lens of Creed rather than Spite, the Destroyer Shape retains all its fearsome power but changes nature enough to allow the Nemissary unexpected capabilities. Further, these shapes echo the Nemissary's inner nature and their Creed, taking less angular forms and existing in an iridescent hue dependent upon the Nemissary's Creed.

They desire knowledge at the expense of everything else. Nothing is sacred to these creatures, and they will happily murder and lie to get what they want. In fact, perhaps their greatest pleasure comes from utilising the Song of Will to rip knowledge from others, and gloat over the secret knowledge they have obtained.

They also often possess an obsessive desire to kill people possessing the same rare knowledge as themselves, and despite their normally calm nature, they will sometimes go on meticulously planned and well-executed killing sprees when in control, simply to make it so that they alone possess a secret.

Finally, **the Traitor** is the ultimate coward, placing its own existence beyond every other concern. Constantly urging the character to abandon their convictions and their companions, these monsters seek to be the pinnacle of existence at any cost, and genuinely derive pleasure from watching other people crushed underfoot in their rise to power.

When in control, these creatures' apparent cowardly nature often becomes a deadly double-bluff, as they are quite aware of their own strength, and more than willing to murder others simply for the joy of treachery. Most of all, they pursue the devouring of other Nemissaries with a single-minded ferocity, cherishing the strength that it brings as the ultimate validation of their existence.

Spite

Not all the powers that a Nemissary possesses draw on Anima alone. A few, such as the Angela Noctis either cost, or risk Spite. This power is akin to a cancer growing within the Nemissary – a physical embodiment of their self-loathing and doubt.

As the quantity of Spite within them grows, so too does the Hollow. At first, each Hollow is little more than a raging monster – a destructive urge pushing the Nemissary to lash

out at their surroundings. As it grows, it builds itself a sense of identity from the Nemissary's self-loathing, forming a personality and will of its own.

To an extent, a Nemissary can learn to abate their Spite, and certain actions can reduce this dangerous taint. Tragically however, Nemissaries inevitably find that it can pushed into remission, but never completely defeated. Some wonder if the Hollow represents not just their self-hate, but something fundamental to their Rebirth.

Dark Communion

Each Hollow is different; a unique and utterly amoral monster, though they do share certain traits and capabilities. All Hollows are on some level capable of communicating with their Nemissary, though the means by which they do this differ tremendously. Some manifest as indistinct, half-remembered shapes at the edges of a Nemissary's vision, some take the form of dark whispers in a Nemissary's ear. A few have no form at all, simply communicating with thoughts and feelings in a Nemissary's mind.

At its heart, the Hollow is everything the character despises about themselves, and ironically they tend to be more dangerous and powerful in those who consider themselves beyond reproach. For people already close to darkness, the Hollow normally manifests in a subtle urge. This shouldn't be taken to mean that it is any weaker however – rather that the Hollow finds it needs to urge less often to get what it wants.

In the case of those who do everything they can to be virtuous, the Hollow is a far more active creature. It rages at the Nemissary's charity and mercy, throwing itself against their mind at every available opportunity. The greater the difference between persona and Hollow, it seems, the more terrible the Hollow's ultimate desires. After all, the cold and the callous usually have no-one the Hollow could hurt.

All Hollows are at their core fundamentally selfish creatures. They are not necessarily evil – certainly they are willing to commit atrocities – but their behaviour is closer to a true sociopath, in that they are quite aware that their actions are wrong, but they are utterly incapable of properly understanding the ethical implications of what they are doing. Of course, they wouldn't care if they could. They are only concerned with their own survival and pleasure, and the acquisition of power and freedom – and to hell with anything which stands in their way.

Discord

As the Hollow builds strength, it edges ever closer to the Nemissary's consciousness, and at times the Hollow assaults the walls of its prison with its full strength. For the most part, willpower alone is sufficient to hold off these assaults. Eventually though, no matter how strong the individual, the Hollow will succeed.

Sooner or later, the Hollow's assaults will bear fruit, and it will subsume, if only temporarily, its host's personality. What happens next differs greatly upon the individual's Hollow.

In the case of those already close to their Hollow, and with few loved ones, they may seem no different to a casual observer. In fact, while the Hollow is certainly likely to behave in ways the Nemissary might find abhorrent, it generally simply indulges itself rather than beginning wholesale slaughter.

For those whose relationship with their Hollow is more antagonistic, this can be a time of extreme danger. The Hollow lashes out at everyone and everything that they hold dear, punishing the Nemissary for their arrogance in believing that it can be contained.

These possessions are always temporary, but normally leave the Nemissary feeling ashamed and defeated. At the very least it ends with the Hollow's laughter as it claims one small victory over its host.

Ultimately, each Hollow works towards a point when it can claim control permanently, locking its host forever in a prison with no walls where it can watch them suffer as it makes a mockery of everything they held dear.

Communion

For all its vitriol and hate, not everyone approaches the Hollow as an antagonist. A rare few learn to accept its existence, and make a concerted attempt to form a truce with their Hollow, rather than spend an eternity in conflict with it.

This path offers a great many advantages – not least of which is to potentially loose the Hollow and its destructive might under controlled circumstances, turning it into just one more weapon in the Nemissary's arsenal.

The dangers of this are grave. For a start, the youngest Hollows are difficult at best to reason with, being more like snarling animals than rational entities. The problems only increase as the Hollow grows stronger, as with an increase in power comes a corresponding increase in intelligence. In a way, Nemissaries who pursue this path lock themselves into an entirely different conflict, playing an eternal game of cat and mouse with their malevolent "guest".

Flesh and Bone

No less massive than the changes to their soul, and their ability to wield Anima, are the physical changes upon a Nemissary's body. They retain a great number of the changes inherent to Broodspawn, but for each similarity they are also different. As a Nemissary ages and their mastery of their Creed grows, they exhibit more and more unique capabilities, and grow further removed from their Broodspawn origins.

Physical Abilities

Each Nemissary possesses a great number of advantages over a normal human being. At a very basic level, their muscle tissue and bones are effectively denser, even though this strangely doesn't lead to an increase in the Nemissary's weight. This means, without any other power, a Nemissary is still usually stronger, more agile, and more resilient than a normal human.

In addition to the basic physical changes, a Nemissary's internal organs undergo massive restructuring. Virtually nothing about their internal organs remains unchanged. For a start, this renders the Nemissary massively resilient to damage when compared to an ordinary human being. Most wounds which would prove fatal are simply inconvenient to a Nemissary. This is further enhanced by the fact the Nemissary regenerates flesh and blood at a prodigious rate, making it almost impossible for them to suffer significant blood loss.

Another side effect of this is that Nemissaries undergo huge changes in their metabolism. They are rarely hungry, requiring very little food to survive compared to a human. This is partially because their physiology utilises small quantities of Anima to sustain their bodies in a manner almost identical to the Broodspawn. For the most part this is a blessing, particularly considering that a Nemissary can go approximately 7 days without water and about 3 weeks without food before suffering any serious ill effects.

Even when these ill effects should manifest, though, rather than the body shutting down, it instead begins to consume the Nemissary's Anima until they resume eating or drinking. This has the other interesting side effect of making the Nemissary almost impossible to affect with most known poisons or chemical compounds. At worst, the Nemissary's body will consume Anima to abate the damage inflicted, and even terrifying compounds such as cyanide will do little or nothing to a Nemissary with an adequate supply of Anima.

Immutable Form

Some of the physical benefits of their transformation are less overt, and only a thorough medical examination would detect them. For a start, Nemissaries possess a limited form of regeneration. Although not quite the equal of the Brood, Nemissaries still recover from injuries at an obscene rate. Cuts and scrapes heal in moments, and even bullet wounds heal in a matter of days. Furthermore, a natural extension of this is that the Nemissary ceases to age, and their body is incredibly resistant to radiation poisoning.

A Nemissary can further enhance these traits by spending Anima, and if enough is expended they can potentially match or even exceed the Brood's capacity to regenerate. Even horrific injuries can be healed in moments, and most Nemissaries sufficiently supplied with Anima can walk through a hail of gunfire or survive multiple impacts from high powered rifles. Nemissaries should beware however, as their regeneration is still limited by their Anima, and sources of damage that would stop the Brood's regeneration will still work on them.

Another side effect is that the Nemissaries possess a curious capacity to return to their natural form no matter what is inflicted upon them. No known power can prevent a Nemissary ultimately returning to their natural appearance.

All of these abilities are at least in part because of a Nemissary's blood which, like that of the Brood, is capable of restoring flesh but also corroding other materials, breaking them down into their constituent components. As a result, most foreign objects will not persist in a Nemissary's body and a further consequence is that a Nemissary's blood or tissues cannot be properly analysed, nor may a Nemissary activate any biometric locks.

The Little Things

For all the massive changes which take place upon taking the Second Breath, there are also a great many less obvious

Terrible Irony

Strange as it may seem, the Hollow's ultimate victory is always short lived. Soon after assuming complete control, a Hollow finds itself the victim of an ironic twist of fate. Without its Host's Creed, it falls relentlessly back towards the void which spawned it, or into the "loving" embrace of the Brood. Either way, though, the new creature is doomed, and usually wreaks terrible destruction in the days or weeks it has left.

Self-Image

An interesting point to note is that the Nemissary can still change their own personal appearance, but only subconsciously. This is because a Nemissary's actual appearance is ultimately based on self-image, not reality. A Nemissary might wish to look different, but ultimately they will always return to the image they have set for themselves.

For example, although a Nemissary who went through the Rebirth as a teenager in theory might remain so for the entirety of their existence, in practice as they perceive themselves to learn and grow, their appearance physical age will likely increase as their self-image adjusts in light of their growing confidence and perception of age.

ones, even to the Nemissary themselves. For instance, most Nemissaries find that their hair and nails don't grow. In fact, Nemissaries are rarely hirsute and their hair length often seems to change day to day with the Nemissary's mood.

Another minor but important detail is that most Nemissaries possess exceptionally vivid eyes. Although few possess unusual colours, most possess eyes of an astonishingly bright hue. The same is often true of a Nemissary's physical appearance in general which is usually lithe and attractive compared to those around them.

This also extends to the Nemissary's curious trait of remaining physically clean, despite the environment. Something about their nature seems to prevent dirt and grime gaining a foothold in their skin. Although it's still perfectly possible for a Nemissary to get themselves into a mess, it certainly won't last for more than a few hours. One consequence of all of this is that Nemissaries do not possess consistent fingerprints or retinas, and as mentioned before, this makes biometric, and incidentally forensic, identification of a Nemissary almost impossible.

A sad fact about their existence is that all Nemissaries are sterile. Although they can enjoy and engage in sex, they cannot procreate – something many Nemissaries truly lament, which occasionally drives some into the arms of the Brood if only to have "children" to care for.

Society

The first Nemissaries were alone in the world, isolated and vulnerable, set aside from humanity. It didn't take long for even these rare few to come together and pool their resources against the relentless onslaught of the Brood. Over time this practice has continued, and grown into a hidden culture amongst the Nemissaries, and even those who deliberately choose the path of isolation will, from time to time, cross paths with others of their own kind.

Cabals

The most basic social unit amongst Nemissaries is an informal group of friends and associates with whom they choose to travel, and over time these gatherings of Nemissaries have become known as Cabals.

Most Cabals are made up of somewhere from three to six Nemissaries. Groups smaller than this tend to be considered loners, and those larger tend to be prone to too much infighting to be considered a true Cabal.

The benefits of such gatherings are many. Not only does a Nemissary find strength in numbers, and easy access to shared tuition, but perhaps more importantly, they find companionship with beings who can understand and sympathise with their existence.

Nemissaries must always remain cautious of their Cabals, as while they provide a great many benefits, people are often judged by the company they keep. To the eyes of many Nemissaries, the Cabal is a single unit, the sins of one member reflecting upon the whole. It's for this reason that some Nemissaries choose to stand alone, refusing to form lasting bonds that might draw them into conflicts not of their own making.

The Factions

Of course, it was inevitable that once the Cabals formed, and the Nemissaries grew more numerous, attempts at a more systematic organisation were made. Frankly, the results have always been mixed. By their own nature, Nemissaries are highly individualistic, and attempts to gather them all together like some great army have as of yet always failed.

Of all the myriad attempts to bring about a unification amongst the Nemissaries, only a handful have borne fruit, and stand today as powerful ideological viewpoints amongst the Nemissaries.

The eldest of these factions owes its inception to the days following the Fall, and the very first Nemissaries. Known

as **the Keepers**, they are defined by their absence from mortal affairs. The Keepers feel that what is occurring with mankind throughout the world is of little interest to them. They believe the only way to bring about true change is to concentrate on their evolution into more powerful beings.

Some of the Keepers are deeply spiritual people, seeing their existence as part of a Dharmic cycle, and hope to better themselves by achieving a form of enlightenment. Others hope that by engaging in protracted studies of themselves, they will ultimately gain the power necessary to change the world as they see appropriate.

A few also travel the world endlessly, searching out every piece of information they can find, hoping to piece together ever more complete copies of the Prophecy of Ah'kesh or find the lore necessary to bring about the end of the Brood.

The second great power to rise is known as **The Throne**. It began as scattered individuals who, seeing their own power, hoped to remake the world in an image of their own choosing, dragging mankind kicking and screaming through the trials of this world into a new future.

At first this faction was limited to a handful of like-minded individuals, but as the number of Nemissaries in the world has grown so too has the Throne's ability to coordinate their actions. They make it a point to aid one another where possible, and of all the Nemissaries follow the most stringent codes of conduct, binding them to a common accord.

The faction however remains split on how to pursue its goals. The highly individual nature of Nemissaries makes a single harmonious organisation impossible. Instead, the Throne operates like some vast hydra, its many heads grasping for different routes to rule.

The Throne's motivations are normally benign by the standards of this age. In essence, they wish to be benevolent dictators, guiding mankind towards a better future – it's not that they all want to be kings forever, but that they don't believe mankind is capable of lifting itself from the current darkness alone.

Of course not every Nemissary who follows this ideology has such laudable goals. Some simply wish to acquire personal power, and are genuinely disinterested in the affairs of a wider world. The only single truism of every member of the Throne is that each, for their own reasons, supports the idea of the Nemissary's rule of mankind – not from the shadows, but openly, commanding the respect they feel they deserve.

The greatest detractors from this ideology are **the Architects**. They feel that as abhorrent beings harbouring a deadly and malign presence within them, Nemissaries should not place themselves in direct leadership – rather, they believe that the Nemissaries should encourage and help humans, but let them stand on their own two feet.

Their reasons for this belief vary tremendously. Some cling to older ethical ideals like democracy and freedom. Others worry that ultimately the defeat of the Brood means the disappearance of the Nemissaries, and thus building a civilisation relying on Nemissaries is only setting the world up for yet another disaster.

Furthermore, the Prophecy of Ah'kesh seems to support some elements of their beliefs. It seems to indicate that blind rule and kingship will lead to some form of disaster. Whilst the Thrones see this as individual weak kings failing in their duties, the Architects often hold that only their ideology can avert such tragedies.

The Architects tend to support human settlements without directly revealing themselves. They often play the role of wandering nomads or mercenaries, showing up in defence of settlements, or hunting Broodspawn across the wastes. Of course, not every Architect lives by such ideals, and just like the Throne there are those who simply desire the power and support that a faction brings, preferring to rule from the shadows, manipulating mankind towards their own goals rather than be a king who might be deposed.

The fourth great faction that has risen amongst the Nemissaries is known as **the Circle**. They believe that ultimately the Brood and every other tragedy that has befallen the world is entirely of mankind's making. Their beliefs are based heavily on lore recovered from the Shards, and thus this faction takes on a distinctly mystical bent when compared with the far more practical Throne or Architects.

These Nemissaries believe that the history turns like a great wheel, of life and death, beginnings and ends. Furthermore, they believe that mankind, through their attempts at immortality, perverted the great cycle, and that the Brood are part of reality's response against our transgression.

The Thorns

The Thorns are more akin to a faith than a mortal faction. They exists in some form or another throughout most of the world. If it were a single unified whole, its power would be almost unstoppable. The limits of communication and the incredibly diverse range of peoples that make up this emerging way of life mean that it has almost no ability to unify itself.

Furthermore, it's notable that this group has grown in many ways beyond the Circle's ability to command. While they certainly have tremendous influence over it, the Nemissaries cannot be said to truly control it. In some places they have become the servants rather than the masters, and the ideology as a whole has taken on a life of its own.

Despite their seemingly nihilistic attitude, the followers of the Circle are usually far from it. They believe in encouraging life and growth and, surprisingly to some, protecting mankind. They are also responsible for the growth of the mortal institution of **the Thorns**.

As a group, the Thorns are diverse individuals, but are unified primarily in their desire to prevent a return to the world before the Fall. For the most part, they hope to return mankind to a more balanced way of life, living in harmony with the world rather than bending it to their will.

As with every group, some members of the Thorns are far more zealous than others, and some are downright monstrous, revelling in the slaughter of those who oppose the Thorns, or their mortal followers in the Circle.

The last of the factions are spoken of with only bitterness and hate by their kin. To the eyes of almost all humanity, these **Harbingers** have turned their back on every virtue that humans hold dear. The Harbingers are comprised of those who choose to embrace rather than fight the Broodsong. Most are lost, absorbed back into the greater consciousness, but as history has shown, a few transcend this limitation, retaining their individual consciousness, but also existing as a part of the Broodsong. These creatures are terrifying; more so because at least a part of them is still human. The vast bulk fight with a strange, manic glee, seeing all the world as a perverse joke and the Mother's Song as the only answer to mankind's suffering.

As a whole, this group is hunted without remorse, and only their terrifying allies keep these Nemissaries safe. Still, desperate times call for desperate measures, and the rising power of the Hive has convinced a few that some dialogue with the Harbingers may be necessary. It is possible that only they command the sheer numbers necessary to combat the terrifying powers of the Reapers, should they ever re-emerge. The only consolation in which case is that with the Brood largely under the command of the Harbingers, should the Reapers return, they – in theory – shouldn't be able to command the Brood a second time.

For all the benefits that factions bring, some choose to stand alone. A few just want a simple existence, preferring the idea of a hermetic life away from the conflict and strife that surrounds mankind. Time and again, their isolation is tested by the necessities of the world. Most eventually give up their self-imposed exile and bind themselves to a faction out of a need for survival if nothing else.

Still, there are rumours that some of the eldest of all Nemissaries remain alone and isolated, wandering and uncommitted, waiting for the right individual to tempt them to take an active role in the world once again.

The Brood

Hope in reality is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man.

-Friedrich Nietzsche

The Brood is a true enigma. When the Fall first began, mankind turned to science to explain this curious new phenomena. People thought that reason alone would be sufficient and that in time a cure, or at least an effective countermeasure, could be developed. In the end, though, the Brood seemed to transcend our limited understanding of biology, mutating over the centuries and finding new ways to bring us low.

The Infection

When the Brood first appeared, it was thought to be a disease. The observation of initial infections seemed to bear out the theory that it was a virus transmitted by bodily fluids. As time wore on, it became clear that the infection, codenamed "Echidna", was something much more than a virus.

When the Echidna strain was analysed under laboratory conditions, it was found to have a great deal more in common with a minute parasite or a nanomachine than with a conventional viral or bacterial disease. The actual particles believed to cause the infection existed at a similar scale to cells within the body, but appeared to have a much denser structure.

It was observed that the Echidna particles, then referred to as "Exo-cells", were already present in a dormant state in all the examined specimens, including the laboratory staff themselves. It was discovered that while a host was alive, the cells remained in this dormant state, only becoming active upon the death of the host. Extensive research failed to find a "Patient Zero" or the initial vector of the Echidna strain. It seemed that whatever the nature of the Exo-cells, they had been quietly spreading amongst the human and animal population for a long time.

Exo-cells

The Exo-cells themselves make up the basic building blocks of the Brood. In their dormant form they are essentially harmless, but when the host entity dies, an unknown process occurs, activating the Exo-cells.

Each Exo-cell is like a tiny, independent creature; each one capable of absorbing neighbouring cells and replacing them with yet more Exo-cells. Individually, these cells are similar to stem-cells, but are far more aggressive and variable in nature, replacing any cellular matter they have previously come into contact with. Once the Exo-cells become active, they will have consumed the host body within hours or, in extreme cases, minutes.

It is the unique nature of these Exo-cells that give the Broodspawn many of their unusual physical properties; not least of which is the apparent ability of the Echidna strain cells to replicate themselves without access to any obvious source of energy. This astounded scientists during the Fall, as it threatened to undermine our entire understanding of physics and biology.

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Animals

One of the mysteries surrounding the Brood is why animals rarely undergo rebirth. Theories on the matter range wildly, but the known facts are that only approximately 1 in 1000 animals undergo transformation into Broodspawn upon death. These Broodspawn begin as Risen and proceed through Ravager and into other Metaforms as usual, the only appreciable difference being their physical shape compared to other Broodspawn.

There are anomalies; for instance, carrion birds like ravens or vultures have as high as a 1 in 3 chance of becoming Broodspawn. Such birds which survive their rebirth often possess unusual natures compared to other Broodspawn. They are particularly known to operate as a form of aerial reconnaissance for the Brood, rather than engaging directly in battle.

The Process of Rebirth

Within seconds of brain death the Exo-cells have begun to propagate. The first thing they target is the brain and spinal column. The Exo-cells modify existing tissue as they replace it, in most cases strengthening the existing abilities of the subject – the only exception being the brain, which the Exo-cells seem to modify in a highly complex, but incomprehensible, fashion. This actually results in the loss of most higher brain functions, replacing them with only the most simple base urges.

The actual time of reanimation varies, depending upon the method of death. In instances where the brain has been damaged, this process can take a great deal of time. When the brain is intact, particularly if the subject had a great deal of blood flowing in their system at the time of death, this process can happen in minutes.

There are only two methods of stopping this process from beginning; one is the destruction of the brain and spinal column, and the second is to incinerate the body. It should be mentioned that superficial damage to the brain will not stop the process and will only delay it. For example, a bullet wound to the head won't work, but a brain splattered all over a sidewalk certainly will.

The first immediate physical symptom is an extremely rapid regeneration of the subject's wounds. This effect is disturbing to say the least; the body begins to convulse and objects, like tiny threads or worms, appear to move underneath the subject's skin. Where large areas of skin are damaged or missing, the effect of the regeneration appears almost as if thin, dark red strands were knitting the body back together.

Soon, bullet wounds will begin to close, cuts will seal themselves, and large scale damage to internal organs or missing limbs will begin to heal. This process can take some time, but with superficial injuries this can be less than a minute. Damage to major organs can take substantially longer however – hours, or even days in extreme cases.

Once the body has been restored to a functional condition, with the brain and internal organs once again intact, the subject will have completed the initial rebirth.

The Broodsong

One of the most curious phenomena observed within the Brood is their highly variable level of intellectual capacity. At first it was thought that a Broodspawn's intelligence was linked directly to their evolution. The truth however is somewhat more complex.

Each and every Broodspawn is linked by a subtle form of telepathy, referred to by the Nemissaries as the Broodsong. This strange communion allows the Brood to share thoughts and feelings on a local level and its intensity builds as the Brood grow more numerous. This allows the Brood to share progressively more complex information, meaning that the more Brood that gather in a location, the more intelligent and aware they become.

It is arguable whether or not the Brood ever become self-aware through this process, or if their collective intelligence amounts to a heightened form of animal intelligence. What is known for a fact is that certain evolved forms of the Brood are capable of manipulating this communion to pull the Brood's collective intelligence towards specific goals. It's speculated that the Reapers exploited this effect to force the Brood to use the highly complex tactics observed during the latter days of the Fall. Why it was that the Brood eventually ceased to obey the Reapers is still a point of deep concern to those who appreciate the ramifications of the Brood's independence.

Reborn Flesh

All Broodspawn, once risen, possess certain physical characteristics in common. First of all, the process of rebirth and the presence of Exo-cells massively increases

the body's ability to heal itself. This can lead to seemingly impossible feats of regeneration, and this same process also renders the Broodspawn nearly immune to small arms fire. Small piercing injuries are simply healed too quickly to cause any significant harm. Only horrific maiming injuries, dismemberment or weapons which cause deep and lingering damage, such as fire or chemical burns, will permanently stop one of the Broodspawn.

Where dismembering is concerned, the Broodspawn functions very much like a human being. Chopping off a limb will seriously impede the Broodspawn, and the removal of the head or major organs will completely stop the Broodspawn – at least temporarily anyway.

The Broodspawn are incapable of regenerating wounds where a large solid object is still within the body. For example, spears and arrows are particularly efficient at killing Broodspawn. An interesting side note is that Broodspawn seem capable of dissolving metal objects within their body very quickly – in fact their blood is extremely corrosive where metals and polymers are concerned but it seems to have absolutely no effect on organic materials such as wood or flesh. This means that whilst metal impaling objects are effective in the short term, they are not always guaranteed to put a Broodspawn down for good.

All Broodspawn possess particularly heightened senses, which only increase with time and proximity to other Broodspawn. It should also be noted that all Broodspawn possess the ability to consume the flesh of living creatures in order to accelerate their regeneration and evolution into new and more terrible forms.

Risen

A Risen, sometimes known as a Ghoul, is the first stage of a Broodspawn. Their appearance is still almost totally human; the only difference being a strange discolouring in the eyes which grows steadily worse in the first few hours of resurrection.

Risen have essentially the same physical attributes as the original host; the only difference being the cellular regeneration going on in their body. This makes them particularly difficult to kill with small arms fire as the Risen, like all Broodspawn, no longer suffer any meaningful blood loss or pain.

Risen are particularly aggressive and will seek to feed on any nearby living creature which is not already a Broodspawn. They won't do this for long; once a victim is actually dead and the process of transformation has begun, the Risen will abandon their meal.

They consume flesh in this manner to hasten their transformation into the next step of their life cycle. This process normally requires the Risen to kill between three to six individuals, or to completely devour a single dead body that is not undergoing the transformation into a Broodspawn.

A Silent Song

You may have noticed in the text that Nemissaries are capable of hearing the Broodsong. A question likely to come to an astute reader is "What exactly does this sound like?"

The problem here is that there really isn't a simple answer. Every Nemissary, and possibly every Broodspawn for that matter, perceives the song in a subtly different manner. In general, the song could best be described like dozens of people whispering in one's ear, with certain words and tones being more noticeable than others. When roused to anger, the Broodsong can sound almost like buzzing hornets, the individual sounds coming so fast as to be indistinguishable.

At times, Nemissaries might be able to pick up specific words or even cries for help, leading to an implication many Nemissaries dare not face; the idea that something of the original person remains trapped inside a Broodspawn, just beyond death. It is a thought often too horrific to contemplate, and one most Nemissaries dismiss out-of-hand.

Brood Mothers

It's also been observed that as the intelligence of a group of Brood grows, certain individual Broodspawn undergo a unique metamorphosis, allowing them to form entities referred to as Brood Mothers. These creatures are capable of manipulating the actions of the Brood in a similar manner to how the Reapers once did, and compete even now for control of the horde with the Nemissary's capable of opposing them.

The goals of a Brood Mother are generally difficult to ascertain, but they are certainly more complex than the basic Broodspawn's desire to kill and feed. Brood Mothers are also known to directly war with one another, urging their legions into suicidal frenzies. Whether this constitutes genuine internal conflict within the Brood, or rather an instinct to create the most powerful Metaforms through constant conflict is a subject of intense debate.

It is also rumoured that these peculiar Broodspawn are capable of giving birth, allowing the Brood to replenish their numbers without the need to hunt and kill human beings. This raises the question of whether, by adopting a defensive strategy, mankind is simply assuring its destruction.

Although fearsome, a lone Risen not a massive threat. Most people with a calm mind and a little support can bring one down. It should also be noted that at this point the damaging of the Risen's brain will stop the process of transformation, at least temporarily, and a major head wound will render the Broodspawn permanently inert.

This can backfire as other Broodspawn will be perfectly happy to feed on the inert body. Some of the worst disasters of the Fall were caused by abandoning the incumbent corpses, only for other Broodspawn to devour them and evolve into more dangerous forms at a prodigious rate.

Ravagers

The Ravagers represent the second primary evolution of the Broodspawn and, even at this early stage in their growth, they are fearsome. Ravagers, although bearing a superficial resemblance to humans, have now gained several disturbing traits.

Firstly their eyes have now transformed into jet black shark-like orbs. Their teeth have been shed, replaced with a fanged maw, and they have elongated limbs; both of which are better suited to their horrific task. Their skin takes on a pallid white texture, similar to paper, and is covered in miniature black lesions which seem to writhe upon their skin.

Ravagers are significantly more dangerous from a combat perspective, possessing speed and strength well in excess of the human norm. They are able to batter down wooden doors or stockades with ease, and are quite capable of tearing their way through fire doors given enough time.

Although their regeneration appears to have slowed, this is deceptive as Ravagers are no longer dependent upon – and in many cases no longer possess – most human major internal organs. In addition, at this stage, destroying the brain will not permanently kill the creature – only significantly slow its recovery. Even the most horrific wound can be healed within a few days.

To make matters worse, Ravagers continue to search for food to continue their evolution and seem to take roles akin to a pack alpha amongst the Risen. Eventually, if enough Ravagers gather, they will form hunting packs of their own which often seem far more restrained and cunning than their less-evolved kin.

Metaforms

Broodspawn that survive the Ravager stage long enough, and who are in the presence of a powerful Broodsong, often undergo a disturbing metamorphosis into far more advanced and deadly life forms. These creatures, known as Metaforms,

possess a dizzying variance of shapes. Some are known to repeat themselves fairly often, where others are almost entirely unique. What is known is that the Brood which reach this stage evolve based on the needs of the horde to overcome specific challenges, and are all the more terrifying for it.

One of the most common Metaforms encountered is the **Brute**. These hulking creatures occur when a Ravager consumes its pack mates and evolves into a mass of muscle, blades, and reinforced bone. Standing almost four metres tall and weighing close to a tonne, these monstrosities are normally encountered in assaults on settlements and are frighteningly difficult to put down.

Like all Brood, they are almost totally resistant to small arms fire, and their immense stamina and armoured carapace renders most standard strategies ineffective, if not downright suicidal. The only hope of stopping a Brute is with high powered rifles, flamethrowers, or explosives. Even then, these horrific creatures will normally take several defenders with them before they finally succumb. Their only known weakness is that their huge size and weight renders them clumsy and ponderous in comparison to other Broodspawn. This shouldn't be confused with a lack of speed, as these creatures have been known to be able to outpace most human beings.

Brutes that advance still further make the transition into a creature known as a **Titan**. These monstrosities can stand anywhere up to ten metres tall and usually possess six or more limbs to support their gargantuan frame. Their bodies are primarily built like those of a rhinoceros, albeit on a much larger scale, with dozens of layers of reinforced bone carapace protecting the creature's front. Its underbelly and back legs often trail away into a mass of writhing, deadly prehensile tendrils.

The Titans are used as living siege engines by the Brood, and are almost impossible to stop through conventional means. Killing them normally requires access to huge quantities of explosives or heavy artillery. Thankfully these creatures are extremely rare due to the sheer number of Broodspawn required to make up their massive frames. It has often been said that one of the most disturbing features of these monstrosities is the dozens of leering faces and hungry eyes covering their bodies.

Not all Metaforms are so direct. In some, the Brood has evolved the art of killing in a far more subtle way. The, thankfully, rare creatures known as **Stalkers** fulfil this purpose. Like Brutes, they will have consumed many of their own kind to complete the transformation, but their final shape could not be more different.

Stalkers rarely stand taller than the average human being. In many ways they resemble Ravagers, though they are noticeably devoid of human characteristics. Their faces are little more than a fanged maw adorned with six glossy black eyes, their bodies are long and sinuous, and their limbs seem frail, which completely belies the terrifying strength these creatures possess.

A Stalker's greatest strength is its speed and silence. Their bodies are specifically re-engineered to allow for great leaps, easily clearing thirty metres or more from a running jump. In addition to this, their behaviour is far more cautious than most other Broodspawn, and they have been observed to patiently dispatch sentries and commit atrocities to panic settlements.

For all their terrifying speed, cunning and strength, these creatures are not unbeatable. Although just as resilient to damage as normal Broodspawn, their forms are relatively frail when compared with creatures such as a Brute, and once cornered, they can be dispatched much like their less evolved kin.

Those which survive and prosper evolve further, just like with the Brutes. These enhanced Broodspawn are known as **Wraiths**, each of which is an almost perfect assassin, combining the stealth of its less evolved form with massively increased physical abilities and a mutable body, capable of adapting to almost any circumstance. More terrifying still, these creatures are often capable of using Songs, further increasing their already lethal abilities.

While the previous two Metaforms are dangerous in a direct sense, the most lethal are those Broodspawn which take on dedicated leadership roles. **Watchers** are not only physically powerful but extremely intelligent, easily rising to positions of leadership and directing the actions of their lesser kin.

These Broodspawn are amongst the least human of their kind. As they grow in strength, very few human features remain. Their bodies distending into truly monstrous forms with long limbs, multiple eyes and crowns of exposed bone.

The Search

One of the questions continually plaguing the Nemissaries is the pattern of the Hive-spawn's abductions. While Nemissaries are well aware that youths tend to possess additional quantities of Anima, this in itself doesn't fully explain the Hive's motivations. After all, if all the Hive wanted was Anima, surely they would abduct every living thing they could get their hands on. The question is then, why?

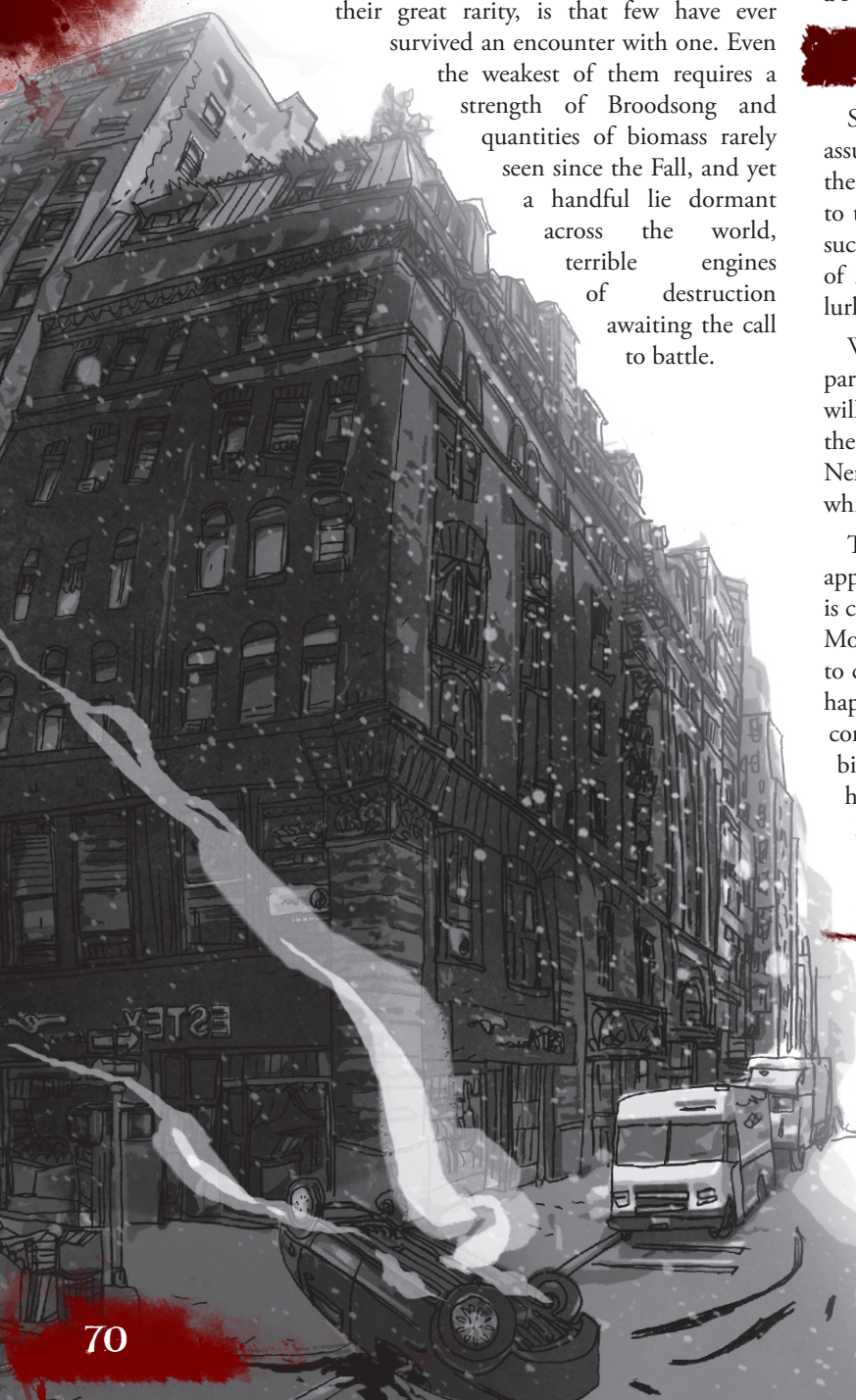
While it's true that Nemissaries cannot command the Hive-Spawn, they can still sometimes hear fragments of their twisted version of the Broodsong, and the only conclusion they can reach is that the Hives are searching for something or someone. Whatever it is they want, it cannot bode well should they find it.

The Watchers, whilst fearsome, can grow even more dangerous, transitioning into a **Brood Mother**, which is by far the most powerful of all common Broodspawn. Such creatures are highly individual, possessing few consistent features other than the fact that they are all incredibly lethal and cunning opponents.

Given their personal might, the direct threat these entities represent is their capacity for long term strategic planning. With a Brood Mother's murderous cunning, the Brood's strengths can be brought to bear against humanity and its weaknesses guarded against to prevent retribution.

Prime Forms

Although most people are not aware of it, even more terrifying forms of Broodspawn exist. The reason these creatures are not common knowledge, other than their great rarity, is that few have ever survived an encounter with one. Even the weakest of them requires a strength of Broodsong and quantities of biomass rarely seen since the Fall, and yet a handful lie dormant across the world, terrible engines of destruction awaiting the call to battle.



Sketchy reports from the Fall describe several creatures of similar composition striking at military bases around the world. These vast and deadly entities were referred to as Abominations by the terrified forces sent to oppose them. Each resembled nothing less than a house-sized monstrosity, composed of unusual, pallid white flesh, and a face with as many as six eyes. Their capabilities are not well recorded, but fragmentary images record them surviving multiple impacts from some of the most devastating artillery available to the past age. They were said to have even survived multiple rail-cannon volleys, and direct-fire assault cannons loaded with incendiary rounds.

Most people dismiss a creature such as this as nothing more than a paranoid delusion of the Brood's capabilities. The truth is that creatures such as this do exist, and the reality that people don't want to face is that nothing but a Nemissary would even stand a chance of stopping one.

Mother

Since the Reapers failed in their task and the Broodspawn assumed their independence, Nemissaries have plumbed the depths of the Broodsong, looking for any weakness to the Brood or any clue as to their own existence. Their successes have been few; what has been retrieved has been of immense value, but also speaks of something terrible lurking beneath the surface of the Broodsong.

When the Nemissaries commune with the Brood, particularly when they try to control large groups, they will sometimes encounter a curious phenomenon in the Broodsong. Rather than obeying their wishes, the Nemissary will receive a sort of "static" from the Brood, which roughly translates to "Mother is coming".

These occurrences almost always coincide with the appearance of a Brood Mother at the heart of a horde. What is curious is that Mother does not seem to refer to a Brood Mother, as at multiple points Nemissaries have managed to commune with such entities without this strange effect happening. The mystery deepens even further when one considers that Brood Mothers have been known to fight bitterly with one another, and more than one Nemissary has wondered whether the acceptance of Mother, or lack thereof, may be ultimately behind these apparent schisms.

Myth and Legend

The Brood's origins remain obscure, and Mother even more so. Some Nemissaries, spurred on by fragments of knowledge recovered from the Shards, have begun to look into Earth's mythology for answers to the Brood and the mystery of Mother.

Few things are certain, but many Nemissaries wonder whether the Brood as a whole might be far more ancient than we suspect. Every culture

on Earth has stories of monsters – things we rationalise as a simple fear of the dark. In light of the world of Sins, some wonder if there is far more truth to these stories than previously believed. Some have also noted that there appear to be a great number of Mother Goddesses throughout history with particularly unwholesome predilections. The question remains unanswered for now and only time will tell if these investigations will bear fruit.

Hives

When the Brood gather, they normally take the form of a great horde that consumes everything in their path. These gatherings are normally short-lived and tear themselves apart within weeks or months. Occasionally, a change overtakes the horde, however; they begin to drag corpses to a central location, and dig.

The horde will spend weeks carving out tunnels, or preferably expanding existing ones, whilst other Broodspawn sacrifice themselves to provide the raw building blocks of the structure to come. These tunnels and random strands of flesh become a single, great, living creature. Immobile but massive, its body forms cavernous passageways and chambers, and its completion heralds an extreme change in the Brood's usual behaviour.

After this point, the Brood will cease to kill where possible, and will instead take living victims - preferably young adults - back to the Hive. What happens next is something of a mystery. Since the Hives themselves are very rare and the few attempts to gain access have been unsuccessful, not a great deal is known about their inner workings. It's surmised by Nemissaries who have studied the Hives that the victims are still alive inside, and that these unusual Broodspawn have found a way to use them to sustain themselves upon their prolonged suffering.

Some Nemissaries know the truth; these Broodspawn have found a way to use the Anima within human beings rather than simply eating flesh. What this means for those held captive by the Brood is terrible indeed. The Brood subject these captives to an endless series of tortures, both supernatural and mental, drawing out Anima so that the Hive itself can feed and spawn yet more of its number.

Many of those who are aware of these Hives despise them for this practice, and they refuse to link them with the rest of the Brood, instead referring to them as Hive-Spawn, or the Cybeli.

"God, I don't want to think about that."

Yes, we do know what we're implying in this section, and frankly, it's meant to be terrifying. What we are trying to get at is that there is something fundamentally different about Hive-Spawn; something which, unlike the Brood, is genuinely and systematically malevolent, and the closest thing to true evil that the setting offers.

The reason why we don't describe what goes on in the Hives is because not everyone wants the level of detail that scenes of brutal horror can contain. We will leave what exact supernatural horrors take place there to your own imaginations. As a specific note to storytellers, just remember that some people won't even want to explore the possibilities, and you shouldn't force your players to if they are uncomfortable. It's perfectly fine, and often more effective, to convey horror as the unseen and indescribable.

The Hive-Spawn

Brood born within Hives are in many ways quite separate from the rest of their kind. These creatures never arose from an infected human, and never possessed the barest shred of a soul. They are born of malevolence, and enter this world hating everything in it.

Physically, Hive-Spawn are distinct from the rest of the Brood. First of all, they do not resemble humans and possess a completely alien anatomy, their flesh comprised almost entirely of a mass of pale white tendrils. Stranger still, these creatures are not unduly harmed by Voidglass and have no aversion to the Shards. To make matters worse, their physical abilities exceed their unmodified brethren, and as they evolve into the Ravager forms and beyond they begin to grow Voidglass carapace and claws.

Another terrifying reality is that the Hive-Spawn are totally outside the ability of Nemissaries to command. No known power has ever been capable of bringing one of these creatures under their command. It seems that not even the Brood Mothers can control them.

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CHAPTER III

CORE RULES

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Basic Concepts

Sins, as with most RPGs, uses dice to help decide whether various actions characters in the setting undertake are successful or not. This concept relies on describing the abilities of people in the world through a series of traits, and it's these traits which decide how many dice are rolled, and what numbers a character needs to succeed.

Tasks themselves can be easy or difficult depending upon the needs of the story, and before you continue reading these rules you should understand that it isn't always necessary to use them. Good roleplaying is really just about making stories. Ultimately any rules we give you are just there to help adjudicate the successes and failures that make up those stories.

Before Everything Else

To understand all the rules in this chapter, it is first necessary to go through some concepts that are relevant to the game as a whole; not just the specific rules the game uses. First of all, people playing the game are split into two types; the **Player Characters**, often abbreviated to Players or PCs, and the **Gamemaster** or GM. Normally, Players control a single Character - their avatar if you will - in the game world. The Gamemaster on the other hand has the task of describing situations and environments to the players, and adjudicating the actions of **Non-Player Characters** (NPCs) which occupy the world.

Characters, whether controlled by the players or the Gamemaster are the same as far as the basic rules are concerned, and unless otherwise stated everything that applies to one also applies to the other. The only difference is who controls the actions each Character undertakes.

Players of the game, the GM included, should be aware that these rules, and the basic rules in particular, do not set out to cover every conceivable eventuality in the game. Part of being in a Narrative Roleplaying game is that the story, rather than the dice, should be the most important thing. With all that in mind, welcome to the HOPE Engine and the world of Sins.

The Core Mechanic

The first things that need to be grasped in the game engine are the concepts of **Dice Pool**, **Target Number** and **Success**.

Dice Pool, or Pool for short, refers to the number of 6-sided dice which are rolled to undertake any given action. These dice are then rolled, and compared to the Target Number. Every dice which rolls a result equal to or greater than this Target Number is considered a Success.

Example: *Tom counts out a Pool of 7 dice and rolls them. The results are a 3, two 2s, a 1, a 5 and two 6s. If the Target Number was 5, three of these dice would be Successes. On the other hand, if the Target Number had been 3 then four of the dice would have been Successes.*

In the HOPE engine, dice which roll a 6 have a special meaning. These dice are said to **Explode**, which means that in addition to being considered a Success, you get to roll the dice again and attempt to generate an additional Success. This process of rolling 6s can continue indefinitely, potentially generating massive numbers of Successes, though this is highly unlikely.

Example: *Tom again generates a Pool of 7 dice and rolls them, getting the following results; a 1, three 2s, a 4 and two 6s. He checks this against his Target Number, which in this case is 4. This means he has generated 3 Successes.*

The two 6s Explode, so he rolls them again. The first 6 rolls a result of 3, while the second 6 rolls a 6 again. This means he adds another Success to his total roll, and rolls the new 6 again. This Exploding dice now rolls a 3, stopping the rolling. In total, Tom has generated 4 Successes.

Finally, there are the concepts of **Difficulty** and **Outcome**. Difficulty is a measure of how hard a task is. When you attempt an Action, you need to roll at least as many Successes as the Difficulty of the task. Difficulties themselves usually range from 1 – which represents a task with some degree of challenge but not one which would seriously strain a character's abilities – all the way up to 7 – which represents an almost impossible feat nearing the limits of human ability. In addition to this, some unusual tasks can have a Difficulty of 0, representing situations where success is a certainty and only the relative degree of success matters.

Outcome is a measure of how well you succeed at a task. Assuming you manage to get enough Successes to equal the task's Difficulty, any Successes after this are considered to be Outcome. On normal rolls, Outcome is used to make a mundane success spectacular. It can also be used to speed up tasks or make a very obvious action more subtle. Outcome can also have specific mechanical effects, particularly in circumstances such as combat where life and death is on the line.

Example: *In the example before, Tom got a total of 4 Successes. If the Difficulty was 0, his action would have been definitely successful and he would have had a final Outcome of 4. This is because there is no Difficulty so all his Successes are counted as Outcome.*

Still using the same example, imagine the Difficulty was 2. In this case, Tom would have succeeded with 2 Outcome, as he achieved the two Successes needed to pass the Difficulty.

Finally, if the Difficulty were 5, the action would have failed altogether, as Tom would have no Successes remaining after the Difficulty was taken into account.

Outcome is only ever relevant if a roll actually succeeds. If somehow a player manages to fail a roll, but still generate Outcome, that Outcome is wasted. Nothing can be achieved if the action was not actually a Success.

Example: *Nate, through a combination of Traits has two bonus Outcome to his Athletics pools. During an adventure, he is asked to roll Body/Athletics against a Difficulty of 2. His total pool stands at 7 Dice and a Target Number of 5. If he were to roll 4 Successes, he would succeed with a total of 4 Outcome. This is because 2 Successes were needed to pass the Difficulty, which leaves 2 Successes remaining, in addition to the 2 bonus Outcome.*

If, on the other hand, he had only rolled 1 Success, he would have failed the task and generated no Outcome, because whilst he gets 2 bonus Outcome, he still needs a minimum of 2 Successes to beat the Difficulty and complete the task. Outcome without success is wasted.

Traits

To understand the Core Rules, it's important to be aware of what a given character is capable of doing. To achieve this, the game defines a character's capabilities through Traits; the most important of which where the Core Rules are concerned are a character's **Fate**, **Attributes**, **Skills** and **Specialities**. Collectively, these are known as a character's **Core Traits**.

Core Traits aren't the only things which define characters. There are also four other Traits; namely **Vitality**, **Focus**, **Motivations** and **Qualities**, which make up a character's Secondary Traits.

Finally, some characters – particularly Nemissaries – possess unique **Supernatural Traits** which are used to represent their various unusual powers and capabilities.

Below, you'll find an overview of the Core Traits and how they are used to form the basis for a character's actions. Secondary and Supernatural Traits are discussed later in this chapter under their own headings.

Attributes

Attributes represent a character's core capabilities, defining the root for their physical, mental and social abilities. They also help tell us how to generate Pools for various actions, and can also influence some other Traits the characters might possess, which we will discuss later.

There are six Attributes in total, each of which governs different aspects of the character. They are **Body**, **Prowess**, **Passion**, **Conviction**, **Reason** and **Cunning**.

- **Body** represents a character's physical abilities, including strength, speed and stamina.
- **Prowess** represents a character's grace, nimbleness and speed of reaction.
- **Passion** represents how forceful the character's presence is, how charismatic they are and how persuasive they can be.
- **Conviction** represents a character's strength of will, their determination and how difficult their opinions are to sway.
- **Reason** represents a character's mental acuity, how knowledgeable they are, and how good they are at solving systematic problems.
- **Cunning** measures a character's wit, creativity and the ability to think rapidly, particularly when under pressure.

Pure Luck

At times, you just need to know whether a character is lucky or not. To do this, you roll 1d6, and on a 4 or above your character is lucky, otherwise they are not. This rule should be used sparingly as most situations are better handled through a character's Traits and Skills.

Reading Ahead

As role-players, we are curious creatures, and there's a great temptation to skip ahead to the Combat Rules and Nemissary chapters. Of course, you are free to do this, but we would like to point out that it's probably best that you read and understand the basic rules first, as a great deal of confusion can be caused by jumping the gun when it comes to learning a new system.

For the convenience of those who like to flick between rules while learning them, you'll find below a quick list of where the various important things in this chapter are located to help you get a feel for things if reading in this way is your preference.

Actions: Page 78.

Secondary Traits: Page 83.

Supernatural Traits: Page 91.

Equipment: Page 177.

Combat: Page 101.

"So What About Attributes above 6?"

Astute players will notice that we stated that Attributes are only normally rated from 1 to 6. In the case of large or very small creatures, things can quickly step outside the norm. For the purpose of the basic rules though, this really isn't important and is discussed in full in the Traits Expanded section on Page 127.

In the game, specific actions require different Attributes. For instance lifting a heavy weight would use Body to generate the action's Pool, whereas trying to solve a complex mathematical problem would fall under Reason.

What Attribute should be used isn't always set. For instance, a character might use Conviction to keep from dropping a heavy load they are already lifting, and by the same token a character trying to solve a mental problem rapidly whilst not being able to draw from their pre-existing knowledge might use Cunning.

For most people, Attributes rate between 1 and 6, with 1 being a particularly poor score, and 6 representing the normal limits of human potential. Most characters will fall well within these limits and a score of 3 represents what is average for a healthy, competent adult.

Summary

- Attributes generate Dice Pools.
- Under normal circumstances they are rated between 1 and 6.
- Attributes can also influence other Traits.

Fate

A character's Fate measures their overall importance to the Story. Like Attributes, it helps to determine a character's Dice Pools. Unlike Attributes, only important characters possess a Fate of 1 or greater, and the Trait itself ranges from 0 for background characters, to 6 for the movers and shakers of the world.

Mechanically, **your Fate is added to every Dice Pool you generate**, so if a player is asked to make a roll involving Body, then they also add their Fate. The only exception to this is when a character needs to roll a set number of dice for some reason, such as being asked to roll 1d6 to test random luck or rolling dice to determine how many rounds of ammunition were used during a shoot-out.

In addition to directly affecting Dice Pools, Fate also determines how high a character's Attributes can be raised through Character Advancement. For anybody with a Fate of 2 or greater, **the total to which an Attribute may be raised through Character Advancement is 5 + Fate.**

Fate is also unusual in that it can be replaced by another trait in certain circumstances. Most commonly this will occur for supernatural entities such as Nemissaries or the Brood, where Creed and Synergy serve to replace the Fate rating of those characters.

When Fate is replaced in this way, the new Trait is still considered to be Fate for all intents and purposes. It just pulls a double duty granting the normal benefits of Fate and its own special effects where appropriate.

Once more in summary;

- Fate is added to every Pool you generate.
- Fate is always rated between 0 and 6.
- Fate determines the maximum to which an Attribute may be raised through Character Advancement.
- Fate can have a different name for certain characters but its basic mechanics don't change.

Skills

Skills represent the various things which a character is trained to do, and characters can and often do have numerous skills for different situations. Skills are rated between 0 to 4, with 0 being totally unskilled, 1 representing basic training, and 4 a true master.

Mechanically, Skills determine the Target Number of a given roll. When you are asked to generate a Pool, you will also be told which Skill is relevant. For skills rated 1 to 4, the Target Number is 7 minus your rating in the Skill. This is also shown on your character sheet, like so:

Skill:	1	2	3	4
Target Number:				

If you have a rank of 0 in a Skill, you can still attempt to roll but doing so is very difficult. As noted in the table above, you need a 6 and any Difficulty of the task is doubled, or set to 1 if it is already 0. In opposed rolls, you instead take a -1 Success penalty to all actions. Furthermore, you cannot gain Outcome on a roll involving a Skill rated at 0.

Just to recap:

- Skills generate the Target Number for your Dice Pools.
- Skills are rated 0 to 4.
- If you need to use a Skill you do not possess, you roll against a Target Number of 6 and double the Difficulty. Also, you gain no Outcome.

Specialities

Specialities represent areas of ability in which your character particularly excels. Unlike other Core Traits, they do not possess a rating or even a fixed description. Instead, **each Speciality a character possesses allows them to add one bonus dice to their Pool and gain 1 free Outcome** when that Speciality is relevant to the action at hand.

On average most characters will possess at least 1 Speciality but rarely more than 5. The description of a Speciality tells you what it applies to. A common example would be "Handguns". This speciality would apply when you are firing the weapon, cleaning it, maintaining it, making it or even recognising particular handguns; literally anything so long as the task revolves around that Speciality.

A character can only ever use one Speciality at once, and exactly how broad a Speciality can be follows some strict rules. In brief, a Speciality must always refer to a particular set of objects or a specialised activity. "Weapons", "Combat" or "Crafting" for instance would not be allowed, whereas "Handguns", "Boxing" or "Woodcrafting" would be appropriate.

Another guideline is that Specialities must always be more specific than any given skill. This feeds in to what we mentioned above. You can't just choose "Combat" because that's already covered by various skills.

Specialities can also be used to represent particular areas of knowledge possessed by a character, such as "Physics", "Philosophy" or "Broodspawn Anatomy". Specialities of this type are allowed to be slightly broader in description because they are representing things that are not already taken into account by existing skills.

For a full list of example Specialities, see page 170 in Character Creation, and for more information on the guidelines for creating new Specialities, see page 145 in the Traits Expanded chapter.

Equipment

Your character's Traits aren't the only things that can influence their abilities. The world itself, and particularly items that the characters possess can have a tremendous impact on their performance.

Equipment can help a character in various ways and is an important secondary source of bonuses to rolls. Each piece of equipment is defined by its Traits just like a character. These are **Effect**, **Rarity** and **Size**. For the core rules, you only need to worry about Effect.

Effect is how the equipment helps a character. It will explain under what circumstances the equipment is useful for. In most cases, this is expressed simply as bonus Pool to a particular Skill or activity, and sometimes a negative Pool modifier where the equipment would be inappropriate or of particularly poor quality.

These bonuses and penalties should normally range from -1 Pool to +3 Pool, based on the item's quality and how useful it is to the situation at hand.

- **-1:** These items are poorly suited to the task at hand or are of inferior quality. Examples include a rusty old tool-set, or a badly neglected guitar.
- **No change:** These items suit their task but are perfectly average examples of their kind; for example a basic store-bought first-aid kit or an average cooker.
- **+1:** These items are either exceptional or highly suited to a given task. They should be highly uncommon and sought after items. Examples include a hand-made, finely-tuned violin or a professional quality lathe.
- **+2:** These items should be amongst the best of their kind. They should be precious, rare and never treated lightly. Examples are a fully-stocked engineering workshop, lovingly assembled over years from the very best components and equipment available, or a state of the art operating theatre in perfect condition, with rare and highly effective prescription drugs.
- **+3:** These items should be entirely unique in a campaign and a character should normally have at most a single item of this quality. A Stradivarius violin, or an old master's hand-made tools passed down through generations.

Measuring Time

Generally speaking, the HOPE Engine uses measurements of time we're all familiar with; things you do take place over minutes, hours, days and so on. However, there are certain circumstances where a more flexible form of timekeeping is necessary. In game terms this is referred to as Dramatic Time. Unlike regular time, Dramatic Time is split into **Turns**, **Scenes**, **Chapters** and **Stories**.

Turns

A Turn is an abstract measurement of time in which a character completes most Standard Actions. It normally represents about 10 seconds but it can last shorter or longer where appropriate. Anything below 3 seconds and more than about 3 minutes is stretching what can be accomplished in a single Turn.

Equipment in Detail

This chapter is intentionally rather light on detail where equipment and particularly weapons and armour are concerned. This is quite deliberate and is for ease of reading.

You'll find the full rules for Equipment in their own chapter later in the book. This is to provide a clear separation between the basic game mechanics and the more complicated situations that can be created when various pieces of equipment are covered in detail.

Gaming groups shouldn't feel pressured to make use of all the equipment rules presented later in the book. If you just want to play with the bare bones as described here that's perfectly fine, but be advised that there are mechanics which assume you are using the full rules, and you should be aware that you may have to adjudicate certain rules if you choose this option.

"I'm a little bit stuck here..."

For many role-players, the concept of Scenes will be a very familiar one, but for some it may be somewhat alien and doubtless some players may struggle with abstract measurements of time. For more advice on how to deal with these issues and on how to run and construct scenes in general, consult the GM's Toolbox section of this book, specifically page 290.

Scenes

A Scene measures a larger period of time, normally somewhere between a few minutes and a few hours. The simplest way to visualise a Scene is to think about how time is spaced in a television show. Various things happen but are broken down into small self-contained segments.

The actual amount of time each of these segments represents is very fluid. For instance, two characters might enter a room to discover a murder victim. They proceed to search the room for clues and then conduct a discussion about what they found out and where they might go from there. This sequence of events added together would constitute a single Scene.

Scenes can also be broken up with short breaks so long as dramatic focus remains on a single issue. For instance, when searching for clues above, the characters are free to move into another room or call a colleague and wait for them to arrive. So long as the focus remains on the issue at hand, the Scene continues.

Another way to look at Scenes is the time it takes to conclude one related set of actions, such as a combat or stealing an object from a house. Both these things have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and don't take up more than an hour or so of time.

Chapters

Chapters usually represent a substantial amount of time, which often contains dozens of individual Scenes. Chapters help to break the game up into measureable sections so that various resources the characters possess can be managed more easily. The simplest way to think of them is as episodes of a television show or as actual chapters from a book, though in this case they tend to contain in practice a bit more information than one would normally find in a single chapter of a book.

Chapters are also often used as a way of describing a single game session's length of time. Of course this varies tremendously between groups, and whilst in an ideal world the Gamemaster can wrap up the night's events, this isn't always possible and so it can sometimes take multiple game sessions to resolve one Chapter. On the flipside, some groups play for much longer amounts of time and in these cases it's perfectly fine if more than one Chapter is resolved during a single game session.

The number of Chapters which take place during a session can be very important to character advancement. As a result, the GM should always be very clear when a Chapter has come to an end. For more information on character advancement and its relation to the timing of Chapters, see page 276.

Stories

Stories are made up of numerous Chapters and represent a single completed plot arc. These are a little trickier to fit into the standard examples as given above. In general an actual novel would be split into about 3 Stories where this roleplaying game is concerned, and perhaps the best analogy in length would be a short story or a TV miniseries.

Stories shouldn't be taken to mean an entire plotline, as in this instance certain abilities the player's characters might possess would be available far too infrequently. Instead, they should be looked at as a milestone for the players and used to bring finality to a particular plot thread the GM has in mind.

Actions

With the basics out of the way, it's time to talk about specifics. Everything that characters do in the game world is an Action. Not all of these Actions require rolls or need adjudicating by the rules.

For instance, there is absolutely no point in rolling to get out of bed, or to drive your car to work. When things get complicated though, such as trying to avoid a car crash or trying to get out of bed before the ceiling comes crashing down on top of you, we move into the territory of the rules, and it is at these times where we need to be specific about exactly what is happening, and in what order.

Not counting the type of situations that crop up in combat, there are two basic types of Actions that provide the framework for everything the character does. The first of these is a **Standard Action**. These are things that the character does which are resolved quickly, which generally have a definite conclusion.

The second type of Action that characters undertake are **Sustained Actions**. These Actions take place over a period of time and usually require more than one roll to complete.

Both these circumstances assume that the character is not being actively opposed by another character. In these circumstances, the concept of **Opposed Actions** comes into play. These special actions represent a circumstance where two characters compete for the same goal, with the character that wins the challenge being the one who achieves their goal.

Standard Actions

Standard Actions function exactly like the rules in Basic Concepts; a character generates a Dice Pool from a combination of Attribute and Trait, and rolls against a Skill appropriate to the action in hand, comparing their results to the Difficulty. In the game, this is written in the following way;

Attribute/Skill (Difficulty)

Remember to apply a Speciality if relevant and to apply any bonuses or penalties that your character is under. Also, you may note that Fate is not included. This is because as mentioned previously your character's Fate is added to every Dice Pool they generate, regardless of what Trait creates the pool.

Below is an example of a common Standard Action presented in the format that you will see it in this book;

Body/Athletics (0)

The notation above is the game's shorthand for "Roll Body + Fate against a Target Number set by your Athletics skill, and compare to a Difficulty of 0".

Outcome and Standard Actions

Most Standard Actions will list various options for your character to spend points of Outcome on, exactly as mentioned in the basic rules. In addition to this, a character may **always** use points of Outcome to achieve any one of the following options;

- **1 Point:** The action is particularly impressive, standing out in the minds of any onlookers and generally being executed with finesse and grace.
- **2 Points:** The action is outstanding and leaves spectators at the very least greatly impressed. Where appropriate, this can grant 1 bonus Pool at the GM's discretion to represent the character's confidence or improved sway with a group which just witnessed what the character did.
- **3 Points:** The character's execution of the action is flawless and beyond any possible reproach. The character gains 2 bonus Pool when dealing with onlookers at the GM's discretion.

Time and Standard Actions

Standard Actions normally take anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes, as appropriate for the situation. Generally, the rules don't specify how long these actions take because the specifics are flexible. It bears mentioning that the Difficulty for a Standard Action is based on the assumption that the character has plenty of time to complete what they need to do. If they are hurried or rushed, these actions can become harder and this is discussed in more detail below.

Sustained Actions

Sustained Actions represent something that requires a character to work continuously over time to accomplish a goal. Usually, they take minutes, hours, or even days to complete, and they follow slightly different rules than a Standard Action.

The basics are the same, in that a character generates their Pool and rolls against a Difficulty as normal; what differs is the requirements for success and how the final Outcome of the Action is calculated.

Sustained Actions are noted in the same way as a Standard Action, but the text will also specify a **Duration** and a **Threshold**. For example, to fix a car, your character needs to make a Reason/Crafts (0) check, with a Duration of 1 hour, and a Threshold of 3.

The action's Duration is how long it takes for a single attempt at the task, and the Threshold sets the number of Successes required to complete the task.

Each roll the a character attempts is compared to Difficulty as normal. All Outcome is counted towards the

Supporting (Optional Rule)

Characters don't exist in a vacuum and sooner or later someone is going to want to help a character with what they are doing. Groups wishing to allow this should implement the following optional rule.

A character wishing to assist another can make a roll appropriate to the situation; usually the same Attribute and Skill combination to the one they are trying to assist, but not always.

The supporting character or characters need to roll before the main character makes their attempt. The base Difficulty of this roll is equal to the number of assisting characters, and is increased by 1 if the task being assisted had a Difficulty of 3 or greater.

All the supporting characters roll at once and the main character's Difficulty is decreased by 1 for each supporting character who succeeded, and increased by 1 for each supporting character who failed.

Characters don't need to accept help but once they've agreed to it (i.e. the supporting characters have begun their rolls) they are stuck with it. This means that sometimes it can be decidedly detrimental to have people attempting to help; as the old saying goes, "too many cooks spoil the broth"

task's Threshold, and when the character accumulates one or more Outcome above the Threshold over all their rolls, the action is considered successful.

Failing a Sustained Action

It's entirely possible, when making Sustained Actions, that the character will fail; particularly when they were attempting something with a very high Difficulty.

Normally, a single failed roll won't destroy the character's chance to succeed, but it does set them back. Each time the character fails a roll, they increase the Difficulty of the task they are attempting by 1, making further attempts all that much harder.

Sometimes, a Sustained Action will specify what happens in the event of a failure; for instance, failing to climb a cliff might have far more dangerous consequences. Unless otherwise stated, these things happen in addition to the increase in Difficulty.

Of course, it's always possible for a character to give up on a task. Sometimes, through failure or simple lack of time, it's possible for the action to become impossible to complete. In these situations, the character loses any accumulated progress, and suffers any specified ill effect for failing a roll.

So long as this doesn't kill them – after all, deciding to give up on climbing a cliff with no support line might be a very final decision – the character can always attempt the task anew without any additional penalties. In fact, sometimes it's better to start from the beginning than trying to force a success after a string of failures.

Final Outcome and Sustained Actions

In a Sustained Action, the normal effects of Outcome are ignored. Outcome on rolls instead is used to reach the task Threshold as noted above. If a character wants to finish a Sustained Action with a number of effective points of Outcome so that they may add dramatic flourish or otherwise succeed impressively at a task, they instead increase the Difficulty of each roll on the task by 1 for each point of effective Outcome they wish to achieve.

Time and Sustained Actions

As stated, each roll takes an amount of time equal to the Duration of the task. This means that the action will take a variable amount of time based on how many rolls are necessary. In most cases, the character won't be able to take a break and must work towards the completion of the task then and there.

This of course can mean that a character, for entirely practical reasons cannot finish what they were attempting. After all, there is a limit to how long a character can work. This isn't always the case though, and some Sustained Actions can be undertaken at the character's leisure.

For instance, once a character starts trying to climb a cliff, they are committed to the task. However, if they had a guide rope, it would be possible for them to take short breaks. By the same token a character working to repair a car can certainly take a break from what they are doing and come back to it.

In these cases, characters need to complete one full Duration's worth of time in a single sitting to make the roll but don't need to make all the rolls in sequence, and are free to go and do other tasks in between.

Where this is not explicitly stated one way or another in the rules, it falls to common sense to be the arbiter and the GM has the final say.

An Example Sustained Action

Just so that there's no confusion, we've included an example Sustained Action from start to finish below to help walk you through the process.

Kat decides she wants to make a sword. The GM looks for an appropriate Attribute and Skill combination and decides that Reason and Crafts fits best. After checking the rules for Crafts, he assigns a Difficulty of 1, a Threshold of 3 and a Duration of 8 hours.

Kat is particularly skilled with Reason and Crafts and decides she wants to make a better than average quality sword. Again, checking the Crafting rules, she finds that for 1 point of Outcome, she can make a Fine quality sword. This means that the Difficulty of the task has to be increased by 1 to gain the required Outcome.

Therefore, the final action as it stands looks like this;

Reason/Crafts (2)

Duration: 8 hours

Threshold: 3

Kat's character has Reason 4, Fate 2, and a Crafts skill of 3. Therefore she will roll 6 dice, needing 4s on the dice to succeed. She makes her first roll and gets 4 Successes. She removes 2 of those Successes for Difficulty, and the remaining 2 Successes count towards the Threshold.

This roll took up 8 hours of her character's time, and because Kat is only 2 Successes away from finishing, she decides to work late into the night to finish the task.

She makes another roll but this time she only gets 1 Success. This means she actually fails this roll, which increases the Difficulty for her next roll by 1. In frustration, Kat takes the rest of the night off and decides to try again in the morning.

The next day, Kat starts again, and manages to gain 5 Successes. She takes off 3 for the new Difficulty, leaving the 2 Successes needed to finish the task. After 24 hours of work, split over two days, Kat has a beautiful and very impressive new sword – though she didn't get a lot of sleep that night.

Opposed Actions

Characters compete often, and usually such circumstances can be handled as the various actions listed above. For instance, if two characters compete to climb a mountain they are both working against a set Difficulty and ultimately the player who gets the most Outcome is the winner. After all, while they are competing, their attempts are separate and don't directly interfere with one another.

There are times when characters compete directly. In these instances, instead of working against a Difficulty or working to complete a task quicker than the opponent, they are instead locked in a direct struggle with one another. The simplest example of this is a tug-of-war, but by far the most common circumstance in which Opposed Actions arise is combat.

Resolving an Opposed Action

In most important respects, an Opposed Action functions like a Standard Action. Where it differs is in how Difficulty functions. To undertake an Opposed Action, two characters must first be competing – that is in a situation where they are attempting to overcome one another. Each opponent generates a relevant Dice Pool and rolls against a Target Number.

Unlike normal, this Action does not have a Difficulty. Instead, the total Successes each character generated are compared to one another to see which character scored the most. If one character scored more than the other, the loser's Successes work like Difficulty, removing Successes as normal. Anything left is then Outcome and the winner resolves their Action in the normal way. If both characters' results are equal, the action is a tie and neither achieves success. In most situations when this occurs, nothing will happen and no progress will be made either way.

Assuming one character generates more Successes than the other, the loser's Successes become the Difficulty, which is then applied to both characters just like a Standard Action. Any Outcome is then calculated normally.

This means that in the normal course of things, the loser will always fail the Action and the victor will always succeed. There are however certain unusual circumstances which may change this and it is possible for both characters to succeed or fail at the same time.

"That Doesn't Look Like a Draw to Me!"

Sometimes, a tie can favour one character or another. For instance, let us say we have two characters, one of which is trying to sneak up on another. Both of them roll and get the same number of successes, and as a consequence neither succeeds. So, our stealthy character steps on a twig and a guard doesn't notice. Round one to the would-be ninja.

An alternate take on this is a tug-of-war. In this instance, when both characters draw, they don't succeed at pulling each other so their actions amount to little more than a lot of grunting. So long as you follow through common sense, it should be pretty obvious who benefits in these situations. If there's any doubt however, always favour the defender in the situation – i.e. the person who didn't initiate the action in the first place.

Just to be clear, combat resolves ties differently and is expanded upon fully in its own section later.

Combat and Opposed Actions

Opposed Actions are by far the most common things characters will be taking in combat. As a result, it certainly pays to be familiar with them. Normally, such Actions only ever result in one character being victorious. In a combat, this isn't always the case. Certain circumstances can allow two characters who tie to both succeed at their Actions, sometimes with spectacular and deadly results.

For more information on this topic, see page 99.

Other Considerations

So far, we've covered how to generate Dice Pools and how to resolve Actions, but the question likely remaining is precisely what Traits and Difficulty should be used in each situation.

What Traits to Use

One of the most important tasks that falls to the GM is gauging what Attributes and Skills to use in a given situation. To work this out the GM, and to a lesser extent the players, need to read through and familiarise themselves with the Attributes and Skills in the Traits chapter of this book.

Doing this will give you a good idea of what each Attribute and Skill is used for, and the overviews themselves provide numerous examples of how a specific Trait might be used. This means that the system is generally very fluid

UNUSUAL SITUATIONS

Since the rules cannot account for everything, there are bound to be times when you won't be able to find the answers you want in this book. Ultimately, just go with what seems right and keeps the game flowing. Remember that while the GM's authority should never be absolute, they are there to deal with this sort of awkward situation, and generally they should have the final say on what skill applies to what.

in terms of what given Traits are applied to any specific roll, and by and large it should be just a matter of common sense to work out what combination is needed.

There are times where what skill is needed will be particularly relevant; especially in situations where a character's life is on the line. This is most evident in combat and in the Advanced Rules section of this book. In these situations it is important to follow the guidelines laid out in the book.

DIFFICULTY

As we've mentioned, all actions have a Difficulty which starts at 0 and usually goes up to a maximum of 6, though particularly extreme circumstances can change this. From a player's perspective, it's enough to know what the Difficulty is for any given action and then to attempt it. The GM will usually have the slightly trickier task of setting and adjudicating Difficulty.

It's important to remember that not every task requires a roll, and those that don't are called trivial tasks. Trivial tasks don't test a character's abilities in any way, or are tasks that could be more complex but happen in a situation where a character has ample enough time or tools so that failure is virtually impossible.

For instance, walking to work, making yourself a cup of tea or swatting a fly are all examples of tasks which are trivial in their own right. On the other hand, driving your car to work or preparing a dinner are tasks which, if undertaken in a stressful situation, would be fairly complicated. They are ultimately made trivial though when the character has plenty of time and can go about them in a calm manner. When tasks grow more complicated than this, they need to be resolved through an action, and fall into the range of Difficulties presented below.

Open-Ended (Difficulty 0): Tasks don't normally have a Difficulty 0. When they do, it represents a task for which there is no chance of failure and only the degree of success is important. **On a Difficulty 0 roll, every Success rolled is counted as Outcome.** Even if you rolled no Successes, you still succeed at the task.

The most common situation this will occur is for certain powers or effects where a character simply needs to establish how effective the ability is. In certain circumstances it might also be appropriate to assign a task a Difficulty of 0 if success is not in doubt but the amount of Outcome may be important. For example, two masters of Origami competing on a basic fold to see which can do it with the greatest degree of elegance and accuracy.

Simple (Difficulty 1): These tasks are straightforward but either carry a small risk of failure, or present a danger if the character undertaking them were to make a mistake.

Good examples of a simple task would include climbing a ladder quickly, using an appropriate tool to open a latch, or driving to work in heavy traffic or adverse weather.

Complex (Difficulty 2): At this Difficulty, a real chance of failure begins to intrude upon the character's actions, and a significant degree of skill is required to generate Outcome. These tasks should be hard and daunting, but not press a character to the limits of their abilities. Generally, they carry significant risks if failed and usually occur under stressful or dangerous conditions.

Good examples of complex tasks are attempting to avoid a car accident or driving on ice, trying to pick a tumbler lock or attempting to jump the gap between two houses.

Hard (Difficulty 3): At this point, just succeeding requires proper training from the character. These tasks fall well out of the realm of day-to-day activities and often may carry fatal consequences for failure.

Good examples include attempting to drive through oncoming traffic, trying to run across a suspended ceiling with no sure footing, or attempting to climb a cliff face with few handholds at great speed.

Very Hard (Difficulty 4): This Difficulty steps things up further and only the very best are likely to succeed at these tasks. They are normally only things that the foolhardy or brave would even consider attempting, or represent the type of activities that require impressive skill and ability.

Examples include trying to run at full speed across an angled slate rooftop whilst in pouring rain, trying to drive a car at speed over a frozen river, or attempting to navigate a trackless jungle with no compass or specialist survival knowledge.

Extremely Hard (Difficulty 5): These tasks rival feats of legend and only those possessing superlative skill and natural ability should even attempt them.

Examples include running across fragmenting ice floes to reach a stranded ship, catching a thin rope in free-fall and then using it to throw yourself back into the building

you just fell from, or getting a car to flip onto its side to squeeze through a narrow alleyway, then righting it again and driving off with only minimal damage.

Heroic (Difficulty 6): The feats of legend begin here. Skill and ability alone are unlikely to allow a character to prevail. Tasks of this Difficulty require the most extreme effort and likely a great many positive factors weighed in the character's favour.

Examples include splitting an arrow from end to tip with a second shot, climbing an overhang on a cliff with no handholds or equipment, or diving through a plate glass window, falling three storeys, grabbing onto an awning rail and then throwing yourself unharmed onto a moving car.

Legendary (Difficulty 7+): These tasks are so outlandish as to border on the supernatural. No amount of conventional skill or ability should allow a character to succeed at these tasks under normal circumstances. These are not just replicas of feats of legend, but new tales in their own right, and succeeding at one will likely give a character something to talk about for a very long time.

Exact examples of these actions are difficult to pinpoint as they represent things that should not normally be possible, and even at the basic Difficulty of 7 they should be impressive indeed. For example, an old woman lifts a half-ton car to save her trapped child, a man rushes into and makes it through a raging inferno unharmed to save two small children, or riddled with bullets and bleeding to death a person stands through sheer force of will alone to deliver a final statement before plunging a knife into the heart of his attacker.

To reach the maximum levels of Difficulty, the task must be truly outrageous. For instance, characters wanting to outwit the Devil at his own contracts, or best Death in a race of speed might face Difficulties as high as 8 or 9. In the end, these kind of Difficulties fall purely to the GM to arbitrate.

Secondary Traits

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a character's Traits are not limited to Attributes, Fate and Skills. Specifically there are various other types of Trait which influence the game; the most common of which are **Qualities**, **Focus**, **Vitality** and **Motivations**. Together, they make up the character's Secondary Traits.

These Secondary Traits are just as important as a character's Core Traits. What makes them different is that they don't form the basis for a character's Dice Pools, but rather they affect the game in a number of slightly less direct ways. Also, unlike the basic Traits, they generally are not – with the exception of Qualities – improved directly and are instead calculated by adding together elements of the character's Core Traits.

Motivations

Everyone has their drives; core feelings and emotions which help define us and provide the framework for our beliefs. Characters in the game express these driving forces through their **Motivations**. These affect the game in many ways, from allowing a character to regain Focus to heavily affecting the advancement of a character's traits.

Each Motivation a character has is split into two components; a **Foundation** and a **Drive**. The Foundation for each Motivation is its core emotional component, such as love, hate, pride and so on. These are meant to be simple and direct, and are intended to represent what the Motivation is about when stripped of its more complex definitions. In a word, these are the primal things we want and need.

The Drive associated with each Motivation is more complex. It builds upon the Foundation, but applies it in a specific way. Combining both their Foundation and Drive, some example Motivations would be; "(Love) Protect my wife", "(Hate) Kill Tom Smith", and "(Pride) Leave a lasting legacy in the world".

Invoking Motivations

The first way in which Motivations help the character is through **Invoking**. This is a unique resource representing a supreme act of effort and investment of will on behalf of a character. It fuels and enhances various abilities such as Dramatic Actions, Saving Face and regaining Focus, all of which are covered a little later in this section.

Each Motivation a character possesses may only be Invoked once per Chapter and to Invoke it the character must be acting in accordance with that Motivation's Drive. This means that if your character possessed "(Hate) Exterminate the Broodspawn", they could only Invoke that Motivation when actively working towards harming Broodspawn in some meaningful way. It's fine to stretch this definition; for instance a character could Invoke the Motivation when helping a community defend itself against the Broodspawn.

Character Advancement

The second and perhaps most important way in which Motivations help you is allowing your character to grow and change. For each Motivation, you can acquire Achievement points. These accumulate for each Motivation separately. The track starts at 0 and ends at 9. For every 3 Achievement points you acquire in a single track, you are said to have achieved a Milestone. This allows your character to change themselves, either gaining new skills or altering existing Traits your character possesses.

OBSESSIVE MOTIVATIONS

Not all Motivations are equal. Some can be so important to a character that they can be a detriment as much as a benefit. Obsessive Motivations function as normal but come with a downside. Whenever a character takes an action to oppose that Motivation, the character loses 1 Focus. This Focus loss occurs at a maximum of once per Scene and the GM should not manoeuver the character into positions where they are forced to act against their Motivations more than once a Chapter. Of course, if a player acts against their own character's Obsessive Motivations repeatedly, that's their own problem.

"WHAT ABOUT TRAINING?"

Advancement via Motivations is meant to simulate the kind of rapid growth people undergo when placed under extreme stress and changing circumstances in their life. It's not meant to account for training and tuition, both of which are covered later on in this chapter.

Also, acquiring all 3 Milestones in a Motivation allows you to **Resolve** a Motivation. This lets you trade in the Motivation for a new one without any penalties and to acquire Traits you couldn't otherwise gain.

Individual Achievement points are earned for roleplaying Motivations and are accounted for at the end of a Session. Essentially when you work towards your Motivations, you get Achievement points. There are some limits in this and this is not the only way to gain them. In brief, Achievement points can be earned in the following ways:

- **Showing Up:** Just taking part in the story and showing up to the game nets you a single Achievement point to assign to any one of your Motivations **once per Chapter.**
- **Roleplaying Motivations:** Having your character act out their Motivations in an interesting way, which also helps keep the story moving can net you an Achievement point, though **you may only claim 1 Achievement point per Motivation per Chapter in this way.**
- **Good Roleplaying:** Good roleplaying can get you an Achievement point to add to whichever Motivation you like. **This can be claimed once per Chapter.**
- **Moving the Story Along:** If your character took an action which significantly helped to advance the story, tie up a plot hole or otherwise help out in some other way, you can claim 1 Achievement point to assign to whichever Motivation you wish. **This point can be claimed once per Chapter.**

The full rules for gaining Achievement points can be found on page 276 in the GM's Toolkit, and the rules for Character Advancement can be found later in this chapter on page 93.

CHANGING MOTIVATIONS

As play goes on, characters grow and change. A consequence of this is that your Motivations don't remain static and can alter considerably. The most common change is when a Motivation's Drive is altered as a result of a character's actions. Rarer, but not impossible, is changing a Motivation's Foundation, something which normally occurs only through great effort on a character's part.

Changing Drives: The primary means through which a Drive is changed is through Resolving the Motivation. This was mentioned briefly earlier, and happens when you have achieved three Milestones. In this case, you get to nominate a new Drive which aligns with your Foundation. There's no time involved and no penalty. You simply reset your Achievement Points and begin again with a new Motivation. You can even Invoke the new Motivation in the same Story you gained it.

The other way in which Drives can change is if they become impossible to fulfil. Unlike Resolving a Motivation, this isn't a good thing and represents a considerable shock to your character's beliefs, but depending upon why the Drive became impossible to fulfil, it may still have some benefits.

If a Drive became impossible to fulfil because a player succeeded in fulfilling their Drive, you remove three Achievement Points per Milestone you have achieved, but get to keep the remaining Achievement Points and apply them to a new Drive.

If, on the other hand, the Drive became impossible because of circumstance or a failure on the character's part, all stored Achievement Points are lost, and again you need to pick a new Drive.

Either way, this Drive doesn't come into effect until the start of a new Story and as a result you cannot earn Achievement Points for the new Motivation, nor can you Invoke it.

Changing Foundations: Whereas changing Drives happens frequently and as a natural part of a character's growth, changing Foundation is much more serious, representing a fundamental shift in a character's nature.

This never happens by accident, and it's always the choice of the player.

To change a Foundation, you have to also be about to change a Drive, at which point, you need to Invoke another Motivation and in doing so you can reassign both the Drive and Foundation of the Motivation.

If the Drive is being changed as part of Resolving a Motivation, you don't get to use this new Motivation right away. If the Drive was being changed for some other reason, you have to wait two stories – not one – for the new Motivation to take effect.

Focus

Focus is both a Trait and a precious resource. It represents a character's reserves of willpower and stamina which are used to alter a character's chances of success, thus shaping their own Destiny.

Focus exists as a pool of points that are available to character and which may be spent in various ways to alter their actions. Under normal circumstances, only Player Characters possess Focus. This has a base value of the character's Fate plus the average of their Cunning and Conviction.

Focus can be spent in one of two ways. The first is to enhance an Action by making that action **Dramatic**. The second is to avoid the consequences of failure which we call **'Saving Face'**. Both these actions can also be pushed further granting extra effects at the cost of Invoking a character's Motivations. Remember that whilst you can enhance both kinds of Action, **you may only Invoke a Motivation that is appropriate to the situation at hand.**

Dramatic Actions

When a character is about to make an Action, they may spend 1 or more Focus points to make the Action **Dramatic**. For each point of Focus spent in this way, the Action gains +1 Pool.

In addition, when they are about to perform a Dramatic Action, a character may – in addition to spending Focus – invoke one of their Motivations. If they do this, the Action is considered **Heroic**. A Heroic Action doubles the number of dice gained from spending Focus on that Action.

Example: *A character has a Dice Pool of 7 against a Target Number of 4+. He wishes to make the action Dramatic and spends 3 Focus. He would now have a total Dice Pool of 10, again against a TN of 4.*

In addition, he could choose to Invoke one of his Motivations to make the action Heroic. In this case, he gains a total of 6 bonus dice instead, increasing his Pool to 13.

Note: *Nemissaries may never spend Focus on any actions which oppose their Hollow directly. This is explained in greater detail on page 203 in the Nemissaries chapter.*

Spirit of Things

It goes without saying that Dramatic Actions should be… well, Dramatic! Of course there's nothing against players using them to accomplish an important but otherwise mundane task.

What we mean is that Dramatic Actions should take centre stage, and deserve a little more focus than is normally given. When they succeed, it should be spectacular, and when they fail the results are deadly.

One specific instance that might crop up is Dramatic Sustained Actions. In the rules there is nothing to stop a player choosing to make forging a sword Dramatic and this is definitely in the vein of what's intended, but the GM should remember that the rules should always serve the story, and not the other way around. If a player decides he's making the forging of a weapon Dramatic, and then decides he's only going to work 4 hours a day on it, the GM might be wise to question whether he should be allowed to use a Focus point at all.

Of course, if he's only working 4 hours a day because he's building it in a cave out of scraps, then there are probably few better situations in which to spend Focus.

Focus used in this way applies only for the duration of a single Action, but will benefit multiple rolls in the context of that same Action. For instance, if a Sustained Action is made Dramatic, each roll that is a part of that Sustained Action is considered Dramatic. However, if a player spends a Focus point on a Combat Action, it would apply only for the action itself, and not any other actions taken as part of the combat.

There is one downside to Dramatic Actions; if they fail, the result should be worse than normal. The door you're trying to pick locks for good, your sword slips from your hand, or your gun jams and so on. Simply put, making an action Dramatic means a character gives it their all and leaves no room for failure. Mechanically, it's up to the GM to adjudicate exactly what happens. Players shouldn't generally be killed arbitrarily because of a failed Dramatic Action, but a dangerous situation can definitely become deadly because of one.

Importantly, the GM should not use this rule to straitjacket or kill their players, but rather it should be one more tool in their arsenal with which to create engaging stories.

Saving Face

When a character screws up, they can spend Focus to prevent them failing. We call this **Saving Face**. To do this, a

SAVING FACE AND COMBAT

As pointed out, you can't use Focus to beat a character in an opposed roll, meaning that the best you can do is trigger a draw. This means that whilst you can't directly hurt your opponent, all the effects of a draw, such as in a Karmic Strike, still trigger.

character spends 1 Focus for each point they failed an Action by. Focus spent in this way can allow a character to Succeed in an Action, but can never grant Outcome to a roll. No matter what happens, you may only purchase Successes to gain a total equal to the Difficulty of the task or, in an Opposed Action, no more than your opponent's Successes.

A character doesn't have to spend enough Focus to make a roll into a success or to draw with an opponent. In some situations you may only wish to partially mitigate a failure, or you might not have enough Focus to spend.

If desperate, a character can go one step further. Like in a Dramatic Action, after a character declares they are spending Focus to Save Face, they may Invoke a Motivation in order to trigger **Grim Resolve**. When a character triggers Grim Resolve, each Focus point spent counts double for negating a failure following the same rules as above.

Example: *Jim is attempting a task with a Difficulty of 4. He makes his dice roll and score 2 Successes. Fearing the consequences of failure, he chooses to Save Face. By spending 2 Focus he can gain the 2 Successes necessary to not fail at the task. If he was to push this further by Invoking a Motivation, he would trigger Grim Resolve and only need to spend 1 Focus to achieve the same result.*

If Jim were fighting an opponent and engaged in an opposed roll where he rolled 4 Successes and his opponent achieved 7, he could spend 3 Focus to draw with his opponent, or by Invoking a Motivation and spending 2 Focus, he could achieve the same result. Even though his Grim Resolve would normally have given him a total of 4 Successes, he still doesn't beat his opponent because he still cannot raise his Successes to more than his opponent's.

REGAINING FOCUS

For all its power, Focus is a limited resource. A player begins a game with only a small number of points and regains them infrequently. Specifically Focus can be regained in a number of ways and may be brought to a value higher than its starting amount, but **at the end of each Scene, Focus in excess of a character's starting value is discarded.**

Beginning a Story: Focus is refreshed at the beginning of each Story, regaining a number of points of Focus to bring that character back up to their starting Focus points as dictated by their current Conviction and Passion.

At the start of a new Story, a character recovers all Focus up to their starting value.

Invoking Motivations: A character can regain Focus for good roleplaying of their Motivations. Specifically, when a player Invokes their Motivations, and is or has been roleplaying that Motivation extremely well, they may regain Focus equal to their Passion.

Whether that means acting upon them or denying them doesn't matter, so long as the player is adding to the game and overall story. There are limits to how many times this may be done which are discussed in the **Motivations** section of this chapter.

Whenever a player invokes their Motivations, they gain their Passion in Focus.

Rest: Proper rest allows a character to regenerate Focus, and under normal conditions, they get a number of Focus points back equal to their Conviction per night, though this only applies to humans and Nemissaries gain only a single point of Focus per night of rest. For more information, see the Nemissaries chapter, page 199.

Whenever a character sleeps, they regenerate their Conviction in Focus, or 1 Focus if that character is a Nemissary.

Combat: In the highly-charged life-and-death environment of combat, Focus can be spent and regained much quicker than in long term gameplay. All but 1 Focus spent in a combat is regained at the end of a Scene. For more information, see the combat rules on page 101.

Focus follows a special set of rules in combat. See page 111 for more information.

Last Stand: If a character is facing overwhelming odds or is confronted by multiple enemies of similar power to themselves, and chooses to fight to the death, then **the GM may grant that character a number of points of Focus equal to the number of opponents they are facing**. This bonus is not intended for players and should be used sparingly to make an outnumbered single opponent more potent. **Under no circumstances may a group of characters claim this benefit**, though a single character with minions may do so at the GM's discretion.

Special: Certain rare effects or supernatural abilities can allow a character to regain Focus, though such abilities are extremely rare. Also, the GM always has the option to award players with Focus for good roleplaying or for actions which help advance the story.

Other Considerations

Dramatic Actions are not the only way Focus can be used. In fact, it's an extremely versatile resource of which the basic rules cannot begin to cover all the possible uses. For more information on advanced uses of Focus, players should consult page 146 in the Expanded Traits section.

Qualities

Attributes and Skills are only one way that the abilities of characters are defined. There are various more specific abilities that can be pointed out in people, such as attractiveness, an intimidating manner, or a particular proficiency in one area of expertise. These specific and unique abilities are referred to in-game as Qualities.

Qualities and the Game

Qualities, unlike Skills or Fate, do not have ratings. Instead each is a singular Trait with its own impact on the character. A character certainly can acquire multiple Qualities but they generally never possess the same Quality more than once; there are, however, certain rare exceptions to this rule.

Each Quality's effect is unique and can influence the character in various ways. They might give bonus dice or make certain tasks more or less difficult.

Player characters begin the game with a number of Qualities and most other NPCs also possess a small number of them. The only exception to this is that **no two Qualities may under any circumstances grant the same benefit to an action**. Specifically, this means that if for example two separate Qualities both granted a bonus to Body actions, then only the greater bonus would apply.

Reading a Quality

Qualities that characters possess are noted in the game in the following way:

Name:

Requirements:

Effect:

Name simply tells you what the Quality is called for ease of reference.

Requirements tells you any Traits your character must possess in order for the Quality to function.

Finally, Effect specifies what the Quality does and if any special considerations are needed. Remember, unless otherwise stated by the Quality, the effects of two Qualities never stack together, and by no account should a player be allowed to circumvent this ruling, unless the Quality explicitly states that it may do so.

"But I Want to Fail!"

The rules for Saving Face are there to prevent your character screwing up and getting killed. In some highly unusual situations, it's actually possible for a successful Action to be more dangerous than a failed one.

When this occurs, a character can use the Saving Face rules to lower their Successes instead of raising them. This works in essentially the same way, requiring you to spend 1 Focus per Success you wish to negate, and you may trigger Grim Resolve to double the effects of Focus Spent.

Vitality

Everyone gets harmed once in a while, and player characters more often than others. Vitality is the game's way of dealing with just how much punishment any individual character can take. It differs in many ways from the other Traits listed here in that it doesn't have a single value, like a Skill or an Attribute, but rather is split into five sub-Traits which represent the different degrees of physical harm that can befall a character.

Vitality Thresholds

When a character takes Damage it is important to work out how many wounds of what type are inflicted. To do this, you need to know a character's Vitality Thresholds.

A character has five Vitality Thresholds—or VTs—three of which correspond directly to the character's Vitality pools and as a result how many wounds of each type they may take. Specifically, the five types are **Injured**, **Mauled**, **Critical**, **Deadly** and **Overkill**. The values for these are worked out as follows:

- **Injured:** Equal to 1 + ½ character's Body.
- **Mauled:** Equal to 1 + Body.
- **Critical:** Equal to 1 + (Body × 2).
- **Deadly:** Equal to 1 + (Body × 3).
- **Overkill:** Equal to 1 + (Body × 4).

When a character receives Damage that is greater than 0, it is checked against their Thresholds and a character takes 1 Wound of the appropriate type for each Threshold that the Damage is equal to or greater than.

Example: *Dan's character, Johnson, has a Body of 5, thus his VTs would be 3 for Injured, 6 for Mauled, 11 for Critical, 16 for Deadly and 21 for Overkill.*

He is then the recipient of a Damage 6 effect. He checks this against his Vitality Thresholds, and notes that the Damage is greater than his Injured Threshold, and equal to his Mauled Threshold. As a result, he takes two Wounds, resulting in the loss of 1 Injured Vitality, and 1 Mauled Vitality.

Resilience and Vitality Thresholds

Thresholds aren't the only things which protect your character from harm. There's also a special kind of trait called **Resilience**. For every point of Resilience a character possesses, incoming Damage is reduced by 1.

By far the most common way characters will gain Resilience is through armour, which provides a variable amount depending upon its quality and its traits; this isn't the only way though. Various powers and effects can modify a character's Resilience. For more information on Armour see page 185.

Realistic Healing

Healing can be a bit of a tricky topic, and the rules presented here are not really designed to be accurate where normal humans are concerned. They are ultimately just a quick way of adjudicating character regeneration over time. For a more detailed and realistic system, particularly one which is appropriate for humans, see page 146 in the Traits Expanded Chapter.

In addition, sometimes the rules may require you to simply take a Wound of a particular type, such as 1 Mauled Wound or 1 Injured Wound. In these cases, you still take one of each preceding Wound.

Example: *Johnson later activates a power which as a result causes him to take a Mauled Wound and, as with other injuries, he also then has to take an additional Injured Wound.*

Wound Tracks

Characters can sustain a number of Wounds based upon their Conviction, split between **Injured**, **Mauled** and **Critical** Vitality.

In addition to these types, characters also possess two special Vitality Threshold, which are **Deadly** and **Overkill**.

As mentioned above, when Damage equals or exceeds a character's Thresholds, the character takes Wounds. These accumulate onto a character's Wound Tracks as appropriate to their type. Injured goes into a character's Injured Wound Track, Critical goes into the character's Critical track and so on.

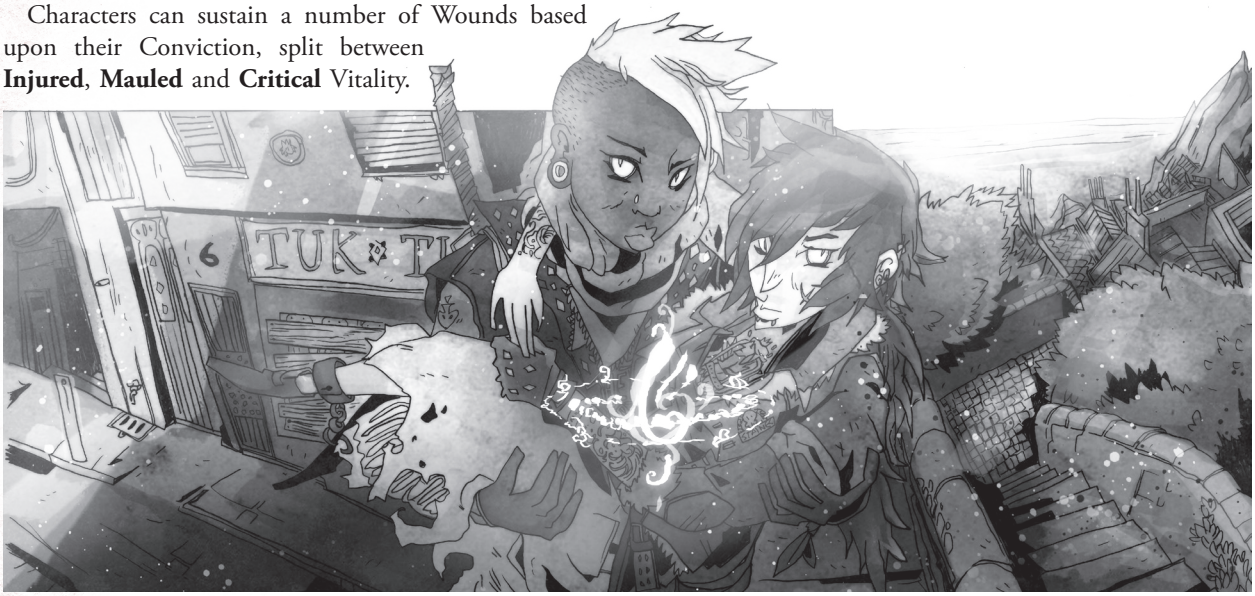
Relatively light injuries that a character takes are applied to their Injured VT. More serious damage, such as broken bones and deep lacerations are applied to a character's Mauled VT. Finally, truly horrendous and imminently life-threatening damage is applied to a character's Critical VT.

Of course some injuries can take a character down in one, and injuries surpassing a character's Deadly VT use the Deadly Wound track. Worse still, it's possible that some hideous attacks can kill a normal character outright without leaving any chance for survival. When necessary, these injuries are tracked in the Overkill Wound track.

A character can only take so much punishment and as such there is a maximum number of Wounds a character may take in any of their Wound Tracks. Each track is worked out as follows;

- **Injured:** Equal to Conviction.
- **Mauled:** Equal to Conviction -1, to a minimum of 1 point.
- **Critical:** Equal to Conviction -2, to a minimum of 1 point.
- **Deadly:** Equal to Conviction -3, to a minimum of 1 point.
- **Overkill:** Always 1 point.

Since both Deadly and Overkill both kill a character in one, having a point in them doesn't mean much to Human characters, but for Nemissaries and other creatures with Regeneration, this can be particularly important.

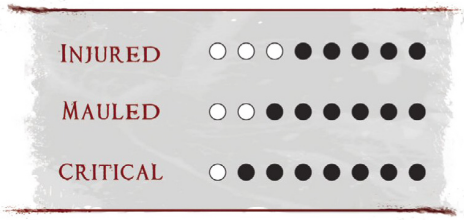


Escalating Damage

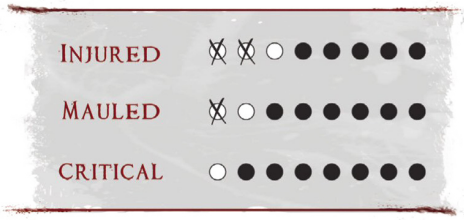
When a character takes wounds of a specific type but has no Vitality of that type remaining, a concept called **Wound Escalation** comes into play.

Simply put, if a character needs to take an Injured Wound but has already filled their Injured Wound track, they would instead take a Mauled Wound for each Injured Wound they should lose. This applies to each of the types of Damage and can escalate all the way up to Deadly or even Overkill.

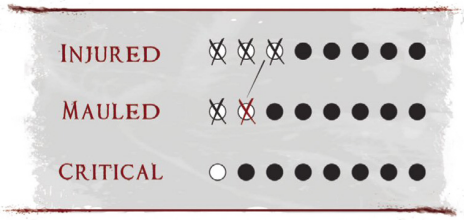
Example: *On Chris' Wound Tracks he has 3 Injured Wounds, 2 Mauled Wounds and 1 Critical Wound. His Wound Tracks would look like so:*



If he had already taken two damaging effects, one of which breached his Mauled Threshold, and one of which breached his Injured Threshold, he would have lost in total 2 Injured Wounds and 1 Mauled Wounds. He would represent this in the following way:



If Chris' character were then to take a Injured Wound, he would fill in the final Injured Wound Track, but would suffer no other ill effects. However if he were then to take a second Injured Wound, because he could no longer cross off a Injured Wound, he would have to remove a point from his Mauled Wound Track.



Now, Chris' character is in real danger. Even another Injured Wound would cause him to lose his only point of Critical Vitality. Furthermore and worse still, because he has no Mauled Wounds left, damage which breached his Mauled Threshold would end up costing him his Deadly Wound.

This is because the net result of taking a Mauled Wound would be taking ***one Injured Wound and one Mauled Wound****. Because he would have no Injured or Mauled Vitality points remaining, one of these two Wounds would escalate onto his singular Critical Wound, and the other remaining Wound would then escalate onto his Deadly Wound Track.*

Wound Penalties

Death isn't the only thing to fear from injuries. As a character grows closer and closer to their limit, their abilities diminish. This is handled in game through Wound Penalties. A character suffers Wound Penalties based on what Vitality Thresholds they have lost as noted below:

- **Injured: A character suffering one or more Injured Wounds suffers a -1 Pool penalty to all Actions** due to pain and distraction caused by the injury. **This penalty is ignored for creatures that do not feel pain such as Broodspawn.**
- **Mauled: A character suffering one or more Mauled Wound suffers a -1 Pool penalty to all Actions.** This penalty is primarily due to pain caused by deep lacerations and other dangerous and serious injuries sustained at this point.
- **Critical: Characters having taken one or more Critical Wounds lose 1 Success from any Action they undertake.** This is due not from pain, but from massive trauma, blood loss and likely broken bones and other injuries the character has sustained.
- **Deadly: A character having taken a Deadly Wound can only act by spending a point of Focus.** This buys them a single Round's worth of actions, at which point they must either spend Focus again to continue acting, or lapse into unconsciousness. Characters in this state not spending Focus to remain active are considered to be drifting in and out of consciousness and are otherwise unable to help themselves. Without assistance, death is normally imminent.
- **Overkill:** Characters which take an Overkill Wound are done for in any normal sense of the word. A minor miracle or an incredible success on a Medicine roll might, at the GMs discretion, cause the character to stabilise, but such characters are usually beyond any help, having suffered injuries that would be obviously fatal to even an uneducated observer. Even Regeneration normally fails at this point and only extremely powerful entities are capable of recovering unaided from such a wound.

Penalties suffered from Wounds occur the moment a character takes that Wound and **all Wound Penalties and effects from Wounds are cumulative.** To reiterate, Broodspawn and other creatures which don't feel pain ignore Injured Wounds when working out Wound Penalties.

Nemissaries and Baleful Wounds

For the most part, Nemissaries can afford to be pretty blasé about taking damage. Through a combination of their innate abilities and powers they can access in game, they can heal almost anything. This all changes when Baleful Damage comes into the picture. It's not nice stuff, and virtually every ability a Nemissary has will fail them, which is entirely intentional. If you pull Voidglass on somebody, you really mean business.

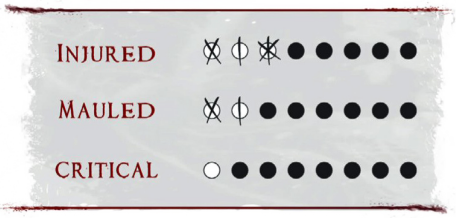
There are two ways a Nemissary can realistically deal with Baleful Damage they accumulate. The first is surgery as covered below. The second is by purging large amounts of Anima from their body, the rules for which can be found in the Nemissary chapter on page 206.

Special Damage Types

Not all Damage is equal, and some require special considerations. Specifically, the rules use the terms **Impaling** and **Baleful** to describe these particular types of Damage.

Wounds caused by these types of Damage need to be tracked separately on your character sheet. For clarity's sake, we recommend using the notation shown below, but any way that pleases the player is fine, so long as it's clear what the notation represents.

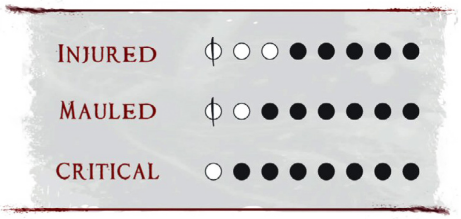
Multiple types of special Damage can exist simultaneously. For instance, the health track of a character who had been hit three times – twice at their Mauled Threshold by a normal attack and an Impaling attack, and then once at their Injured Threshold with Baleful Damage – would look something like this:



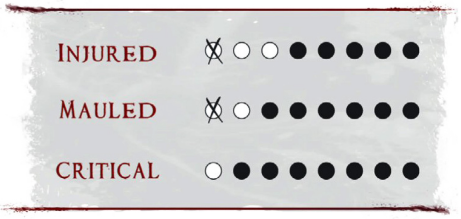
Impaling Damage: This represents objects which are lodged in a character's body. These wounds are distinct in that they cannot be healed in any way until the object in question is removed from the character's body.

Once an object which caused Impaling Damage is removed, the associated Wounds revert to normal and can be healed in any of the ways available to the character.

Example: *Jack takes a hit from a spear-gun in combat and it breaches his Mauled Wound. As a result, he loses 1 Injured and Mauled Vitality. These are noted specifically as Impaling Damage. As these wounds are Impaling, they cannot be healed.*



Later, Jack removes the spear. This converts the two points of Wounds lost from Impaling Damage back to normal Wounds, and allows them to now be healed, just as with any other Wounds Jack has taken.



Baleful Damage: This represents horrific injuries; things which either cause massive trauma such as fire or supernatural sources of damage such as those from Voidglass weapons or the Arietta of the Nemissaries.

Baleful Damage cannot be healed normally. It must first be addressed with medical attention or removed through powerful supernatural effects. Removing it with medical care requires a character to cut away the affected flesh, requiring a Sustained Action which uses Prowess/Medicine roll against a Difficulty of 0 and a Threshold equal to the number of Baleful Wounds the character is suffering in total. Each roll takes 1 hour and the Difficulty of this task is then further modified by the patient's situation.

- **Difficulty +1:** The patient is suffering 1 or more Baleful Injured Wounds.
- **Difficulty +1:** The patient is suffering 1 or more Baleful Mauled Wounds.
- **Difficulty +1:** The patient is suffering 1 or more Baleful Critical Wounds.

- **Difficulty +1:** The patient is suffering a Deadly Wound.
- **Difficulty +1:** The patient is attempting to treat themselves.

If an individual roll fails, the Patient suffers 1 Injured Wound in addition to the normal increase in Difficulty. If the Action succeeds, all Baleful Wounds are converted into normal Wounds. If the action is abandoned, the target takes a further 1 Injured Wound.

Regaining Vitality

Characters remove Wounds and restore their Wound Tracks at varying speeds. Deadly Wounds are healed first, followed by Critical, then Mauled, then Injured. This healing only affects normal Wounds a character has taken, and not any specialised types of Damage, which must be dealt with themselves as noted above.

- **Deadly:** 6 weeks of bed rest will remove a character's Deadly Wound.
- **Critical:** 1 Wound removed per 3 weeks
- **Mauled:** 1 Wound removed per week.
- **Injured:** 1 Wound removed per day.

These times all assume that a character is receiving basic medical attention and are taking it easy. If they do not do this, the recovery times are doubled.

Example: *John's character is pretty messed up. He's taken 3 Injured Wounds, 2 Mauled, and 1 Critical Wound. In total, it will take him 5 weeks and 3 days for him to recover from his wounds. At the end of the first three weeks he would recover his Critical Wound, then as the next two weeks passed he would remove the two Mauled Wounds, and then finally he removes one Injured Wound per day until healed.*

Supernatural Traits

"He fought because he actually felt safer fighting than running."

-Richard Adams – Watership Down

Not everyone in the world of Sins is strictly mortal. Many entities – not least of which the Nemissaries which the players portray – possess unique and sometimes quite terrifying supernatural abilities. In game, these are handled through Supernatural Traits.

Each type of supernatural entity – be they Nemissary, Brood or other – differs in what they are capable of doing. As such, Supernatural Traits can vary tremendously and exactly what Traits are possessed, and their capabilities, are determined by the type of Supernatural in question.

"Where do I find things?"

These rules are elaborated on in their respective chapters. You might be wondering why we don't cover these sorts of things correctly in the Core Rules, and frankly the answer is that it would just make this chapter too big and probably lead to a lot of confusion.

All the rules you need for player characters are split between Chapter 8 – Nemissaries, and Chapter 9 – Songs, and you will find the full rules for the Brood and the Shards in Chapter 10 – The Brood and Chapter 11 – GM's Toolkit.

Common Supernatural Traits

Supernatural creatures follow a common framework. Although some of their abilities are entirely unique, there are certain features which function in similar ways for virtually all supernatural creatures. The most prominent of these are Anima and Supernatural Features.

Anima

Anima is an energy source; a pool of points characters use to fuel their supernatural abilities. This pool is normally split into three subtypes: Light, Dark and Neutral Anima. This Trait can go up and down during gameplay and is capped at a particular maximum in a similar way to Focus points.

Different Supernaturals utilise Anima in different ways, but the most basic is a stable pool of points which are depleted as powers are used and replenished over time. Other examples, such as the Brood – where a certain number of Anima points can be spent per round – are also fairly commonplace.

Supernatural Features

Individual, unique supernatural capabilities are often defined through Supernatural Features. These vary tremendously between different character types but all function in much the same way as normal Qualities; that is, they provide a consistent stable set of benefits and drawbacks.

Unlike normal Qualities, these do not need to be purchased during character creation and cannot be bought during gameplay. Instead, various situations or character types can give Supernatural Features to the character.

Many abilities are expressed through this system and several common Supernatural Features are shared by multiple types of Supernatural.

Specific Supernatural Traits

For the most part, Supernaturals can be defined by their Supernatural Features and their ability to manipulate Anima. However, this doesn't account for certain more sweeping changes that being supernatural imposes.

These Traits, such as Creed (Page 200), Spite (Page 202) and Synergy (Page 264), are covered in detail later in this book along with their relevant roleplaying and mechanical information.

There is Always More

Not everything to do with the rules falls neatly into the sections we've outlined above. Below are a collection of additional rules; specifically illness and disease, fire and character advancement.

Size

Not all living things are equal. Some are much larger or much smaller than others. Primarily, this comes into play when factoring in a creature's combat abilities. In some non-combat situations, size can be an advantage or disadvantage and in these cases the GM should give one party a penalty based upon the difference in size steps.

For instance, if you were trying to chase a cat through an alleyway, it would certainly gain an advantage as raw speed is not what matters. On the other hand, if trying to beat a gorilla in a contest of strength, its size would certainly count against you. The sizes for characters in the game are as follows:

- **Minute:** These creatures are rarely worth considering. Generally they have no direct effect on the game. Examples include flies, worms, and anything else you can crush with a finger.
- **Tiny:** Mice, rats and very small birds.
- **Very Small:** Cats, small dogs and human infants.
- **Small:** Average dogs, eagles and children.
- **Medium:** Large dogs, predatory cats and adult humans.
- **Large:** Horses, great cats and bears.
- **Huge:** Elephants, whales and anything else you can't fit in a house.
- **Massive:** No natural creatures exist of this size any more. This is larger than several houses but not quite the size of a tower block.
- **Gigantic:** This is like something out of a nightmare. As large as a tower block and several hundred feet tall, it defies a natural scale.
- **Titanic:** This creature's size almost defies description, rivalling skyscrapers just in height alone.

Other than as a reference to adjudicate Difficulties in some situations, size also has a number of concrete effects related to combat.

Illness and Toxins

The sad fact is that in a dark and gritty world, most infections, diseases and poisons are ultimately fatal. However, characters with Fate are somewhat more difficult to kill. Rather than launch into an extended description of every possible illness, diseases are given a set of abilities which are rolled against your character in an opposed test. For the purposes of the rules, refer to all diseases, toxins, poisons and such, as a Condition.

First of all a Condition has a **Vector**, which is how the agent is spread. It can be airborne, waterborne, contact with blood or other bodily fluids, or any combination of these. What matters is that if someone is exposed to the Condition via its Vector, there is a chance they will be afflicted.

Secondly there is **Virulence**. This is the Dice Pool that the Condition rolled to affect a host. It is noted as X / Y, with the first number denoting the number of dice rolled, and the second number the target number required on each dice, very much like a Skill roll. The Condition gets to make this roll when the target first runs afoul of its Vector. The results of the roll determine whether the character will be affected or begin to throw off the Condition as explained below.

Next is **Interval**. This is how often the disease or toxin tests against the host if it successfully infects them. Each time the Interval passes, the disease gets to roll its Virulence against the target's Body/Athletics as before.

If the Condition is successful, then the target suffers the Condition's listed **Effects**, all of which are cumulative, potentially making the Condition more likely to succeed at an Interval roll in the future.

If the target overcomes the Condition when tested at an Interval, they should note their successes. These are added up until they equal the Condition's **Persistence**, at which point the Condition is fully defeated and the target will begin to recover from any effects caused in the interim.

Health recovers as normal and lost Attributes return at a rate of 1 Attribute rank per week. Other effects such as Pool penalties also diminish at a rate of 1 per week and effects not listed above end immediately when the Condition is overcome, unless otherwise stated.

A character need not face a Condition alone. Another character can attempt to offer Medical Aid so long as they have access to appropriate medical supplies. If they do so, they make an opposed Reason/Medicine check against the Disease's Virulence. Each point of Outcome that the assisting character scores is added as free Successes to the patient's next attempt to overcome the Condition.

With all that in mind, an individual Illness or Toxin would look something like this:

Tetanus: One of the more common ailments of mankind, this infection is normally acquired by exposing an open wound to rusted metal or other unsanitary conditions.

Vector: Blood contact with infected medium

Virulence: 5 / 4+

Interval: 3 Hours until 1 Virulence test has been failed, then 1 day

Persistence: 3

Effects: Each time a test is failed, the character loses 1 Prowess and 1 Body and suffers from stiffness and spasms that inflicts a -1 pool penalty on all actions. If the character is reduced to 0 body, they die. If the character is reduced to 0 Prowess then they are essentially paralyzed and may require emergency medical care to stay alive.

This is just one example. For common toxins, see page 192 in the Equipment chapter, and for a list of common illnesses see page 298 in the GM's Toolkit chapter.

Note: *Nemissaries are immune to normal Conditions by default, though certain Arietta can change this, allowing a Nemissary to be affected by Conditions that would not normally affect them.*

Fire

Simultaneously a symbol of life and death, fire has always held a fascination for mankind, and in the world of Sins it takes on particular significance as it's one of the few effects that can reliably kill the Brood and cause serious harm to a Nemissary.

Fires are rated by their size and inflict Damage accordingly. Any character who comes into contact with the fire takes Damage as shown below;

- **1 Damage:** A candle or torch.
- **2 Damage:** A campfire.
- **3 Damage:** A bonfire.
- **4 Damage:** A full-scale house fire.
- **5 Damage:** A raging inferno.
- **6 Damage:** A blast furnace or other incredibly hot fire.

The Damage is inflicted once per roughly 10 second period the character remains in contact with the fire, and should be based on the character's average exposure to it. In a combat situation where time is more rigid, this Damage is inflicted each Round that the character is in contact with the flame.

This Damage is Baleful, and ignores all Resilience except that which is specifically stated as working against fire. Also, it is assumed that only a small part of a character is exposed to the fire. If for some reason more than half their body would be inside the fire, double the Damage the fire inflicts. Likewise, if they are entirely inside the fire the Damage is tripled.

Character Advancement

As a story progresses, characters grow. The primary means in the HOPE Engine to facilitate this growth is through Motivations, as discussed previously in this chapter; it isn't the only way however. Training and dedication can advance a character as well and under certain special circumstances, traits can be gained or lost as result of things which happen to characters in the game.

Milestones

When your character achieves a Milestone they get to advance their Traits and redistribute Traits on their character sheet. Both of these effects happen as soon as the character achieves the Milestone. This means that advancement can happen mid-game so long as that advancement wouldn't be disruptive. If it is, or if what you want to do is too complicated, you'll have to wait for a lull in the action.

Supernatural Traits and Advancement

The rules for advancement here only cover mundane traits your character possesses. They're not intended to deal with things like Creed, Spite or Arietta. These traits advance according to their own special rules. As a rule, Creed and Spite both possess temporary ratings and advance only when they acquire 7 temporary points respectively. For more information, see page 199 in the Nemissary chapter.

Arietta can be acquired through training with another Nemissary, communing with Shards, Devouring or advancing a character's Creed. For more information on the advancement of Arietta in general, see page 225 in the Songs chapter and for more information on Devouring and Creed, see the Nemissary chapter.

The GM may also find the rules for Shards useful in this context which are found on page 279 in the GM's Toolkit.

When your character achieves a Milestone, they gain two Advancement Points which may be spent as noted below:

- **2 Points:** Gain a Quality for which your character meets the prerequisites.
- **2 Points:** Gain a Speciality of your choice.
- **1 Point:** Increase any Skill by 1 point.
- **1 Point:** Gain a Skill that you do not possess at rank 1.

Note: *Remember that you cannot have more than 4 ranks in a Skill, nor may you stack Qualities or Specialities.*

A player may also trade a single Trait when they achieve a Milestone. This follows certain restrictions;

- If the Trait has a rank, only 1 rank of that Trait may be traded.
- If the Trait has a rank, it may be traded only to increase a Trait that has an equal or lower rank.
- A Trait must be traded for another of the same type; Attribute for Attribute, Quality for Quality.
- The trade must also make sense from the point of view of the story and be agreed upon with the GM.

Example: *A player has just achieved a Milestone and wishes to lower their character's Conviction and increase their Prowess. First of all, because this Trait has a rank they can only trade 1 point. The player's character has a Conviction of 5 and a Prowess of 3. They check again and because their Conviction is higher than their Prowess, they may trade the rank. If the character's Prowess was 6 then this trade couldn't take place as the Prowess would be ranked higher.*

Having checked both that the trade is legal and that the GM agrees the trade makes sense in context to the story, the character's Conviction is lowered by 1 and their Prowess is increased by 1, giving them a final rating in both traits of Conviction 4 and Prowess 4.

The final arbiter on whether any Trait may be advanced or traded is the GM. Ultimately, you can only advance things which are reasonable for your character to learn. It's okay to spontaneously get better at things but it's not appropriate to develop skills or traits which your character has previously shown no interest in developing.

Resolving Motivations and Advancement

The greatest changes in characters come from finally completing elemental drives and goals. When your character manages to Resolve a Motivation, they get a free rank in an Attribute in addition to the advancements for Milestones noted above.

Note: *Attributes may not be raised to a rank higher than a character's Fate +5.*

Training

Not all changes come quickly. Characters can also take their time and learn things the hard way. To qualify for training, a character needs to spend at least 20 hours a week practicing alone, or 10 hours a week with a tutor also willing to put in the same amount of time. This counts as appropriate training for raising a single Trait. If you wanted to train two Traits, you would either have to put in twice as much time or the Trait would advance at half the normal rate.

The maximum number of hours a character can spend training is equal to 5 + that character's Conviction and Resolve. If training time is missed for some reason, a character can resume but for every hour that was missed, they will have to train for 2 hours before the time is once again counted towards advancement.

The Traits listed below simply require the listed length of time in continuous training in order to improve:

- **New Natural Skill:** 7 - Cunning in months.
- **New Learnt Skill:** 12 - Reason in months.
- **Improve a Skill up to rank 3:** Current rank × 6 in months.
- **Improve a Skill to rank 4:** 10 - Lower of Cunning and Reason in years.
- **Learn a Quality:** 1 year.

Characters can also improve Attributes through training, but only if they are willing to lower another Attribute to do so. Assuming a character is willing to do this, they need to practice as noted before:

- **Improving an Attribute:** Current rating × 3 in months.

Finally, Arietta can be learned through training but only if a tutor who knows the relevant Arietta is willing to teach it. For more information, see page 225 in the Songs chapter.

Fate and Advancement

Fate doesn't advance in the same manner as other Traits; rather, it increases as your character grows in strength and importance to the plot. For Nemissaries, this is represented in game through the advancement of Creed, which as we have mentioned replaces Fate. Human characters still possess a normal Fate trait which advances as that character achieves Milestones.

For normal characters, Fate advances after that character has Resolved a Motivation and taken part in at least one complete Story that had at least three Chapters. The first requirement is rigid, but the second is less so. So long as the character can reasonably be said to have completed a Story from start to finish and that Story can be said to have significant consequences, Fate is eligible to advance.

For information on how Nemissaries advance their Creed, see page 200 in the Nemissaries chapter, and for further information on Fate and character advancement, see page 279 in the GM's Toolkit chapter.

Temporarily Modifying Traits

It's possible for traits to be modified temporarily during the course of play. This occurs most frequently as a result of various supernatural abilities, but can also occur due to certain Qualities that a character might possess.

When this occurs, certain guidelines need to be followed. These are broadly the same as those for modifying dice pools.

- Multiple increases to the same Trait do not stack.
- Multiple decreases to the same Trait do stack.

In addition to those two guidelines, you also do not modify Derived Traits due to temporary modifiers to a Trait, so for instance, if you get a temporary boost to Conviction you don't gain new Motivations. That said, certain Traits like Attributes can have additional effects when they are modified. Each of these situations is covered in more detail below.

Modifying Attributes

One of the more common Traits to be modified through supernatural means is a character's Attributes. When this happens, a character's Attribute is altered by the specified amount and functions as if the Attribute was at that rank naturally, other than for recalculating Derived Traits. In addition, Body, Conviction and Passion have additional effects when modified as explained below.

Body and Conviction: When modified, these Attributes provide all their usual benefits, with the exception that Derived Traits are not changed. Instead, for every point these Attributes are increased, the character gains 1 point of Resilience. Alternatively, for every point that they are reduced, the character increases incoming Damage by 1. These effects are cumulative with one another and cancel each other out, so increasing Body and Conviction by 1 each will grant a total of 2 Resilience. Conversely, if a character had +1 Body but -2 Conviction, they would increase incoming Damage by 1.

Passion: Modifying Passion during play gives you the normal increase to dice pools and potential resistance to social effects but not Derived Traits. In addition to these normal effects, modifying Passion has an additional special effect.

When you make an action Dramatic and your Passion has been modified, you increase or decrease the dice pool of the Dramatic Action by the same amount your Passion has been modified by.

Modifying Skills

It's possible, though extremely rare, for an effect to modify a character's Skills. When this happens, a character's Skills are temporarily raised or lowered as normal but may **never** be raised above 4 or below 1 by any combination of effects.

"Why the Difference?"

So you're wondering why some Attributes get treated differently when modifying Traits? Believe it or not, it's to reduce book-keeping. We know that's a little counter-intuitive but it comes down to this; for raising Attributes to be even, they would have to affect everything that the Attributes would normally, and that means Derived Traits. While this is logical, it's a bookkeeping nightmare.

Consider that Body can change a lot, and now imagine every time it does you have to recalculate your character's Wound Thresholds. That's not fun, I can assure you. So in a nutshell, the reason these Attributes work a little differently is to preserve the balancing without requiring you to recalculate everything. If, for some reason, you don't like this solution to the problem you can ignore the differences between Attributes and just recalculate everything. It is, after all, your game.

Modifying Qualities

Characters may gain temporary Qualities with the condition that they may never possess the same Quality more than once. If an effect would cause them to do so – even temporarily – that aspect of it is ignored. Losing Qualities simply removes access to that Quality and all its associated benefits and problems. **If this Quality has a number of uses per Story, losing it temporarily does not reset the limit.**

Modifying Motivations

Though rare, it is possible for a character to temporarily gain new Motivations. When this occurs they function in most respects like any other Motivation a character might possess. Specifically they provide a defence against social actions (as outlined on page 131) and may be Invoked as we have discussed earlier. The difference is that they never track Achievement points nor generate Milestones and thus do not provide a means of character advancement. Temporary Motivations may not be Resolved and never count towards a character's maximum limit of Motivations. Also, **a character may never possess more than 1 Temporary Motivation.** Any effect which would cause them to gain a Temporary Motivation whilst they already possess one simply replaces the existing Temporary Motivation.

Equally rare but possible is an effect which causes the temporarily loss of a Motivation. In this case, Achievement Points and Milestones are not reset but you cannot use the Motivation for anything either. You are also still considered to have the Motivation for the purposes of your maximum number of Motivations.

Optional Rules

The following rules are not critical for gameplay. In fact, they are unlikely to crop up in a game centred around Nemissaries. With that said, not every game revolves around these entities, and sometimes you will need to worry about the little things which Nemissaries take for granted, but easily rule the lives of most human beings.

Holding Your Breath

Sometimes you need to know how long your character can hold their breath. A simple guide is 10 seconds times the sum of Body + Conviction + Athletics. If you are attempting to hold your breath in a stressful situation such as rapid swimming or a Combat, you should halve the available time.

Once you run out of breath, you pass out and are at the mercy of the GM. If you are at any depth underwater, it's probably time to roll a new character. In most other situations, as long as the suffocation stops, your character will probably recover at the end of the Scene.

Breaking Things

Sooner or later you need to know how to destroy something. For the most part, due to the nature of the game, this is handled abstractly. If you want to throw someone through a wall, you can. This works great for games where the characters are all Nemissaries but for human groups or grittier stories, you may need the more in-depth system presented below.

Items don't have health quite in the same way characters do but they do have many similarities. First, they have a form of Vitality called **Structure** which represents the amount of punishment an item can take. As an item takes damage, its Structure is reduced and once it runs out of Structure, it is wrecked. This doesn't necessarily mean that the item is completely destroyed; rather that it no longer functions. A car can't work, a wall has a gaping hole in it and so on. In addition to Structure, items also possess Resilience, which is handled in a similar manner to the normal Damage rules.

When you attack an item, you reduce your weapon's Damage by that item's Resilience, and then lower the Structure of the item by however much Damage is remaining. Once the item runs out of Structure, it is wrecked as noted above. Damage can still be applied and instead of counting down, it counts back up towards the item's starting Structure. Once that amount is reached, the item is completely and totally destroyed; the car is twisted scraps of metal on the floor, and the wall is… well, there is no wall any more. You get the idea.

The actual Resilience and Structure of an item is determined by how thick it is and what it is made out of as shown below:

- Soft materials such as paper or plaster have 1 Structure point per inch and no Resilience.
- Tough materials such as wood have 2 Structure points per inch and a Resilience of 1.
- Strong materials such as most stones have 3 Structure points per inch and a Resilience of 3.
- Very resilient materials such as iron or granite have 4 Structure points per inch, and a Resilience of 5.
- Impossibly resistant materials like bonded titanium or Voidglass can have 5 or more Structure points per inch, depending upon the situation, and usually possess a Resilience of 7 or more.

We cannot list every possible situation in this regard, so just use common sense within the guidelines above.

Going Without Food and Water

The human body can survive approximately seven days without food and three days without water. However, detrimental effects of hunger and dehydration begin much sooner than this.

After three days without food, or one day without water, all of a character's Attributes are reduced by 1. For each additional day that passes without either food or water, the character's Attributes are lowered by a further 1. These decreases are cumulative and applies for both food and water. If you go without both, you lose a total of 2 Attribute ranks per day.

If a character's Body Attribute is reduced to 0, the character faints, and will be incapable of helping themselves. Whilst a character's Body remains at 1 or more, their other Attributes may not fall below 1. However, once Body drops to 0, a character's other Attributes may do so as well. If all of a character's Attributes reach 0, the character dies.

Certain environments can dramatically increase the rate of dehydration.

- **Step 1:** Normal or Temperate conditions. The character loses Attributes due to dehydration every 24 hours.
- **Step 2:** Hot or humid conditions, such as California or Nevada in the summer. Each hour counts as 2 for the purposes of dehydration.
- **Step 3:** Desert environment such as the Gobi Desert or Australian Outback. Each hour counts as 4 for the purposes of dehydration.
- **Step 4:** Lethal environment, such as Death Valley or the deep Sahara. Each hour counts as 6 or more for the purposes of dehydration.

Lost Attributes return at a rate of 1 rank per week once starvation and dehydration are stopped. Bear in mind that this is 1 point in total recovered per week, and not 1 rank per Attribute per Week. This process can also be accelerated with proper medical care, changing the time from weeks to days.

Broodspawn are essentially immune to starvation and dehydration, being able to function more or less indefinitely. Nemissaries, whilst still needing food and water, are extremely resilient and can go a base of 21 days without food or 7 days without water before any Attributes would be lost.

Even then, when an Attribute would be lost, the Nemissary instead loses 1 point of Anima and may not regenerate Neutral Anima through rest until they have gained sustenance. Only when this Anima runs out do they suffer Attribute loss.

Cold Weather

With appropriate survival gear, most people can survive in adverse weather conditions. Cold weather becomes truly lethal when people are unable to escape it, or lack appropriate survival gear.

Cold weather inflicts a variable number of Wounds upon a character based upon the severity of the Weather.

The Vacuum of Space

Though unlikely, it's not outside the realms of possibility that the players will find themselves in space. It's worth pointing out that the space surrounding the Earth varies in temperature.

In direct sunlight, the temperature can be dangerously high, inflicting 15 or more Fire Damage per Round to anybody without appropriate protection – you'd better have a space-suit or be in the Destroyer Shape.

Outside of sunlight space is extremely cold. However because a vacuum is an extremely poor conductor of heat, you're actually far more likely to die from the pressure difference causing your blood to boil than you are to actually freeze to death.

Whether in light or dark, characters without appropriate protection such as a space suit or high levels of proficiency in the Song of Bone should suffer 1 Injured Wound per Round which cannot be healed until the character is removed from the vacuum. Any character suffering one or more Mauled Wounds as a result of this Damage will be permanently blinded unless they are capable of Regeneration.

Not that we're being nasty or anything, but one more thing worth noting is that any character exposed to the vacuum of space without protection is also quite likely to take in enough radiation to kill them in the long run anyway, not to mention being potentially fatal in the short term. Granted, as Nemissaries are "dead", they can get round this problem and in the long run, it might not be as unlikely as you think for them to be venturing into space.

- **Step 1:** Cold temperatures, such as a temperate region at night. The character takes 1 Injured Wound per 3 hours.
- **Step 2:** Very cold conditions, like exposed mountain slopes, or desert regions at night. The character takes 1 Injured Wound per hour.
- **Step 3:** Dangerously cold conditions such as Mountain peaks or tundra. The character takes 1 Injured Wound per 30 minutes.
- **Step 4:** Extremely cold temperatures, such as arctic regions or a glacier. The character takes 1 Injured Wound per 5 minutes.
- **Step 5:** Deadly cold areas, such as polar regions without additional dangers. The character takes Injured Wound per 30 seconds or 1 Injured Wound per 6 combat rounds.

- **Step 6:** Imminently fatally cold temperatures, such as during a heavy blizzard in a polar region. The character takes 1 Injured Wound per 5 seconds or 1 Injured Wound per Round.
- **Step 7:** No hope. At this point you are an icicle within seconds and your character is most certainly dead without supernatural protection.

Wounds sustained from cold may not be healed by any means, natural or otherwise, whilst the character remains in the cold environment. Just to be clear, that means no Regeneration, no healing Arietta, nothing.

Broodspawn and Nemissaries are highly resistant to this type of harm. Any Steps for cold exposure are reduced by 4, to a minimum of 0, so for a Broodspawn, Step 7 exposure would count as step 3. Also, Broodspawn and Nemissaries may never take an Overkill Wound as a result of cold weather. Instead, when this occurs, they are frozen stiff and remain dormant until they are no longer exposed to the environmental conditions.

If for any reason your character is wet, increase the danger of the cold by 1 step. If your character is actually immersed in water, increase the danger by 2 steps. Both these conditions last until your character is totally dry. This cannot generally be achieved whilst still in a cold environment. Even though the table doesn't go above step 7, the two modifiers listed above can push the rating higher for the purposes of bringing it back down again with survival equipment. That said, cold weather damage at a step higher than 7 isn't any more lethal, just harder to abate.

Survival equipment also impacts the severity of cold weather conditions:

- If a character lacks any survival gear, they increase the severity of environment by 1 step.
- If they possess basic survival equipment, the severity of the environment is treated as normal.
- If they possess fine quality survival equipment, the severity of the environment is considered 1 step lower.
- Finally, if they are lucky enough to have masterwork quality survival equipment, the environmental severity is counted as 2 steps lower.

Smoke Inhalation

One of the more deadly things that can effect a human, smoke inhalation occurs rapidly and is usually fatal. Generally an outdoor fire creates a smoke danger with a rank equal to half the fire's rank, whilst an indoor fire generates a smoke danger equal to the full rank of the fire.

For every minute that the character is exposed to the smoke, they take a number of Injured Wounds equal to the rank of the smoke danger. This danger can be mitigated somewhat through appropriate equipment based defences; the most basic of which is a wet cloth or towel over the mouth and nose which will lower the smoke danger's effective rank for this purpose by 1. Other equipment is covered on page 186.

Nemissaries and the Broodspawn are not affected by smoke inhalation. Certainly they can be blinded by it and will cough and splutter if for some reason they attempt to speak, but smoke alone won't kill them.

Falling Damage

Given the high octane nature of the game, falling damage isn't normally something which needs to be considered in rigid terms. After all, in a game where jumping between buildings and using cars as improvised weapons are just part of the fun, checking for Damage from a fall may be unnecessary.

However, not all games run in the world of Sins are high action. Some may deal with fully mortal groups, or the GM and players might desire a more realistic style of play. In that case, feel free to use the falling damage rules presented below.

Falling damage can be a tricky subject. In most instances it should be relatively obvious whether a fall would be harmful or not. Generally speaking, a human being can fall about 3 meters without any real harm, but even then a bad fall could still maim or kill you.

Generally, if it is in doubt if a fall should be harmful or not, remember that only falls of 10 meters or so result in an almost certain chance of death, and thus a fall should inflict a damaging hit equal to the number of meters fallen, but should generally not inflict any damage if the fall is from less than about 2 metres.

Of course a character can mitigate this damage by successfully breaking their fall, and doing so is a Prowess/Athletics against a Difficulty of one quarter the height in meters fallen. Success will cut the Damage in half, and lower the final Damage by 1 for each point of Outcome.

Overriding Rules

Before going any further, it's important to note that there are some concepts which hold true for every rule and situation. Some of this may go over your head until you've read the later sections of the book but it's important to state it anyway so that we can avoid confusion or inconsistencies with the rules.

Stacking: Qualities do not stack. You get the best benefit offered by two Qualities but you don't add them together. Also, Arietta never stack. You can use multiple ones at once and can cherry-pick the best benefits of your powers, but you never add them together. Two powers which give you +1 Pool still only give you +1 Pool, no matter how many times you activate them.

Bonuses and Penalties: General bonuses and penalties from anything other than Qualities and Supernatural Powers, such as Stances, Wound Penalties and various situations in combat, all stack together. That is if something gives you +1 pool, something else gives you +3 pool and something else gives you -2 pool, your total modifier would be +2.

Rerolls: No roll or individual dice may be rerolled more than once. If a power specifically says you may pick the better result, you may; otherwise you are stuck with the new roll – no exceptions. Note that rerolling is not the same as a dice Exploding.

Exploded Dice: When a dice explodes, it's not a new dice – you are just checking whether you get more than one Success from a single dice. This means that if you had a Dice Pool of 6 and three of the dice Exploded, and you were then given an opportunity to reroll this pool, you would still only roll 6 dice.

Actions: You can only gain the benefits of an Action once per round; that is, you have to resolve all the effects of an Action, power or attack in one. You cannot use them more than once to stack the benefits over and over again.

Math: No value in the game can be lowered below 0 after all modifiers have been taken into account. Note that this means that cumulative modifiers can still add up to a negative, but this cannot lower an actual Dice Pool or anything else for that matter below 0.

Rounding: Unless otherwise stated, all fractions in the game are rounded down. This applies when working out Traits, Anima spending and everything. If you have 7 Anima and have to spend half of it, you would need to spend 3.

Multiplication: You don't add multiples together. If for some reason you were asked to multiply a value by 2 and then multiply the result by 2 again, you would actually just multiply the starting value by 3. Essentially, take the sum total of all the modifiers, and then -1 from that, and multiply the base number by this. Again, just to clarify, if you are asked to multiply something by 6 and then 4 you would just multiply it by a total of 9.

Overriding the Rules: The only way to override any of the rules above is if an effect specifically states that you may do something. So, if a Quality or power says that it stacks with other Qualities or powers, then it does, but it still doesn't mean you can break the rules as listed above in general.

Common Sense: The rules can't cover everything and even if we could design them that way we wouldn't. If something is not covered or a situation isn't clear, just fall back on common sense using the rest of the rules as a guideline, or preferably err on the side of drama. Ultimately, use your common sense and keep the story moving.

The Golden Rule

Fun is Mandatory, Citizen! Don't enforce the rules or even worry about them if it is disrupting peoples' enjoyment of the game. **All the balancing in the world is irrelevant if you aren't having fun**. In the end, as soon as you start playing, this becomes your game far more than it will ever be ours.

TABAC

CHAPTER

IV

COMBAT

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How Combat Works

For better or for worse, combat serves as a core element in storytelling, and is of particular importance in a world as bloody and deadly to the average person as the world of Sins.

The Basics

In Sins the combat rules serve to provide a framework for actions characters take when they engage in life and death struggles with one another. To resolve these situations, we largely use the mechanics already laid out in the Core Rules with specific additions added as necessary.

The main difference is that where the Core Rules are very fluid, the Combat Rules are more rigidly defined. As such, there are a variety of concepts you should read and understand before we move on to explaining the mechanics in full.

What's Needed?

For a combat to begin, you need a group of characters all within a reasonable distance of one another. In the game, this normally means that a combat takes place only when a set of characters are all within about a hundred metres of one another.

The reason for this is that combat actions are normally opposed and the rules assume that characters will be acting in a dynamic way. Beyond the distances we're talking about, this concept breaks down. While you can certainly try and kill each other from more than a few hundred metres away, you're not really reacting – rather you are attempting to take an Action which would happen to result in another character's death.

The most common example of this is sniping; you are trying to accomplish a task which has a Difficulty set by range and the environment rather than by the opposition of another character. The bottom line is, if all the actions likely to occur couldn't reasonably be opposed, then it's not a combat.

Of course, when all the characters are near to each other, ranged combat or not, your actions are weighed directly against your opponents and the full combat rules come into effect.

Characters

For combat to flow we need to know who is involved and the specific states all those characters are in. Everyone involved in a combat, whether ready for it or not, is referred to as either **Aware** or **Unaware**, depending upon the situation. Aware combatants are those people who knew the combat was about to take place and are ready for it, while Unaware combatants are people who were surprised by the outbreak of hostilities.

Normally, all characters at the start of the combat will be Aware. Of course this won't always be the case and sometimes, such as in an ambush, some or all of the combatants will be Unaware.

Combatants also exist in one of two states used to define their relationship to other characters in the combat; these are **Ready** or **Engaged**. A Ready character is stood alone or next to friendly characters. An Engaged character is one who is next to an opponent or non-friendly character.

Timing

Combat rounds take a variable length of time, usually somewhere between 10 and 30 seconds. The reason for this variety in timing is so that combat rounds remain fluid for the purposes of storytelling and description. As a result, exactly how many seconds are used in a combat is not really that important. What matters is how time is structured. To this end, we break time down into **Turns**, **Rounds** and **Instances**.

A Turn is the time required for a character to complete their Core Actions. A Round is the time required for all characters in a combat to have completed their Turns. Finally, an Instance is a fraction of time used to describe the resolution of a single Action.

Actions

During a round, each character takes actions. These fall into one of three basic types; Core, Minor or Free. Each of these take up a variable amount of time and require a different degree of effort on the part of the character.

A Core Action represents a single goal which takes up the bulk of the character's attention during their turn. These are normally things like engaging an opponent or picking a lock. Essentially, they demand your character's full attention. As a result, taking multiple Core Actions is extremely hard and incurs a steep penalty on the character.

Minor Actions are things which don't take up a lot of time or don't require a great deal of attention on the character's part. Tasks such as moving, drawing a weapon or speaking to another character would all be considered Minor Actions.

It's far easier to do multiple Minor Actions in a round than it is to do multiple Core Actions; in fact most characters will be doing so on their actions. For instance, a character might wish to draw a weapon, run up to an opponent and attack them. This would take two Minor Actions in addition to their Core Action.

Free Actions are things that don't really require any effort or time on the part of the character. Things such as just observing the situation or shouting out a quick one word warning or answer fall under this type of action. The important thing about Free Actions is that you only ever get one. Anything you do after this that would count as a Free Action is instead treated as a Minor Action.

Normally, you take Actions on your Turn, but it is possible for Actions to happen out of sequence; this is called a **Response**. Any action can potentially be a Response if the rules provide for it. The most common type of a Response is if someone attempts to attack you and you choose to fight back, thus triggering an Opposed Action. In addition to this basic type of Response, certain supernatural abilities can also be used under a particular set of conditions, thus acting as a Response.

Setting the Scene

Combats ultimately are a part of the story. Quite aside from the rules, they have to exist for a purpose. Sins isn't a game about random encounters or endless fights. When combats happen they should be significant and something should genuinely be at risk.

The rules as written provide a framework and that will give you an answer as to who wins in a given situation. To make it really flow though requires effort from all parties involved – both players and the GM.

Remember that a combat round can last up to 30 seconds and that's a lot of time in which things can happen – chains of blows, emptied clips and broken limbs. Layer on the detail as much as possible, as after all description can net you bonuses and serves to really bring the game and the environment to life.

Initiative

When a combat begins, the first thing you need to do is roll for Initiative. Each Combatant – whether Aware or not – that is involved in the combat rolls Cunning/Perception against a Difficulty of 0.

This establishes each characters' Initiative rating. On the first Round of a combat, this is split into two groups – one for Aware combatants, and one for Unaware combatants. First, the scores of all Aware combatants are compared to one another, and **the character with the highest Initiative is given the first opportunity to act, gaining +1 Pool to all Actions that Turn**. In the event of a tie, characters compare Prowess, with the highest acting first. In the event that this is still a tie, resolve the tie by rolling a dice.

Example: *Three characters, Eric, Lisa and a Broodspawn, are all involved in a fight. When it begins, they each roll Cunning/Perception. Eric scores 4 Successes, Lisa scores 2, and the Broodspawn gets 1. That means that Eric gets to act first, then Lisa and finally the Broodspawn.*

Once all Aware combatants have had a chance to act, any Unaware characters that have not already been given and taken an opportunity to act then do so in order as above. In subsequent Rounds, this stage is skipped as all Combatants will then be considered Aware at their current Initiative. This is important because a Character's Initiative can change as a result of their actions, potentially changing the order in which characters take their actions.

"Why an Instance?"

Simply put, Instances are an accounting tool. It's really a short-hand way of saying that something affects an Action and anything that chains off it, but not anything else you might do in a Turn. So, running up and fighting with someone in close combat is all one Instance and in this case the Instance is composed of several separate Actions.

Where this is relevant is that a Quality may give you a bonus Pool in any Instance that you take an Aggressive Action. In this case, everything you do at the same time as that Aggressive Action also gets the bonus Pool. The flip side, of course, is that if something specifies that it applies to a single Action, it works only for the Action itself and not anything that chains off it, such as multiple Actions or an opponent's Response.

Your Action vs. Opportunity to Act

If you are coming to Sins from another game system the way the structure of Rounds takes place can be a little strange. What's important is that being given an opportunity to act and taking it is the same as acting on your own Initiative. If you act because someone else gives you the opportunity, that is your Turn right there.

None of this stops you using some of the more advanced rules to take multiple actions or even to attack other people after being attacked yourself. The bottom line is that if you take your turn because of an opportunity to act, **you do not get to act on your Initiative that Round.** The only way that you can act again is if you are later given another opportunity to act by someone else, and this comes with steep penalties of its own.

Changing Initiative

It's possible for a character's Initiative to change through various actions. When this occurs, check the characters new Initiative by taking their original total and adding any applicable modifiers. In the following Round, the character now acts using their new Initiative total. Just remember that changes to Initiative only take effect on the next Round.

"So what about..."

There's a lot more you can do in combat than the basics we are describing here. What you are reading is the framework that Actions obey. The specific details for things like range, cover, position and so on are under the advanced rules later in this chapter.

"The bomb's going to blow in 28 seconds!"

So there are certain situations where it's important to know exactly how long a round is. The simple way of resolving it is to break down whatever's happening into units of 30 seconds, so if that bomb is going to go off in 40 seconds, that's two rounds.

The bottom line is that it is up to the GM to set the situation at the start of a combat. If variables like seconds are important, make sure all the players know how many rounds that equates to. If you're still not happy with that answer, this probably isn't the game system for you. After all, Sins is about heroic action and drama; not counting seconds. We're not saying that's wrong, but ultimately it's not the way the game is designed to be played.

Responses

In this game, there are two types of Responses. The first and most common is when you are given an opportunity to act by an opponent. In this case, you take your Actions as a Response and all this really means is that your Actions and their's occupy the same Instance.

The other situation is where a power or ability acts as a Response in its own right. These effects always say under what circumstances they are triggered. The reason this matters is that if a Response is triggered, it happens right there and then as part of the same Instance which triggered it.

If you had a power that activated when an opponent took a Standard Action, it would be triggered and resolve its effect at the same time as the Standard Action which triggered it. In practice, the most common situation this will occur is with defensive Arietta, some of which are triggered by being attacked. So, in any situation in which you are attacked, you can use the Arietta whether or not your character actually chooses to take the opportunity to act.

Example: *Eric and Lisa jump a group of Broodspawn led by another Nemissary. The GM determines that they have successfully surprised their opponents, and everybody rolls Initiative as normal. Eric gets 2, Lisa gets 5, the opposing Nemissary gets 3 and the Broodspawn minions get 3, 2 and 0.*

Normally, Lisa would act first followed by the opposing Nemissary, but because both the Nemissary and his minions are Unaware, Lisa and Eric's Actions are resolved first, followed by the Actions of the Broodspawn and the Nemissary.

After the first Round, this would no longer be the case and the turn order would function as normal, with Lisa going first and then their Nemissary opponent.

Another thing to consider is that Initiative is a fluid thing, and there are numerous ways in which a character can affect their Initiative score.

Order of Events

The character with the highest Initiative gets the first opportunity to act, and if they do so they take their Turn. If they don't act, or the actions they choose to undertake don't involve anybody else then their turn is over and the next character in line gets to act.

Of course, in a combat, a character's actions rarely involve only themselves. Most of the time characters will be directly fighting one another by using various types of Attack actions.

When an action a character takes targets another, this triggers an opportunity for the target character to act. This is treated in the same way as if they were the next character in the order of Initiative. Generally, they'll use this opportunity to defend themselves by attacking in turn, turning a very one-sided action into an Opposed one.

It's very important to understand that if you act in this way, that is your turn done. Your Initiative is not modified, both characters resolve their action simultaneously and Initiative moves on to the next character who is yet to act.

One way or another, this process of triggering Turns continues until all the characters involved in the combat have had an opportunity to act and have each completed their Turn as a result. At this point, the Round is over and the process begins again anew, with whichever character who currently has the highest Initiative gaining the first opportunity to act and the bonus Pool for doing so.

Example: *Continuing from the first example of Initiative we gave you, Eric acts first. He chooses to attack the Broodspawn, which means the Broodspawn gains an opportunity to act. It chooses to do so, and as a result it gets to take its Turn now. For its action, it chooses to attack Eric back.*

Next, Lisa gets her turn to act. As she is not a dedicated combatant, she chooses not to attack and simply moves back away from the combat for her Turn.

Normally, the Broodspawn would now act, but as it has already had its Turn due to using the opportunity to act given by Eric, its Initiative step is skipped and the Round is over.

One final point; if during a Round a character turns down all their opportunities to act, then they have to live with that decision. You can hold your action in preparation for being attacked by an opponent, for example, but if no one then attacks you, you are stuck with your own decision to hesitate unless you have some Quality or other special feature that allows you an opportunity to act in its own right.

Multiple Opportunities to Act

It is also possible, and quite likely, for a character to be targeted after they have already taken their turn. In that event, they may still choose to act but are considered to be **Desperate**.

Desperate is a special penalty which imposes -1 Success on everything the character does. This is cumulative and applies each time a character acts after their first normal opportunity. This penalty stacks each time the character acts and lasts until the end of the Round.

When granted an opportunity to act, a character that is Desperate may take only a single Core Action and do not receive a free Minor Action, though they may willingly incur additional penalties to use a Minor Action. **Under no circumstances may a Desperate character take multiple Core Actions of any type, neither may they attack multiple opponents.**

If a Desperate character chooses to use either an Aggressive or Defensive Action, they may target only the character which triggered the opportunity to act. In addition, for the purposes of the rules, **a Desperate character will not be considered to have started a new Turn, which means existing bonuses, penalties and effects from their initial opportunity to act still apply.**

Example: *Continuing from our previous example, a new Round has begun. Eric once again attacks the Broodspawn and again the Broodspawn chooses to act and fights Eric. This time, it's injured.*

When Lisa's Turn comes up, noting that the Broodspawn is weakened, she chooses to attack. This means that the Broodspawn is granted a second opportunity to act. It chooses to do so, attacking Lisa in turn. However, this Action is considered Desperate due to having acted before in the Round, meaning that the Broodspawn is at a penalty of -1 Success to all its Actions now.

Also, as explained above, the Broodspawn is also not considered to have taken a new Turn, meaning that any benefits or penalties are still in effect for its Actions. As before, the Broodspawn's normal opportunity to act at its Initiative step is skipped.

Core Actions

When you have an opportunity to act either on your own initiative or as a Response to someone targeting you with an attack, you get to take a single Core Action. This can be one of three types; an **Aggressive**, **Defensive** or a **Standard Action**. All Core Actions take place, and are resolved, in a single Instance. In the event that Core Actions are Opposed, both Actions occur in the same Instance.

Generic Actions

Sometimes the rules will ask you to take an Action to either use or pay for some particular ability. This doesn't mean you get to use the normal effects of that Action. For instance, if the rules say you need to take a Standard Action in order to recover from a blow, that's all the Standard Action does. You cannot use it to run across a room for instance. This remains equal for all types of Actions including Minor Actions.

Combat Actions Outside of Combat

Occasionally, the rules might ask you to take one of the two types of Actions specific to combat outside of an actual combat. In this case, just treat the Action like a Standard Action in all respects. It should be said that this situation is unusual and is most likely to occur in situations which wouldn't require rolls, such as using a combat Arietta to tear a stationary car to pieces.

AGGRESSIVE ACTION

The simplest and most direct action a character can take is to attack another combatant. To do this, you need to choose a weapon that you will use. You then check to see whether that weapon is within range of the character you wish to attack.

With melee weapons, you will generally need to close the distance which is covered using a Minor Action and is discussed in detail below. Ranged weapons, on the other hand, have set ranges and will not normally require you to move up to attack. Again, this is discussed in greater detail below.

Example: *John's character is facing off against a Broodspawn, and he decides he wants to shoot it. So long as the Broodspawn is within the maximum range of his pistol he would be perfectly fine to use the Aggressive Action. If John didn't have a ranged weapon however, he could still attack the Broodspawn with a melee weapon or his bare hands, as long as he moves into range of the target. If for some reason John cannot or unwilling to do this then he may not use the Aggressive Action.*

Once you select a target, that character is then given an opportunity to act as discussed under the Initiative rules. What that character chooses to do is very important as to what happens next. If they choose to take an Aggressive or Defensive Action, both your and your opponent's Actions will be Opposed by one another. If this is not the case, your attacks on the opponent are against a base Difficulty of 1.

Example: *Continuing from the example above, John's character chooses to move up and attack the Broodspawn. It is then given an opportunity to act and chooses to attack John back. Both of them now roll, John rolling Prowess/Melee and the Broodspawn rolling Prowess/Fight. John scores 2 Successes and the Broodspawn 3. This means that the Broodspawn hits John with an Outcome of 1. If, for some reason, the Broodspawn had chosen not to act, then John would have rolled his attack against a set Difficulty of 1.*

When you make an attack, the skills which you use are based on the type of weapon you are employing;

- Characters fighting with their bare hands or wielding a weapon in an instinctual, untrained manner, use **Prowess/Fight.**
- Characters with specific training in weapons who want to get the best out of them use **Prowess/Melee** instead.
- Characters using crossbows and firearms use **Prowess/Marksmanship.**
- Characters using bows roll **Prowess/Archery.**

In general, this combination of Attribute and Skill doesn't vary; that said, there are some situations in the Advanced Rules where they can. Though unusual, these situations do occur and the rules will make it clear when they do so.

Along with the basic Aggressive Action, there are also a lot of other ways to fight. Virtually all of these techniques use the Aggressive Action as a foundation and apply various modifiers to it. You'll find more information on alternative ways of fighting a little later in this chapter, starting page 120.

Defensive Action

Rather than attack, a character can choose to evade the assault of their opponent. Just like an attack, this can be done on your Initiative or when given an opportunity to act by another character's attack.

When Defending, characters roll Prowess with a +1 Pool bonus against either Athletics, Fight, or Melee, dependent upon the situation. Against ranged combat, your character can only use Athletics, but in close combat all three options are valid.

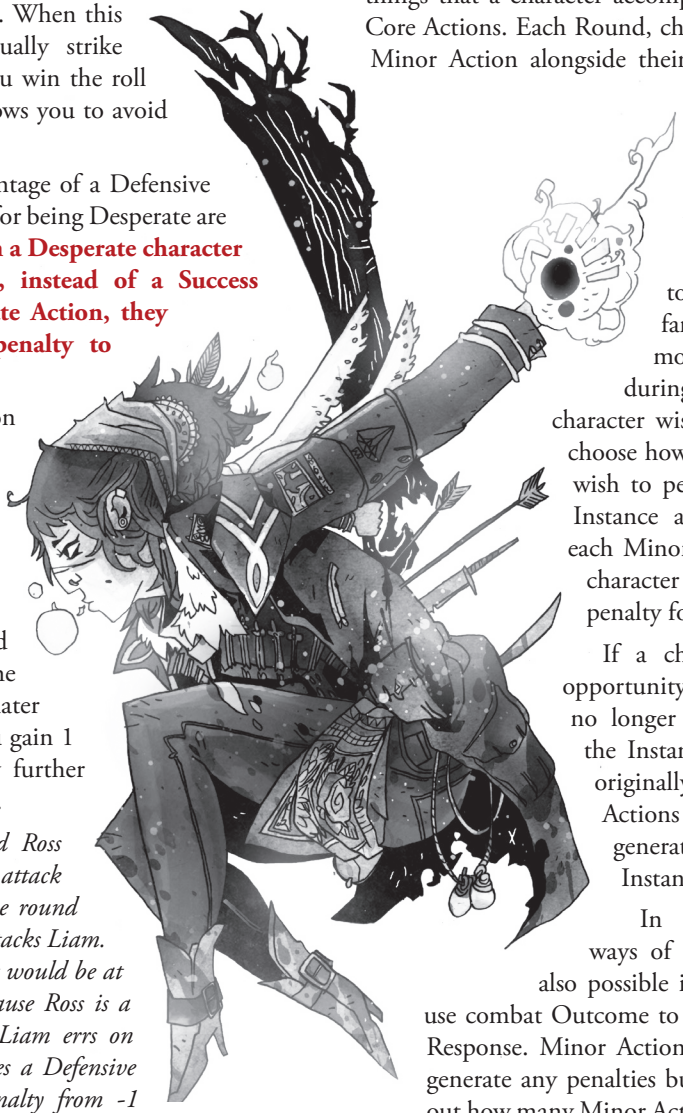
If you Defend as the result of an attack directed against you, it becomes an Opposed Action just as if you had attacked in return. When this happens, you cannot actually strike your opponent whether you win the roll or not; winning simply allows you to avoid your opponent's attacks.

Another important advantage of a Defensive Action is that the penalties for being Desperate are mitigated somewhat. **When a Desperate character uses a Defensive Action, instead of a Success penalty for each Desperate Action, they instead take the same penalty to their Pool.**

If you choose to Defend on your own Initiative, your character is assumed to be getting ready to dodge attacks. In this instance, you don't roll immediately. You resolve all other actions you are attempting and then end your Turn. The advantage is that if you are later attacked in the Round, you gain 1 Automatic Success on any further Defensive Actions you take.

Example: *Liam, Joe and Ross are fighting. Liam and Joe attack one another and later in the round Ross joins in the fight and attacks Liam. Liam could choose to act but would be at -1 Success if he did so. Because Ross is a fairly dangerous opponent, Liam errs on the side of caution and takes a Defensive Action. This lessens the penalty from -1 Success to -1 Pool. Because the Defensive Action itself gives +1 Pool, Liam will not actually be at a penalty for this Action.*

If he was somehow attacked again during the Round, he would then normally be at a -2 Success Penalty. If he again chose to use a Defensive Action, his total modifier would be -1 Pool instead.



Standard Action

Not everything your character does will influence your opponents directly. You might choose to disarm a bomb, sprint a great distance or attempt some other Skill-related feat. To do these things in combat, your character needs to take a Standard Action. These function exactly as outlined in the Core Rules and can be anything your character could reasonably accomplish in a 30 second window.

Minor Actions

As we've discussed, Minor Actions are simple, quick things that a character accomplishes in addition to their Core Actions. Each Round, characters get to take a single Minor Action alongside their first Core Action. Below are presented in detail the most common Minor Actions a character may wish to take, along with their mechanical effects.

One important addition to the rules we've covered so far is that a character may take more than one Minor Action during their Turn. Assuming a character wishes to do this, they must choose how many Minor Actions they wish to perform as part of the same Instance as their Core Action. For each Minor Action after the first, the character takes a cumulative -1 Pool penalty for that Instance.

If a character is later given an opportunity to act, these Penalties no longer apply as they affect only the Instance in which the character originally acted. Any further Minor Actions the character wishes to take generate a separate penalty for that Instance.

In addition to the normal ways of taking Minor Actions, it's also possible in certain circumstances to use combat Outcome to trigger Minor Actions as a Response. Minor Actions gained in this way don't generate any penalties but are counted for working out how many Minor Actions in total you have made during a Turn.

Regardless of what actions you take and when you take them, **you may never take in total more Minor Actions than your Prowess +1 over the course of a Turn, and your character only ever gets 1 free Minor Action per Turn.** Also remember that multiple opportunities to act do not constitute as separate Turns, so the limit on Minor

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

One Standard Action that bears specific mention is Sprinting. The full rules for this are covered in the Traits Expanded chapter. These rules allow for dramatic license and a somewhat random top speed for characters.

In combat, you'll generally want to use a simpler method than printed there. We suggest that you should assume a character's top speed and sprint is equal to 5 × the character's Body + Athletics + Conviction, plus an additional 50% total speed for every Size step above Medium of the character taking the Action.

"SHOULDN'T BIG THINGS MOVE FASTER?"

The simple answer is yes. The long answer is more of an "er, sort of". Whilst large creatures certainly can cover more distance on account of their larger strides, the time taken for them to reach full speed is much greater than that for smaller creatures. This is why, as a rule, you can't catch your cat when it runs off with part of your dinner. In a straight run you can massively outpace the cat but in the immediate short term the cat is much faster.

As the Move Minor Action relates only to quick bursts of speed to reposition in combat, Size is ignored for the reasons noted above. Remember that, Size still applies to Sprinting, so you can't still outrun big things over a longer distance.

Actions is in essence over the course of a whole Round, not any one Action.

Example: *The first time Joe acts in a Round, he chooses to move and draw a weapon. One of these Minor Actions is free, but the other imposes a -1 Pool Penalty to his Actions at that opportunity to act.*

Later in the Round he is given another opportunity to act and as a result takes a -1 Success Penalty. His previous Minor Actions do not inflict a penalty, but he doesn't get a free Minor Action, so if he wanted to move again or draw a second weapon, he would take a -1 Pool penalty in addition to the -1 Success penalty for a Desperate Action.

Regardless of the circumstances, Joe could only take a total of 5 Minor Actions across all his opportunities to act during a Round as his Prowess is 4.

UNIVERSAL MINOR ACTIONS

Below you will find a list of the Minor Actions that characters can undertake. This isn't an exhaustive list; while the Minor Actions below are certainly the most common, there are other circumstances that can require a character to take a Minor Action. These obey all the rules already laid out but don't provide any additional effect.

Assess: The character assesses their situation, allowing a character to get the jump on their opposition, and act more quickly in subsequent rounds.

A character using the Assess Minor Action improves their effective Initiative by 1 for the duration of the combat. This Minor Action may only be used once per Turn. This means that the character's Initiative total is modified and will be taken into account at the start of the next Round, potentially allowing the character to act earlier.

Convey Information: Under normal circumstances a character can shout a few words, making simple statements such as "Grab him!", "Run for it!" or "Kill that bloody sniper!". If a character wishes to say more than this, it requires a Minor Action.

As an example, "The one in the red! He's got the key! Get him!" or "Look, there are six of them! They'll be on us in less than a minute!" are statements which will require a Minor Action.

Move: The Move Minor Action is used to allow a character to move short to medium distances in a single combat Round. Each time the Move Minor Action is taken, the character gets to move a number of meters equal to their Body + Athletics. Unlike other forms of movement, **a character's Size does not affect a Move Minor Action in any way.**

A character may only use this Minor Action a total of 3 times in a single Round regardless of their Prowess. This includes Move Minor Actions gained through Combat Outcome. Also, they may not take this Minor Action if they have chosen to Sprint as a Core Action.

Bear in mind that a character's ability to Move can be influenced in various ways by the combat environment and any opponents. If for some reason an outside force causes a character to take a Move Minor Action against their will then it still counts, but effects which simply move your character – such as a Throw – do not, though such movement can cause its own problems when done voluntarily, as explained under Triggering an Opening later in this chapter.

Ready Item: This Minor Action allows a character to draw and ready a weapon or item. A character only needs

to use this Minor Action to draw a weapon or item of medium size or larger such as a sword or rifle.

Small items like knives or handguns do not require a Minor Action. Instead they use a Free Action, meaning that, unless the character wishes to ready more than one of these items, there is no need to use the Ready Item Minor Action.

Throw or Catch Item: This Minor Action refers to throwing or catching an item over a short distance such as a few metres. For instance, a character could throw a key or a weapon to an ally for them to use, throw a vase on the ground, or a rock at a window.

Regardless of what is thrown or caught, this Minor Action only allows a throw of a few metres. A quick pass is fine, but a true hurl or a long distance throw is inappropriate. Accordingly, whilst you can use this Minor Action to throw a grenade, you probably don't want to as you won't be able to throw it further than its blast radius.

If in doubt, assume a character may throw an item a number of metres equal to their Body + Athletics, -1 Metre for each Size Step the item is above Medium.

Free Actions

A Free Action is something which takes virtually no time on the character's part. It happens in an instant or at least so quickly as to not impact on anything else a character might do in a round.

A good example of a Free Action is a simple shouted warning or dropping a small object. Certain actions can also be quick enough that they don't take up meaningful time in the context of the rules. These are things like drawing a small weapon such as a knife or pistol or taking a few steps.

In the above instance, the only time the rules are affected is if your character wants to do more than one of these things in a Round. Drawing a knife or a pistol is fine, but trying to do both steps outside the bounds of a Free Action. Essentially, if your character would need more than one Free Action, count each after the first as a Minor Action instead.

This still counts even if the Free Action comes up as part of a power or Quality – **you get one Free Action; that's it, no exceptions. Any after this become Minor Actions with all the associated penalties and rules.**

Multiple Actions

Normally a character takes one Core Action in any given Round unless they are targeted after their Action and use the rules for Desperate Actions. That said, it is possible for a character to attempt multiple Core Actions on their own Initiative or as a result of being given an opportunity to act.

Switching Weapon Types

Between the rules for multiple actions and Minor Actions, it's possible that a character might either wish to draw a ranged weapon whilst wielding a melee weapon, or to shoot a ranged weapon and then to attempt to engage a foe in close combat.

When drawing an additional weapon, only the rules pertaining to the actual weapon you're using matter, so if you have a melee weapon equipped and then draw a ranged weapon, you count as using whichever weapon you attack with.

For the far trickier situation of fighting with a ranged weapon and a melee weapon, you will need to consult Two-Weapon Fighting in the advanced rules on page 123.

Multiple Core Actions

Sometimes in a turn, a character will want to take more than one Core Action. For instance they might wish to run across a room and shoot at a target, or Respond to an attack and also take a Standard Action. Doing either of these things is possible but extremely challenging.

When a character has an opportunity to act they may choose to take more than one Core Action. Doing so imposes a -1 Pool penalty to all actions equal to the total number of Core Actions the character wishes to attempt. The total number of Core Actions a character may take in this way **may never exceed that character's Prowess or Cunning; whichever is lower.** This only applies to Actions you choose to take at your opportunity to act. If you are later given an opportunity to act you can make an Action in that Instance with all the accumulated penalties, but under no circumstances can you then take further multiple actions as part of that opportunity to act.

Example: *If a character with a Prowess of 4 and a Cunning of 3 chooses to take multiple Actions on their first opportunity to act, they could do so up to a maximum of 3 Actions in total. If they are later given an opportunity to act during the Round, they may do so but they may no longer take multiple Actions. The only option available to them is to take a single Core Action and then any Minor Actions which remain.*

Multiple Attacks

In the HOPE Engine, **an attack action does not represent a single blow.** Rather, it is a flurry of strikes and gunshots and if answered represents a deadly exchange between two characters, rather than a static attack or defence. With this in mind, **a character may never under any circumstances take more than one Attack Action directed against a single target in a Round.** It might not

be possible to take multiple Core Actions to attack a single opponent, but it's perfectly possible to attack multiple opponents at once.

Attacking multiple opponents at once is in most respects the same as taking an ordinary Aggressive Action, but does require some special considerations. First of all, you must be capable of attacking each opponent separately. For ranged weapons this is simple enough but for close combat it means you must be capable of moving the total distance involved and incurring any penalties for doing so.

Each opponent gets a chance to act as normal. **You make your attack, taking a -1 Pool penalty for each opponent after the first.** Your attack roll is then compared to each opponent separately. All attacks and their responses are resolved as one Instance.

The results of this are then worked out as normal with the exception that **you calculate Outcome only against the opponent which scored the most Successes**. Assuming you have any Outcome, you can use it normally but it may only be used to affect either yourself or that opponent.

Example: *John is fighting three Broodspawn. He decides to attack all of them. Each of the three Broodspawn then get to respond, and all of them choose to take an Aggressive Action.*

John rolls his Pool taking a -2 Pool penalty, and scores 5 Successes. The Broodspawn score 6, 3 and 1 Success in turn. All these results are compared, and as a result John is hit by one of the Broodspawn which does so with 1 Outcome, but he manages to strike the other two Broodspawn.

Each of John's successful hits is resolved at 0 Outcome because his Successes were lower than those of his highest scoring opponent. If the Broodspawn had rolled 4, 3 and 1 Successes, then John would have 1 Outcome he could use.

He could have applied this Outcome to any one of his three opponents but it does not count multiple times. If John had managed to score 4 Outcome, he could have used 3 Outcome to boost Damage against one opponent, and 1 Outcome to boost Damage against another.

Your multiple attacks are all counted as one Core Action. This means that the penalty is cumulative with those from multiple Core Actions.

Example: *Kat is involved in a combat and is facing off against two opponents. She wishes to attack them up close but needs to take more than three Move Minor Actions to do so. In order to reach her opponents, Kat has to use the Sprint Core Action. This, combined with attacking two opponents, results in a total Pool penalty of -3.*

Complex Situations

When multiple actions are thrown into the mix, some fairly difficult situations can arise; the most common of which is called Chain Attacking. This is where one character targets another, and that character chooses to take a multiple action to return the attack and engage someone else.

These situations can seem daunting but in practice aren't really that complicated to resolve. Remember that all the actions effectively happen simultaneously and the dice rolls should simply be compared as we've mentioned above. Just take things one step at a time and resolve actions erring on the side of common sense.

Example: *John and Kat are facing off against a long running villain of their game, Maxim, and his henchmen. Kat manages to act first and chooses to attack Maxim.*

Maxim, being a powerful character, chooses to answer Kat's attack and to lock down his opponents, so he chooses to attack John. Being a powerful combatant himself, John – perhaps a little overconfidently – decides to answer Maxim's attack and attack both of Maxim's henchmen. Maxim's henchmen respond and just choose to engage John. The combat now stands like this. Kat and John are fighting Maxim, but John is also fighting two henchmen.

Everyone concerned rolls their combat pools. Maxim's is compared against Kat and John, and John's score is also compared with the two henchmen.

Kat scores 4 successes, John scores 5, Maxim 5 and his henchmen score 3 and 2 respectively.

As Maxim's score is greater than Kat's, he strikes her with 1 Success. As John and Maxim have equal scores, neither prevails and no blows are landed. John however strikes the two henchmen for 2 and 3 Successes respectively. Damage will then be calculated as normal.

Remember that, once you've taken multiple Actions, you are stuck with the penalties for doing so and you may only take a single Core Action on each opportunity to act once your character is considered Desperate.

Using the previous example, let's say that there was a henchman that neither Kat or John was aware of.

Example: *An additional henchman enters the fight late as his Initiative was lower and Kat and John were not immediately aware of his presence. He chooses to engage the overextended John.*

John now has the chance to take a Response. Again, confident of his success, he chooses an Aggressive Action. The penalties for this are quite severe. He is already at a -2 Pool penalty for the Multiple Attack he has already taken, and as this is now his second opportunity to act, he is also at a -1 Success Penalty for a total modifier of -2 Pool, -1 Success.

In this situation, it would be a better idea for John to take a Defensive Action, downgrading the -1 Success to a -1 Pool, meaning that he would be at a total of -3 Pool. As he has already in one form or another attacked both Maxim and his two other henchmen, he could not attempt to make any further attacks on them or take any Action other than an Aggressive or Defensive one, nor could he use Multiple Attacks.

ADVANTAGES IN COMBAT

Combat can be a messy affair. A great many factors can weigh on a combatant's performance, and these vary from the specifics of firearms or melee weapons all the way to the environment itself.

FOCUS IN COMBAT

Focus is a critical part of the game and perhaps doubly important in combat. It allows you to shift odds in your favour and survive otherwise lethal situations.

Using Focus in a combat situation works as appropriate to the type of action being performed. By far the most common use will be to negate the successes of an opponent on an Opposed Roll, but adding dice to combat is of course a close second. The difference is that in a combat, Focus is both regained and lost at a faster pace than normal and much of the Focus you spend is returned to you once the combat ends.

When a combat begins, you should note your current Focus total. Once combat ends, check how much Focus your character has remaining and compare that to how much you started with. If it is now less, you regain all but one of the spent Focus. If it is more, you lose Focus until you return to the value you started combat with.

Example: *John enters a combat with 4 Focus. During the combat, his Focus pool fluctuates. At the end, he has 2 Focus remaining. Because this is less than his starting total, his Focus pool is reset to 3, one less than what he started with.*

At the same time, Kat enters the combat, starting with 5 Focus. She fights conservatively and manages to gain 2 Focus over the course of the combat. Her final total then is actually 7. Because this is greater than her starting value, her total Focus is reset to 5 at the end of the combat.

CATCHING YOUR BREATH

One option open to characters is to take time in a combat to compose themselves. To do this, a character may take a Standard Action once per round to gain a single point of Focus.

STUNTS

Description is a very important part of roleplaying and this is just as true in combat as it is in the actions of an NPC or in setting out a room. Good roleplaying should always be rewarded and the chief way of doing this is Focus. Normally, the types of things which would get you Focus take far too much time to play out in a combat but there is still a way to get more. To gain extra Focus in the middle of a combat, characters can attempt **Stunts**.

A Stunt is where a player or the GM describes the actions of their character in a particularly impressive, interesting and most of all relevant way. When this happens, the group awards between 1-3 Focus to the character in question.

Stunts worth 1 Focus should be perfectly adequate descriptions which serve to bring a bit of flavour and interest into the actions of a character. For instance, rather than saying "I'll make an attack", you say "My character will leap towards the enemy and engage them in a flurry of blows whilst my character smirks and presses his advantage".

Stunts worth 2 Focus should be significantly more impressive and should generally involve props or the environment. For instance, "My character steps forward, kicking up dust as they do so. They lean low and begin a series of strikes, hoping to push my opponent back into the tree. As they fall backwards, he parries and then dives forward bringing his sword into his opponent's leg."

Stunts worth 3 Focus should make the whole group go "Wow!". They should be memorable and the kind of things likely to be reminisced over later on. For instance "My character dives forwards, catching the dying sunlight on the edge of his blade, and bringing it upwards towards my opponent's eyes. At the last moment he feints and weaves to the side, bringing the sword down into his opponent's leg. In the same heartbeat, he strikes his opponent across the face and sends them both tumbling backwards into the dirt. As his heart thunders, he strikes again and again, laying out all his hate into his opponent until his hands are covered in blood and his throat raw from screaming."

Now whatever the level of the Stunt, there are several things to bear in mind. First, it's fine to embellish a Stunt, by stating things like "I fire my pistol" or "I strike my opponent across the face". As long as these things aren't actually Actions, you can add any reasonable dramatic flair you wish.

Second, you can push the limits of what's possible with a Stunt but you still have to keep to what your character is actually capable of. It's fine for someone with Body 9 to strike the ground creating a shockwave and sending plumes of dust in all directions, but it's not okay for someone with Prowess 4 to weave through bullets to strike an opponent. If in doubt, remember that the value of Stunts is decided by the group and not an individual, so you should rate them with a degree of realism in mind.

Finally, when two characters' Stunts contradict one another, the one who wins the opposed roll is the one whose Stunt happens as they described it. Alternatively, the GM can describe a new sequence of actions based on a combination of both stunts.

SURPRISE

If you get the jump on opponents, you obviously gain a significant advantage against them – of course, this isn't always easy. In general, stealth is something covered by

"BUT I'M STABBING HIM IN THE BACK!"

You might be wondering why successfully sneaking up on someone and stating you want to gut them doesn't guarantee you a kill. The answer is that there's no such thing as a guaranteed kill. Certainly, the assassin has an advantage but is by no means guaranteed to succeed. There's always a chance, however small, that you'll be too slow, miss your mark or so on.

The point we're trying to make here is that even in the event you succeed perfectly at an ambush, your opponent still gets to fight back to represent the chance that they may defend themselves. Remember that this is a cinematic game, and Action Movies would be over very quickly if every time someone stabbed the hero, they just keeled over and died.

the Core Rules. What matters in combat is exactly who is surprised and what advantages there are for a successful ambush.

WHO IS SURPRISED?

To set an ambush can require various rolls. The most common is Cunning/Stealth against the opponent's Cunning/Perception. Regardless of the specific roll, you need to establish who exactly is surprised. Essentially, when a combat begins, the defenders – that is the people you were attempting to use Stealth against – are surprised if they didn't manage to beat you in the opposed roll. This is usually tracked for individuals, and means that the benefits described below are tracked separately against specific targets.

Example: *Three players are attempting to sneak up on a group of six opponents. The GM rules that this is a normal sneak attempt (i.e. Cunning/Stealth), and the group opts to have one of them roll and the other characters act in Support. In total, the rolling player scores 4 Successes.*

The GM then rolls Cunning/Perception for each opponent. They gain 0, 1, 1, 2, 4, and 4 Successes. Because the defender wins on a draw, the two opponents who scored 4 Successes are not taken in by the ambush but the other four are all unaware for the first Round.

FIRST STRIKE

When attacking an unaware opponent, you have a significant advantage. We call this advantage **First Strike** and it applies the first time an Unaware opponent is attacked in any given Round. **When an opponent would be affected by First Strike, all their actions that Round suffer a -3 Pool penalty** and as soon as the attack is resolved, they are no longer considered Unaware but the penalty does persist for the remainder of the Round.

Note that an individual may only suffer the effects of First Strike once per Round as the first instance of First Strike stops them being an Unaware combatant – a small comfort given that attack may very well kill them.

WEAPONS

One of the things most likely to affect your character is the weapon they are using. Weapons function in a similar manner to tools as described in the Core Rules; they supply a dice bonus or penalty. They also affect how much damage you will do and provide a number of unique traits and abilities depending upon their type.

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONS

Close combat weapons are things like knives, swords or axes. They function very much like normal equipment and as such they have a pool modifier, a damage value, and a notation for any traits they possess.

Most actual close combat weapons are intended to be used with the Melee Skill, though they can be used with the Fight Skill – albeit less efficiently. **When using the Fight Skill to wield a Melee weapon, you suffer a -1 Pool and Damage penalty, unless the weapon has the Simple weapon Quality.**

Just like with other items, a close combat weapon's Pool modifier affects your dice pools whilst using that weapon. A close combat weapon's damage is added to a character's Body to determine the total damage inflicted upon a successful hit.

If you really want to get the best out of close combat weapons, you need the Melee skill. When using close combat with this skill, you also get access to a special ability unique to each weapon.

RANGED WEAPONS

Ranged weapons such as bows and guns are a little more varied in their effects than those designed for close combat. For a start, the skill needed to use a ranged weapon differs depending upon what type it is. For most this will be Marksmanship; the exception being bows and arrows which use Archery.

With the exception of bows, ranged weapons have a Damage rating but they do not add Body to work out total damage. They also have Clip and Range ratings. Clip defines how many rounds of ammunition the weapon has before it requires reloading whilst Range is a measure of how far away the weapon can fire whilst remaining effective.

Bows work differently from most other ranged weapons. They only have Damage and Range modifiers and unlike other ranged weapons a character does get to add their Body to work out total Damage.

Reach and Impact

The total list of weapon traits available is quite large and is presented in the equipment chapter later in this book. With that in mind, there are two weapon traits which bear particular relevance to the rules we're about to discuss. These are **Reach** and **Impact**. Both these traits only apply to unarmed fighting and close combat weapons and only ever apply against an opponent which you are Engaged with.

Ranged weapons, though not possessing either of these traits, have their own advantages and disadvantages when used in combat. These are discussed a little further on in this chapter.

"What about Size and Rarity?"

If you've skipped ahead you will notice weapons do have other traits besides the ones we've mentioned. These are all covered in the Equipment section of the book. We just don't reference them here because they have no particular bearing on combat.

In addition to the rules noted above, there are several options available to you when spending Outcome that can affect Reach in various ways. For more information see Outcome in Combat on page 117 later in this chapter.

Reach: This represents the advantage inherent of being able to attack a large area. Each point of Reach imposes a -1 Pool penalty against an opponent who makes an Opposed close combat roll against you. Reach applies to all close combat attacks but **if, after having engaged an opponent, you lose an opposed close combat roll – either to that opponent or any other opponent in close combat with you – the effects of Reach are lost**.

If you successfully disengage from a close combat, your Reach is reset and can be used again. In addition, **you may use a Minor Action to restore your Reach** which is applied in the same Instance the Minor Action was used. Reach is most commonly gained as a weapon quality but a character can gain Reach through the use of certain Qualities and special abilities and **for each size step a character is above Medium, they gain one rank of Reach.**

All sources of Reach stack with each other, as long as they originate from different types of sources. What we mean by this is that **the normal rules for combining Qualities or Arietta are not ignored**. You could theoretically have two Qualities which give you a bonus to Reach and only the best bonus would apply. However, Qualities, Attributes, Weapons and other modifiers such as Size or Arietta all add together to give your character their total Reach.

Also, unlike most other effects, **different characters' Reach cancel each other out when in an Opposed Action**. This means that if two characters are in situation where both would apply Reach, you count only the difference between the higher Reach rating and the lower Reach rating for the purposes of modifying Dice Pools.

Example: *A character is fighting an evolved Broodspawn. Both he and the Broodspawn have Reach and have committed to an attack. The character has a Reach of 3 and the Broodspawn has a Reach of 2.*

Both characters don't take a penalty. Instead, the Broodspawn's Reach is cancelled out by the character's, but since he still has 1 point of Reach remaining, the Broodspawn is at -1 Pool.

Impact: This trait represents massive force which is almost impossible to stop. When you take an Aggressive Action and an opponent successfully beats you, they take a damaging hit equal to your Impact rating.

Damage inflicted through Impact isn't affected by weapon traits but may not have its Damage reduced by armour, though other sources of Resilience do still apply. Some Qualities and Enhancements may also affect the amount or type of Damage inflicted through Impact.

Weapons a character possesses can have an Impact Quality of their own. In addition, a character's Attributes can affect Impact. **For every point which a character's Body and weapon Damage added together exceeds 5, they gain 1 rank of Impact.**

Impact only ever inflicts normal Wounds, regardless of what Qualities may or may not apply to a weapon or that character's unarmed attacks. A Voidglass greatsword does not make your Impact damage Baleful.

Like Reach, **all sources of Impact stack and the normal rules preventing the combining of Qualities and Arietta are ignored**, so long as each source of Impact originates from different types of effects.

Impact isn't unstoppable, and a character that beats you can choose to sacrifice Outcome in order to mitigate your Impact. The rules for this are described under Outcome in Combat on page 117, later in this chapter.

Positioning

Exactly what position characters take in combat is largely ignored in Sins because of the long duration of a Round and the fluid nature of the combat system. What is important is whether or not characters are Ready or Engaged.

Earlier on in this chapter we briefly touched upon the difference between the two. Essentially if you are in close proximity with an opponent you are Engaged and if you are not you are Ready. To work this out, we use a concept called **Threat**.

Threat is noted as two numbers; for instance as 3/7. The first number indicates a character's **Primary Threat**. This is the distance that you can physically reach at any given time. **A character's Primary Threat is equal to 1 plus any Reach they possess.**

The second number stands for a character's **Secondary Threat**, which represents the area you can reach within a few seconds. **A character's Secondary Threat is equal to their Primary Threat plus the number of metres they can move in a single Move Minor Action.**

Unlike Primary Threat, **Secondary Threat applies only when you are targeted by an attack** and is normally used only for working out things such as The Shooter's Advantage, which is explained on page 122 later in this chapter.

Anyone within a character's Threat in meters will be considered Engaged. The exception is that a character can selectively apply their Threat if they wish to. This means that you don't have to cause your own allies to be in the Engaged state with you but you can definitely inflict it upon an opponent.

Remember that when you attack someone, you check whether you are currently Engaged or Ready. Bonuses or penalties that apply to the attack are based upon what your situation is at the start of a Turn rather than what your situation is about to become.

Triggering an Opening

Because in Sins a character can Respond to an attack, even when Engaged by an opponent, they might not necessarily wish to end their turn next to that opponent. They might want to fall back or move to attack another opponent. There's nothing to stop you doing this but it's not without cost. When you move away from an opponent that you are Engaged with, you take a considerable risk and trigger an **Opening.**

When an Opening is triggered, whether through a Move taken in your own turn or through some other means, the next Opposed Action you make against opponents that were Engaged with you suffers a -1 Success penalty. Also, until you move out of your opponents' Threat, you take a separate -1 Success penalty to all Actions.

To be clear, we define movement as a situation where you are Engaged with an opponent and attempt to make a meaningful Move; that is a Move Minor Action, a Sprint, or some other form of movement beyond simply a few metres here or there for descriptive purposes. **This does not include a situation where your character is forced to move without actually taking an action.**

For instance, if an effect were to throw your character several metres, you would not trigger an Opening. However, if the same effect was optional on your part and **if you choose to allow yourself to be moved or the movement duplicates the effect of an Action, an Opening is triggered.**

Lastly, **if you move in order to stay in contact with an opponent, it never triggers an Opening** unless you are also trying to disengage or move away from an entirely separate hostile combatant.

Some effects can be based on whether you successfully disengage from an opponent or not. **If, when the Round ends, you are no longer within your opponent's Threat, then you have successfully disengaged from them.**

In some circumstances, the -1 Success penalty against an opponent you retreated from should be ignored. This is particularly the case if the opponent shifts their attention to a new character or otherwise chooses to ignore the Opening you created for at least 1 Round.

Flight and Combat

Not all combats take place on the ground. From time to time, and particularly as characters grow more powerful, battles will find themselves drawn up into the three dimensional world of aerial combat.

Normal Flight

Aerial combatants are treated just like everybody else; that is, they move and take Actions like normal with certain exceptions to account for this method of movement. First, there are several basic considerations which apply to flight both in and out of combat:

- To begin flight, a character must take a Standard Action to take off. This allows them to duplicate the effects of the Move Minor Action.
- Characters in flight may move in three dimensions, but moving up halves the rate at which a character may move whilst moving straight down increases it by 50%.
- Flying characters calculate speed as normal unless their method of flight states otherwise.
- Flying characters must take a Move Minor Action each Round to maintain flight, or they will fall.

Beyond these basic assumptions, the rules for combat are also modified in several ways for a character in flight.

- Characters in flight find it harder to press their advantage over an opponent, and may never claim more Outcome on an attack than their Prowess.
- Targeting a flying opponent incurs a -1 Success penalty to attacks against them.
- Flying characters gain +1 Pool on close combat attacks they make when using a weapon one-handed.
- Using a ranged weapon in flight incurs a -1 Pool penalty, or a -3 Pool penalty if the ranged weapon is two-handed.
- Flying characters may not make Manoeuvres as described in the Advanced Rules below.

Other than these basic changes, flying characters also treat Reach and Impact differently. In addition, they are at a serious disadvantage if they are beaten in combat by an opponent.

Flying characters struggle to make use of Reach properly and as a result halve their total effective Reach. That said, their elevated position and increased mobility means that their minimum Reach will be equal to that character's Prowess.

A flying character who wishes to end their turn in flight may not make use of Impact. On the other hand, if their Action would cause them to end their Round on the ground, they may apply their Impact as normal, and gain a bonus to their Impact equal to the number of Move Minor Actions they have used as part of that Action. This bonus persists until the character's next opportunity to act.

Flying characters also have an advantage where Threat is concerned. Unlike normal, a flying character's Threat extends down as far as it extends out, and it also extends up by half that amount whilst the character is in flight.

If beaten in a combat, flying characters are potentially in trouble. In close combat, such a character is automatically Grounded and in ranged combat they will be Grounded if they take a Mauled Wound or greater. A Grounded character immediately falls. They don't suffer Falling Damage but instead take a -3 Success penalty to all actions. This penalty is reduced by 1 each time the character gains an opportunity to act where they are not Desperate.

All these effects apply only whilst a character is actually in flight. They may, as part of Moving, choose to land and will no longer use the flying rules above once the Instance in which they moved is over.

Hovering

Some supernatural means of flight allow a character to simply hover in the air. In this case, the character still uses the rules for flying but ignores the basic assumptions. This means that they may move freely and do not need to use Move Minor Actions to stay airborne or use a Standard Action to take flight.

In all other respects, the character is still flying and gains all the bonuses and penalties as noted above, with two exceptions. First, the character's Outcome is not limited by their Prowess, and secondly the effects of being Grounded are lessened to -1 Success, which persists until the character's next opportunity to act in which they are not Desperate.

Environment and Cover

The battlefield itself can often affect a combat. This is primarily expressed through the use of **Cover** and **Environmental penalties**. Cover represents things that characters can use to guard themselves from ranged attacks and explosives. Environmental penalties on the other hand are used to represent the difficulties involved in things such as snow drifts or unstable terrain.

"Who turned out the lights?!"

Environmental penalties don't really apply to things like heavy rain or darkness. Simply put, these affect everyone and everything in the combat zone. Since everyone gets screwed over equally, there's really no need to apply a penalty.

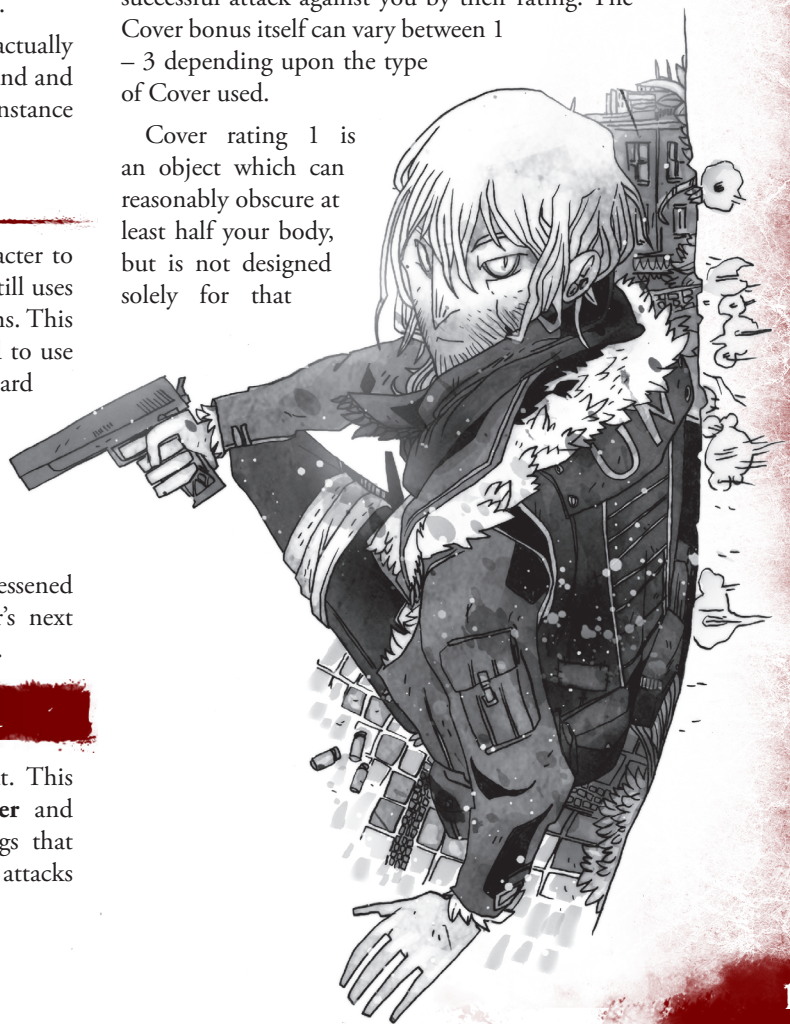
Of course the next thing that comes to mind is "Well, what if I can see in the dark?" or "That rainstorm doesn't affect me". In this instance, that's considered an **Environmental Advantage**, and it gives you +1 Success compared to an opponent without the same advantage.

Cover

Anything your character could reasonably hide behind can grant you Cover. It could be a tree or a concrete wall – what matters is that you can fit at least half your body behind it. When this is true, you get to claim a **Cover Bonus**.

Cover bonuses reduce the Successes of any successful attack against you by their rating. The Cover bonus itself can vary between 1 – 3 depending upon the type of Cover used.

Cover rating 1 is an object which can reasonably obscure at least half your body, but is not designed solely for that



"OOPS!" (OPTIONAL RULE)

An optional rule which groups might like to consider is to have Actions which fail when a character is suffering Environmental Penalties to cause additional problems for the character, representing the character cutting themselves on broken grass or straining an ankle in rubble and so on.

The simplest way to handle this is to have any Environmental Penalties simply persist until the end of the scene if a character fails any Action either by rolling less than the Difficulty or by being beaten in combat.

An alternate approach is, instead of a penalty, to have the character take a Damage 3 hit for each rank of penalty; thus Damage 3 for a -1 Pool, Damage 6 for a -2 Pool and Damage 9 for -3 Pool.

The damaging variant of this rule should really only be used in particularly dangerous environments such as unstable buildings or in places with realistic hazards such as broken glass or sharp metal.

DESTROYING THE ENVIRONMENT

Part of the fun of playing extremely powerful creatures is watching the scenery get torn to shreds like in a good anime or action movie. Rather than get bogged down in rules on this issue, we suggest that the GM err on the side of awesome, particularly when dealing with characters that have Impact ratings of 6 or higher.

Frankly, in these cases, it's fine to have shockwaves decimating buildings and shattering all the glass in sight. With Impact 12 or higher, you should probably allow characters to level entire buildings with a single punch.

As discussed under Epic Attributes on page 128, Nemissaries and the Broodspawn can very easily exceed human limits and express those powers in distinctly supernatural ways, casually disregarding the laws of physics as they do so. Just because a gorilla can't punch a hole in a concrete wall, doesn't mean a Nemissary with comparative strength and Voidglass bones cannot smash their way straight into a bank vault.

purpose, such as an overturned table or a broken-down wall.

Cover rating 2 represents large, solid structures which can cover your entire body, but again are not solely designed for this purpose. Suitable things include a solid concrete wall or pillar, or a large car.

If an object is designed to provide a form of cover, such as military barricades or walls which have been built to provide firing angles, its cover rating is increased by 1. This is the only way of getting Cover 3.

To claim the benefits of Cover, a character needs to either begin next to Cover, or Move next to it in the same Instance that they wish to use its benefits. This Cover must lie between you and an opponent to count. For instance, you can flip from one wall to another or run up a highway full of overturned cars without losing your Cover bonus, but emerging from a treeline to take a shot will deny you the bonus.

For ranged combat, Cover always applies as explained above. In close combat, Cover can only apply if you are acting as a Response and your opponent has not beaten you in an Opposed Close Combat action whilst you are benefitting from Cover.

Example: *Julie is targeted by a ranged attack and there are some nearby concrete bollards that would provide a Cover rating of 2. Not having a ranged weapon of her own, she takes a Minor Action to move to the Cover and chooses to take a Defensive Action against the attack. Since both the Move Minor Action and the Defensive Core Action occur in the same Instance, and because the Cover lies between her and her opponent, her opponent's final Successes are reduced by 2. As a result of this, they miss and Julie's character is unharmed.*

Later in the Round, a new combatant charges Julie. He moves directly at her and attacks. Because the Cover still lies between him and Julie and because he has not previously beaten her in combat, she still gets the Cover bonus. If she wins, this bonus persists into the next Round. If she does not win, or her opponent moves to flank her, the benefits will be lost.

ENVIRONMENTAL PENALTIES

When an area in a combat zone could negatively affect characters, it's defined with an environmental penalty which inflicts a Pool penalty between -1 to -3 Pool.

Environmental penalties only ever apply to a single area and affect any action which is part of an Instance in which the character occupied or moved through that area.

- -1 Pool terrain represents things like rubble, loose shale or tall, dense grass.
- -2 Pool represents heavily broken terrain such as a dilapidated building, knee-high water or bushes.
- -3 Pool occurs in particularly tricky situations such as soft sand, waist-high water or snow and unstable rubble in a collapsed building.

Defining the Environment

Before a combat begins, it's the responsibility of a GM to work out the type of area that a given battle will be taking place in and then to make that area clear to the players. In Sins it's really not important to worry about exact details; rather what is important is where potential hazards, difficulties and areas of cover lie.

For instance, if a battle were taking place in an abandoned building, the GM should make a rough map and define what areas would work as cover and which areas, for instance collapsed masonry, would be a complication. The GM should then describe the area to the players and show them the diagram so that they can make good use of the environment both in relation to Cover and avoiding penalties, and to incorporate it into Stunts.

It is important to note that both Cover and Environmental Penalties can coexist, and in fact often do so. For instance, a dilapidated wall usually provides both a Cover rating of 1 and an Environmental Penalty of 1 due to the loose bricks which surround the wall.

Outcome in Combat

In a combat, Outcome's primary purpose is to increase the Damage you inflict, but there are also times when you want to accomplish something specific rather than just pile on Damage. In these cases, you can sacrifice Outcome to achieve various special effects.

When spending Outcome in this way, **you must choose to do so before Damage is calculated**. You specifically may not check what the damaging effects of an attack would be before deciding whether to use Outcome in this way. The moment you begin working out Resilience, Wound Thresholds or anything else related to Damage, the opportunity to spend Outcome on effects is lost.

Any effects are applied immediately and a given character may not be affected by a single effect more than once in an Instance. Also, **bonuses and penalties from these options are treated like Qualities in that they do not stack**. You use only the greatest individual modifier of each type. This does not apply to penalties occurring indirectly as a result or an option, such as those incurred for triggering an Opening.

Some of these uses of Outcome can duplicate the effects of Minor Actions. These effects don't count for the total number of Minor Actions you can take in a Round, but **they do count for the total number of times you can use any individual type of Minor Action**. For instance, you can use Outcome to reposition yourself in combat and as a result this counts towards the total number of times you can Move in a given Round.

Also, **you cannot duplicate the effects of a Minor Action that you could not normally use on an opportunity to act**. So, using the previous example, if you had already used the Move Minor Action three times or Sprinted, you would not be able to spend Outcome on any option which emulated a Move Minor Action.

Some of these options listed below are common to any action you undertake, whilst others are more specific in nature such as advanced manoeuvres that apply only to close or ranged combat, and finally there are certain options which apply only to a specific type of action.

Gaining an Edge and Counter-Attack

An interesting combination to note is that you can stack the effects of Counter-Attack and Gaining an Edge. Furthermore, you can do so over multiple Rounds. To do this, you simply don't attack after Gaining an Edge and then use Outcome from your Defensive Action towards Counter-Attack, allowing you to then make an attack action against an opponent, which both gives you bonus Successes and reduces that opponent's Pool. Just like with a Quality, these will stack because they are different modifiers; one for your Successes, and one for the opponent's Pool.

Universal Options

The following options may be used for any combat action, whether Aggressive or Defensive, ranged or close.

Assist: To take this option, you must be fighting against an opponent who is also Engaged with at least one of your allies. For each point of Outcome you use, that ally gains +1 Pool on their next attack on that opponent, following the same guidelines as Gaining an Edge below. **A number of points of Outcome may be used in this equal to your character's Reason.**

Disarming an Opponent: By using this option, you cause an opponent to drop one weapon of your choice that they are currently holding in their hands. To use this effect, **you must pay a number of points of Outcome equal to your opponent's skill with the weapon in question, plus 1 additional Outcome if you are attempting this with a Ranged Attack.**

Fluid Draw: By using this option, you cast aside a weapon you have just used and immediately draw another weapon of your choice that is no larger than Normal size. Alternatively if you fighting Unarmed, you simply draw a weapon at the end of a successful strike. **This option costs 1 Outcome, or 2 Outcome if you were using a**

two-handed weapon, plus a further 1 Outcome if the weapon you wish to draw is two-handed.

Forced Reposition: Using Outcome in this way, you force your opponent to move in the same way as the Reposition effect listed on this page, with the exception that they may ignore you for the purposes of whether they are Engaged or not. This means that they will not trigger an Opening against you, but may still do so against other opponents in close combat. **This option costs the character 2 Outcome, plus 1 Outcome for each additional character Engaged with the target, and an additional 1 Outcome if this option is used with Ranged Combat.**

Gaining an Edge: By spending Outcome in this way, a character sacrifices immediate rewards to push their opponent into a more vulnerable position. Each point of Outcome used in this way grants you 1 Automatic Success the next time you attack that opponent. Successes granted through this option apply only against that opponent, not any other opponents you may be Engaged with, and this bonus is lost if you take an Aggressive Action which does not include your original target. **A number of points of Outcome may be used in this equal to your character's Cunning.**

Reposition: With this option a character may move as per the Move Minor Action. Using this option is risky if Engaged with an opponent, and can be counted as an Opening as normal. **This option costs the character 1 Outcome plus 1 additional Outcome for each previous use of the Move Minor Action this Round.**

Targeted Attack: Outcome added to Damage can easily be described as attacking the vital areas of a target. Sometimes though, you want to do something very specific as part of an attack, such as shooting a detonator or carving your initials into someone's clothes. **To use this effect, a character must use 1 Outcome, plus 1 Outcome for each Size the target area or item is smaller than Medium.**

Taunt: Goading an opponent, though not always wise, sometimes has its advantages. With this option, you nominate one of your opponents. That opponent must use the Aggressive Action against you the next time they are legally able to do so. **This option costs a number of points of Outcome equal to the lower of your opponent's Reason or Cunning.**

Triumph: Your character draws strength in their victory, regaining 1 Focus for every 2 points of Outcome spent on this effect. **A number of points of Outcome may be used in this equal to your character's Passion.**

CLOSE COMBAT OPTIONS

These uses of Outcome apply only to close combat and as a result may only be used when you are Engaged with an enemy and choose to oppose them using the Athletics, Fight or Melee Skills. Unlike the universal options, some of these options may only be used in a particular circumstance, such as when taking an Aggressive Action or fighting unarmed.

Breathing Room: With this option, you push your opponents back slightly, allowing you to restore the effects of your Reach without needing to Disengage from your opponents. **This option costs 1 Outcome per opponent you are engaged with.**

Counter-Attack: This option may be used only with a Defensive Action and allows you to gain an advantage over your opponent the next time you attack. Nominate an opponent that you are Engaged with that attacked you in the same Instance this effect was triggered. The next time you attack that opponent, they take a Pool penalty equal to the Outcome used for this effect. **You may spend a number of Outcome in this way equal to your character's Prowess.**

Drive Back: This option combines the effect of both Reposition and Shift an Opponent for a reduced cost. For this to work, you must be eligible to use both options. These then take place; Shift an Opponent occurs first as normal, then the Reposition option takes place. In this case, you must use your Move to get as close to your opponent as possible. All other consequences to these moves apply as normal, including triggering an Opening if you are Engaged with multiple opponents.

This option costs 1 Outcome, plus 1 Outcome if your opponent's Body is greater than yours, and an additional 1 Outcome if your opponent is of a larger Size category than you. There is a further cost of 1 Outcome per Move Minor Action you have already taken this Round.

Fluid Guard: As described under the rules for Impact, you may use this option to avoid being affected by it, and in doing so negate your opponent's Impact entirely. **This option costs 1 Outcome, plus 1 Outcome per 5 full ranks of Impact you are attempting to negate.**

Improvised Impaling: It's possible, if a little tricky, to stab someone with near enough anything. Certainly, there are times when you need to impale things and don't have access to a dedicated impaling weapon. For this to work, you must be using a weapon which could reasonably be used for this purpose. A knife, sword or bayonet is fine, but a lump hammer won't cut it.

When using this Option, you voluntarily leave your weapon in the target and so long as it remains there, any Wounds inflicted by the attack are considered Impaling. Remember that if you or someone else removes this weapon from the target, the Wounds will no longer be Impaling.

Using this option costs 1 Outcome, and an additional 1 Outcome for each Size Step the weapon you intend to use is larger than Small.

Rain of Blows: When used, this option reduces your opponent's Initiative step by 1 for each Outcome used, and a further 1 if your Impact is greater than your opponent's. **A number of points of Outcome may be used in this equal to your character's Body.**

Shift an Opponent: With this option, you use the momentum of a successful action to either throw or knock back an opponent. When used, nominate an opponent that is Engaged with you and no more than one Size step greater than yourself unless a specific Quality or Feature allows you to do so. They are then moved a number of metres equal to your Athletics plus any Impact you possess. **This option costs 1 Outcome, plus 1 Outcome if your opponent's Body is greater than yours, and an additional 2 Outcome if your opponent is of a larger Size category than you.**

Take Weapon: This option may only be used with the Fight Skill and only as part of the same Instance in which an opponent was successfully Disarmed or discarded a weapon. If used, you immediately take the weapon in question and must discard any weapon you are holding if would not have a hand free to do this. **This option costs 1 Outcome, or 2 Outcome if you must discard a weapon of your own.**

Withdraw: Using this option allows you to Move as per the Reposition universal option, but does not trigger an Opening. **This option costs 2 Outcome plus 1 Outcome per additional opponent you are Engaged with.**

Ranged Combat Options

The following options may only be used in a ranged Aggressive Action, and unless otherwise stated may be used whether or not you are Engaged with an opponent. This differs from close combat options in that if you attempt to use a ranged weapon in close combat, you may still use the ranged combat options, so long as you follow the rules for the Shooter's Advantage and use the Marksmanship or Archery Skills, and in the case of throwing weapons, Athletics.

Fire Control: This option applies only to firearms and other weapons that fire multiple rounds. For each point of Outcome used, the number of rounds fired is reduced by 1 to the minimum number of shots that may be fired to complete your Action, unless this option is used on a Heroic Action, in which case there is no minimum number of shots. **A number of points of Outcome may be used in this way equal to your character's Reason.**

Rapid Shot: This option may be used only with weapons possessing the Bow quality, and allows you to make more shots than is normally possible. The next time you fire the bow, you may target two opponents instead of one, or fire both arrows at one target gaining +1 Pool

Knocking Someone Out

Occasionally you need to knock someone out and you want it to be a little more Hollywood than beating them to within an inch of their life. Just to be clear, in real life there is no safe way to knock someone out; if they're going unconscious there's always a chance they might die. That said, if for the sake of the story you want a way of handling non-lethal takedowns, we suggest the following optional rules.

When dealing Unarmed damage, a character may choose to check for a knockout instead of inflicting Wounds. They compare their total Damage against an opponent's Body + Conviction -1 for each Mauled Wound or greater they are currently suffering. If the Damage is higher than this total, then the opponent is knocked out.

"What About Horns?"

Yes, technically some animals such as stags have horns and engage in protracted defensive battles against each other using them. The bottom line though is that this isn't really relevant to combat. A stag might try and ride you down or gore you with its antlers, but it won't be trying to guard against your sword strikes with them.

On a side note, some natural weapons can manifest in ways which don't immediately lend themselves to being able to guard, such as claws or tentacles. In this area, we're just erring on the side of fairness by saying "to hell with it". After all, it would get very complicated to classify every type of potential Natural Weapon and it's just not that important in the context of the game.

and Damage instead. This uses two arrows accordingly, and follows all the normal rules for Multiple Attacks, incurring any relevant penalties. It simply bypasses the normal restrictions imposed on a weapon with the Bow quality. **Using this option costs 1 Outcome, or 2 Outcome for a bow of Very Large or greater size.**

Suppressing Fire: With careful shooting you force your opponents to go to ground. Each target that you attacked must choose whether to take a Pool penalty to their next action equal to the number of Outcome used on this option, or allow you to increase the Damage of your attack by double the Outcome spent.

This effect is best used on targets in the open. Against targets benefitting from Cover, the number of Outcome you have spent is effectively reduced against that opponent by the Cover rating they are using. If this would reduce the number of Outcome you have spent to 0, then that target will not be affected by this option. **A number of points of Outcome may be spent in this way equal to the lower of the number of shots fired or your character's Body.**

Advanced Combat Rules

Combat can be a messy affair full of all sorts of rapidly changing conditions. The rules we've covered so far are the meat and bones of what you need to know to make a combat flow. What follows are more specialised rules dealing with unusual situations and particular forms of combat. Before you read this section it helps to make sure you've got a good grasp of everything we've just discussed. Indeed, it's probably a good idea to run a simulated combat using the NPCs found on page 300.

Close Combat in Detail

Bloody, visceral and dynamic, close combat is never far away in Sins. From the super-powered Nemissary to the Broodspawn or highly-trained mortals, close combat is vitally important in the world of Sins.

Unarmed Combat

Fists, feet and teeth are all deadly in their own right, though they certainly have disadvantages when compared with dedicated weaponry. With their powerful bodies and diamond-hard bones, Nemissaries and the Broodspawn are just as capable when unarmed as they are when armed, but for normal humans the situation is somewhat more precarious.

When fighting Unarmed, you are considered to have a weapon with no Pool or Damage modifiers. When comparing your Damage to your opponent's Wound Thresholds, the actual Damage inflicted is reduced by 1 step to a minimum of an Injured Wound. If you would normally have bested the Critical Wound Threshold, you resolve the attack as if you had only affected an opponent's Mauled Threshold.

Nemissaries, Broodspawn and characters with the Natural Weapons Enhancement, or those using close combat aids such as knuckle dusters and even some Qualities all allow you to ignore this penalty.

Manoeuvres

In close combat, there are various ways you can modify an Aggressive or Defensive Action. Collectively these are known as Manoeuvres. Each has their own advantages and disadvantages, and they are mutually exclusive, meaning **you may use only one of the following options to modify an Action, and you may not use a Manoeuvre when making Multiple Attacks or if your character is Desperate.**

All Out Attack: Sometimes you want to throw caution to the wind and throw all your character's effort into the destruction of an opponent. This Manoeuvre may be used only with an Aggressive Action.

With an All Out Attack, you gain +1 Automatic Success on your attack and gain 1 free Outcome if your attack succeeds. You must spend at least your Passion in Outcome to boost Damage before you may use it for any other purpose. If your opponent beats you, they gain 3 free Outcome to use against you.

In the rare situation that two characters both use this Manoeuvre and draw, a **Karmic Strike** occurs. In this circumstance, both characters strike one another as if they had hit and apply a number of points of Outcome equal to half their rolled Successes for that Instance. The Karmic Strike itself is still considered an All Out Attack for the purposes of how Outcome from this attack may be spent.

Feints: Not every attack has to be sheer speed or brute force. You can also attempt to trick an opponent and keep them off guard. **The Feint Manoeuvre is unique in that it may be declared after you have committed to an attack or defence, so long as your opponent does not respond with an All Out Attack.**

If you use the Feint Manoeuvre, both your Body and Prowess are capped by your Cunning for that Action. The advantage is that your opponent's Prowess is also capped by their Cunning until that opponent successfully Disengages from you, or takes a Minor Action to remove the effect.

Whether or not your opponent negates the effect, you can continue making feints in combat but doing so becomes difficult as your opponent wises up to your tricks. Each time after the first you attempt a Feint against a particular opponent, you gain a cumulative -1 Pool penalty to these attempts until the end of the combat.

Restraining an Opponent: It may be risky, but there are times when it's necessary to restrain an opponent. To use this Manoeuvre, you must make an Unarmed Close Combat attack or use a weapon with the Entangling quality, and declare you wish to restrain your opponent.

You roll the attack with a -1 Pool penalty, and if you succeed, your total Damage is halved, and all Outcome must be spent to establish the **Hold Strength** for this Manoeuvre, which will begin equal to the number of Outcome spent. If you fail in the attack you leave yourself dangerously exposed, and any Outcome scored by an opponent is doubled.

Whilst your Hold Strength is 1 or more, your opponent may not move away from you. They can shift their position but not gain any distance on you. The Hold Strength is reduced by 1 each Round after the first at your normal Initiative step. An opponent in a hold suffers a penalty equal to the Hold Strength to any Action which does not target you. In addition, both aggressor and victim may attempt to strengthen or break the hold respectively.

To break or strengthen the hold, you need to make a Close Combat attack. If this is done Unarmed, there is no penalty to attack, but just like above Damage is halved after Outcome is taken into account. If a weapon is used, the character suffers a -1 Pool penalty for every size step the weapon is above Small, but Damage is not halved. In either case, on a successful attack, you may increase or decrease the Hold Strength by your remaining Outcome.

If the Hold Strength reaches 0, the hold is broken and the person who initiated it suffers a -1 Success penalty on the next Opposed Action with the victim if they are the subject of the victim's next Action.

If at any point Hold Strength exceeds the lower of an opponent's Body or Conviction, that opponent is considered **Restrained**.

A Restrained opponent is considered to be in the Deadly Wound state for the purposes of taking actions. As a consequence, they may only act if they spend Focus. If a restrained character spends Focus to act and manages to lower the Hold Strength they are no longer Restrained, and may potentially break free as appropriate.

Technical Fighting: In close combat, it's possible to put yourself at a disadvantage in order to attempt to outmanoeuvre and outfight your opponent in an indirect way.

Whether using this Manoeuvre on an Aggressive or Defensive Action, you gain a number of free Outcome equal to your character's Reason, so long as you succeed in the action. The downside to this differs depending upon whether the action is an Aggressive or Defensive one.

For Aggressive Actions, your character simply inflicts no Damage upon a successful strike as the entire effort is directed to manoeuvring rather than striking. For a Defensive Action, the downside is that your opponent will gain an additional +3 Damage if they beat you.

Grappling

So, you want to get someone in a headlock? If you want to restrain the opponent, fine, but if you want to do it for the sake of inflicting damage, there are no rules for that. The reason is that this game uses an abstract combat system. It's not designed to account for everything under the sun. After all, punching someone in the face and choking them out are essentially the same thing, just different descriptions of a Close Combat attack and the use of Outcome Options.

Ranged Combat in Detail

Guns changed the way combats were fought. They can be truly devastating but can also be a liability in certain circumstances. In this section we will cover various advanced rules regarding ranged weapons and their particular advantages and disadvantages when matched against close combat.

Range

The first concern for a ranged weapon, as you might imagine, is how far you can shoot. Each weapon has a range trait which is a general indicator of a weapon's maximum effective range. These fall into one of four categories, **Short**, **Medium**, **Long** or **Extreme** range.

Since ranged weapons operate at a minimum of Short range and most fire-fights occur well within 50 metres, an additional range step is used. We call this **Close** range, which represents shots up to about 10 metres in range. The Close range step is used only in extremely stressful situations such as combat, and not when dealing with target shooting, sniping and other less intense situations.

In combat, each range step above Close you try to shoot at inflicts a Success penalty on your shot. These penalties escalate sharply and represent the extreme difficulty of precision shooting at great range and are not intended for use when taking shooting actions outside of combat.

To determine what range a shot falls into, compare the distance of the shot against the highest range listed below and use the listed penalty. These are not cumulative so use only the highest one which applies. Also remember that a weapon firing beyond its listed range doubles any penalties that apply.

- **Close range (No penalty):** Approximately 10m.
- **Short range (-2 Success):** Approximately 50m.
- **Medium range (-4 Successes):** Approximately 100m.
- **Long range (-8 Successes):** Approximately 300m.
- **Extreme range (-16 Successes):** Approximately 1000m.

These penalties are not cumulative and you use only the most severe applicable. Also remember that outside of combat, shooting uses the normal Difficulty framework, bearing in mind that weapon traits can affect more than just a weapon's combat capabilities.

The Shooter's Advantage

Ranged combat has a number of advantages, not least amongst them is the fact that an opponent without a ranged weapon is at a significant disadvantage against you. The flip side of course is that it is very difficult to use a ranged weapon properly in close proximity to an opponent. This advantage and drawback are handled in game by the following rules.

When you target an opponent with a ranged weapon and trigger an Opposed Action, you check to see what conditions apply. Depending upon the circumstance, several penalties either to you or your opponent may apply as outlined below:

- If you are Ready and targeting an opponent at Medium range or greater and trigger an Opposed Action in which your opponent does not respond with a ranged attack, your opponent suffers a -1 Success penalty to their action for each Move Minor Action they take, or a -3 Success penalty if they Sprint.
- If you are Engaged and your opponent attacks you with a Close Combat Aggressive or Defensive Action, you suffer a -1 Success penalty to your action, or a -2 Success penalty if the ranged weapon you are using is two-handed.

As you can see, a Shooter's Advantage can be a double edged sword. At distance your advantage is massive, but at short ranges things quickly shift in favour of close combatants.

Jamming

The rules for Stalling do not mean that your gun actually jams. They just represent the hesitation that comes from unexpectedly running out of ammunition. For the sake of simplicity, the rules don't cover actual mechanical defects. If you'd like to add rules for gun jams you can use the following optional system.

When using Auto Fire or Full Auto, roll 1d6. On a result of a 1, the gun jams. Resolve the attack as normal. If you succeed in hitting your target, lower your Successes by 2. If you have any Successes remaining, you still hit the target. If not, the jam caused you to miss outright. In either case, you need to clear the jam which requires a Standard Action using Prowess/Crafts against a Difficulty of 2.

Item quality can also affect the chances of a jam. Poor Quality items jam on a result of a 1 or a 2 and Terrible Quality items jam on a 4 or less and always break if they do jam. For Fine or Masterwork items, you may re-roll the jam dice once for a Fine quality weapon or twice for a Masterwork.

Rate of Fire

In Sins, attacks with ranged weapons don't usually represent a single shot; rather the system assumes that an exchange of blows – or in this case shots – takes place over the 30 seconds or so that make up a Round.

For most ranged weapons, you need to work out how many shots are fired with each attack. To do this, roll 1d6 minus Marksmanship. The total, which is a minimum of 1, is how many rounds of ammunition are expended for that attack. Check this number against the remaining rounds in the weapon. If the total is 0 or higher you are fine though you might need to reload. If this total takes you into negatives, you've **Stalled**.

In either case, if you run out of ammunition you need to reload. If you are choosing to reload or need to because of running out, you need to use a miscellaneous Minor Action to reload before you can fire the weapon again. If your character Stalled, things are a little harder.

To reload after a Stall you need to take a Standard Action. This is because Stalling represents the added time for your character to get themselves together after running out of ammunition prematurely.

One way to counteract the dangers of Stalling is for a character to Ready a reload. To do this, you take a miscellaneous Minor Action. Once this is set your character will automatically reload if they run out of ammunition during their round. This still applies if the character Stalls and they won't need to take the full Standard Action, but for the purposes of any traits which might apply, the character still counts as having Stalled. This is important because certain weapons can have negative effects in the event of a Stall.

Rate of Fire and Weapon Qualities: Various weapon qualities can modify both a weapon's potential rate of fire and the time necessary to reload it. These traits are covered in detail in the Equipment rules on page 179. An abridged description of common traits which affect rate of fire follows;

- **Slow Reload:** This weapon takes longer than normal to reload. This doubles the number of actions necessary to reload.

- **Auto-Fire:** These weapons can use a lot more than 1d6 ammunition in a round. For each rank in this quality, the weapon may fire an additional D6 rounds for a cumulative +1 Pool bonus to an action.
- **Full Auto:** These weapons can empty their entire clip in a round. When using Full Auto, the guns entire clip is emptied and for every full 10 rounds of ammunition expended, the action gains a cumulative +1 Pool and Damage bonus, but the effective Cover of your opponents is doubled.
- **Rapid Reload:** These weapons are particularly fast to reload, requiring only a Free Action to reload.
- **Single Shot:** These weapons only ever fire a single shot in a Round, and thus cannot cause a Stall and do not require a Minor Action to make only one shot.

The list isn't a comprehensive one and the entries are presented in an abridged fashion to help you understand the rules which follow. Many of them, particularly Full Auto, have additional information and clarifications which you will find in the Equipment rules starting on page 179 and we strongly suggest that you familiarise yourself with the various weapon traits before running the game.

Rate of Fire and Multiple Opponents: When shooting at more than one target, you obviously have to use at least 1 round per target. To account for this, the minimum number of shots you may use must be equal to the number of opponents you are targeting. **Remember that there is still a maximum number of actions you can take in total and as a result there is a finite limit on how many characters you can target with multiple shots**. As noted above, if you want these to be single shots, you need to take 1 miscellaneous Minor Action per opponent targeted.

Firing into Close Combat

Firing at combatants is difficult enough without the added stress of trying to pick out one combatant from amongst a melee, and as a result this almost never ends well. If your character wants to fire into an ongoing close combat, there are some potentially serious penalties which may apply.

Assuming you want to do this, you declare an attack on a target as normal and suffer a -1 Success penalty for each other character Engaged with the target. In the event that the target chooses not to take the opportunity to act, you instead make the action unopposed as normal and apply the same penalty as above.

In either case, an additional penalty may apply based on the relative size of the target and that of the largest character they are Engaged with:

- **-2 Successes:** The target is a size category smaller than their opponent(s).
- **No change:** The target and their opponent(s) are in the same size category.

"You Shot Me in the Leg!" (Optional Rule)

The rules for shooting into close combat are designed to be as simple as possible. In particular they don't account for the possibility of hitting your own allies in a combat. Groups wanting to add a little more danger to their combats can introduce the following optional rule.

When shooting into close combat, check to see whether you failed the attack roll by an amount up to the increase in Difficulty. If you did, then you hit one of the other combatants involved in the close combat instead of your intended target. This hit should be randomised between opponents and is worked out as if you scored no Outcome on the attack roll. In all other respects it's a normal hit from your weapon.

- **+1 Success:** The target is a size category larger than their opponent(s).
- **+2 Success:** The target is two size categories larger than their opponent(s).

These modifiers are not cumulative with each other, but as noted do combine with the penalty for the number of combatants. Also, the modifiers for a target being of a larger size may not give you a net Success bonus. In the event that you want to target a Huge creature engaging a single normal sized opponent, there would be no penalty for firing into close combat but you would not get a bonus to the roll.

Two-Weapon Fighting

Though extremely difficult, two-weapon fighting often captures the imagination and with sufficient skill can be an effective means of fighting.

All forms of two-weapon fighting, whether melee or ranged, follow the same basic principles. First of all, you have to be able to use each weapon in one hand. Because of the additional coordination needed to fight with two weapons, you must use one Minor Action per Core Action which will use both weapons.

Note that the rules we are discussing do not apply to just holding a weapon in your offhand. You are always free to carry two weapons and switch between them as necessary during a Round so long as you keep in mind the obvious downsides which come from not having a free hand.

When using two weapons in this way, you count all the traits of both weapons for attacks and defences. You then apply them as appropriate but following the rules laid out below;

Two-Weapon Fighting and Large Creatures

The rules for fighting with two weapons assume you are human-sized. Obviously, some creatures have greater stature and bigger hands. In these cases, larger weapons than normal can be used with two weapon fighting; particularly, two-handed weapons can be used in one hand. This means that a Nemissary in the Destroyer Shape for instance could use a greatsword in each hand or an assault rifle and battle-axe.

Weapons used in this way function just like their smaller counterparts, but impose an a -1 Pool penalty for every size step above Medium in addition to any other penalty suffered.

"We didn't say fighting this way was sensible."

You may have noticed that certain types of two-weapon fighting are better than others, That's because there are only certain types of two-weapon fighting that are in any way useful.

Historically, outside of certain specific duelling styles and a very limited group of specialised martial arts, two weapon fighting just didn't happen. The reason is simple; in real life, it's just not efficient. Even using two pistols, you won't get any real advantage over carefully shooting with a single pistol.

All of that aside, the rules have been written so that certain types of two-weapon fighting are slightly better than they would be in real life; after all this is a game about having fun and let's be honest – scything your way through a group of Broodspawn with a pair of katana is freaking cool even if it's not very realistic.

- Traits do not stack. If one weapon gives you Reach 1 and the other gives you Reach 2, you use the highest Trait.
- Traits which affect only melee weapons such as Reach and Impact are only applied to close combat actions. Likewise, traits which affect only ranged weapons apply only to ranged actions.
- If the effects of two traits contradict one another, they cancel each other out.

In addition to the guidelines above, characters suffer a -1 Pool penalty to their attacks if any weapon used in this off-hand is of the Medium or Large size. Weapons with a size greater than this may never be used for two-weapon fighting by human-sized characters. Also, just in case it needs to be said, two handed weapons may never be used with these rules.

The bonuses provided by the different ways of two-weapon fighting are described in the sections below.

Close Combat Weapons

In close combat, there are differing benefits for two-weapon fighting, depending upon whether you are using your second weapon aggressively or defensively. When using an off-hand weapon defensively, it provides a defensive bonus based on the size of the off-hand weapon.

- **Small:** Reduce opponent's Outcome by 1.
- **Medium:** Reduce opponent's Outcome by 2
- **Large:** Reduce opponent's Outcome by 1.

These effects never work against ranged attacks and cannot completely negate an opponent's attack upon you; they can only reduce an opponent's Outcome to 0.

If a close combat weapon is used offensively, their base Damage is 1 plus the average of both weapons' Damages. Body is then added as normal.

Ranged Weapons

Using two ranged weapons, particularly handguns, can be an effective means of combat. To do this, the character follows the rules outlined above and in addition they average the Damage of the two weapons they wish to use. They then make their attack roll as normal.

The benefit is that the overall Damage is increased by 1 and for every 2 full points of Outcome, the attacker gains an additional point of Outcome; thus 2 Outcome becomes 3 and 4 Outcome becomes 6.

The downside is that the character may not ready a Reload and ammunition expenditure is rolled as normal and then applied to both weapons. As a result, it's possible for one or both weapons to Stall, meaning that it is very unwise to use weapons with greatly differing clip sizes in this manner.

Combining the Two

In some situations a character may wish to attack with both a ranged weapon and a close combat weapon as part of the same action. If you are already Engaged with an opponent and want to use a ranged weapon as part of your close combat, you take an additional -1 Pool penalty and just average the Damage as if you were making a two-weapon close combat attack.

If you want to shoot someone and then run up and stab them, you do the same thing in reverse; you average the Melee weapon's Damage with your ranged weapon and would need to use a Move Minor Action in addition to the Minor Action required for using two weapons.

In either of these cases, you are just making either a close combat or ranged attack from the point of view of the rules. Things like Impact or the Shooter's Advantage apply just like normal to the attack you are using.

Grenades and Explosives

Indirect fire weapons, thrown grenades or explosives can be devastating. In Sins, these weapons are resolved in one of three ways. First of all, you can attempt to hit an individual target with the weapon, or you can just throw the thing and hope nobody jumps out of the way. Finally, you can set an explosive to detonate in an area.

Targeting an Area

To just throw an explosive into a specific spot, you need to pick a target that is within (Body + Athletics) × 10 meters. You then take a Standard Action and then make a Prowess/Athletics roll, modified by how far you wish to throw and modified for cover as appropriate:

- **10m or Less:** +1 Pool.
- **30m to 60m:** -1 Success.
- **60m or More:** -2 Successes.

Alternatively, you may use a Minor Action to throw but in this case the maximum distance is your Body in meters and success or failure is determined if the distance you are throwing is less than or greater than your Prowess. If the distance thrown is less than or equal to your Prowess, you succeed. If not, you are considered to have failed.

If the throw succeeded, the grenade lands on target. If you fail, assume the grenade lands approximately in the right area but to represent inaccuracy, halve its damage.

Once you've worked out where the grenade lands, check what the explosive's Blast rating is. This is a Trait and represents the number of meters within which the explosive is dangerous. Every character that is still eligible to take a Move Minor Action and is considered an Aware combatant gets the option to **Dive** or **Take Cover**. If they don't want to or cannot do either of these things, then they are at the full mercy of the Blast as noted below.

Each character which opts to Dive immediately makes an effective Move Minor Action. At the end of this Move action, check to see if the character is still within the Blast area of the explosive. If they are not in the Blast, but would still be within a distance equal to twice the explosive blast radius, they take half Damage. If they have reached a distance more than double the blast radius away, then they are safe and take no damage.

Characters who opt to Take Cover take the full Damage of the explosion but gain Resilience equal to 1 plus double the rating of any Cover they are currently gaining the benefits of. If they do this, they take a -1 Pool penalty to their next Action.

Explosives inflict Damage just like ranged weapons, with the exception that they don't need to roll to hit targetsand as a result they resolve Outcome differently. When a character suffers Damage from an explosive, that character should roll a d6 and add or subtract an amount of Damage from the explosion as shown below.

- **1:** The explosion inflicts 2 additional Damage.
- **2:** The explosion inflicts 1 additional Damage.
- **3-4:** The explosion inflicts the listed Damage.
- **5:** The explosion's Damage is reduced by 1.
- **6:** The explosion's Damage is reduced by 2.

Explosives share traits with ranged weapons and as a result their Damage and other effects are modified just like any other weapon. For information on weapon traits, see page 180 in the Equipment chapter.

Targeting an Individual

Targeting an individual person is only useful if the explosive will detonate on an impact, the most common of which is a Molotov cocktail. Attacking this way is essentially a normal ranged attack which uses Prowess/Athletics as opposed to Marksmanship or Archery. You make this attack just like any other ranged attack, including things like Cover and the Shooter's Advantage.

If you hit, you resolve Damage using Outcome normally. The explosive then triggers using the same rules as above and is considered to have been a successful throw. The original target is not affected by this but all other characters are affected normally.

If you miss, then you treat the attack in all ways like a missed throwing attack, potentially striking both the original target and anybody else nearby.

Setting an Explosive

Setting an explosive properly is not a straightforward process. That said, a large enough amount of explosives will render most defences irrelevant. Setting up explosives and laying traps is something primarily left to the Action mechanics in the Core Rules.

Where damage is concerned, a set explosive functions in the same manner as a thrown explosive, gaining random Outcome and granting targets the option to Take Cover or Dive as noted before.

FEDERAL SPECIAL FBI
DAY TWO
STAGE
DAY 30

CHAPTER V

TRAITS EXPANDED

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Core Traits

Core Traits define the heart of a character. They serve as the foundation for their capability to interact with and influence the world directly. This section primarily sets out to help you understand the meaning of Core Traits and to make them more than dots on a sheet of paper. It also expands upon the kinds of situations in which they are useful and provides a range of additional rules to cover more complex situations that might crop up during the course of the game.

Fate

Fate is a measure of a character's importance to the larger narrative of the world, and unlike the other Core Traits, it isn't something that can directly be improved through training and effort; rather, Fate grows with the character's experience and impact on the story.

As noted in the Core Rules, a character's Fate adds to all Dice Pools your character generates, but not random groups of dice they might be asked to roll.

Example: *Jack needs to generate a Dice Pool based on Body and Athletics. If he had a Body of 4 and a Fate of 3 he would roll 7 dice, with his Skill providing the target number.*

If Jack was asked to roll 2d6 and add the numbers together, he would just roll the number of dice indicated as this is not generating a Dice Pool, meaning his Fate is irrelevant.

Fate, like Skills, can have a rating of 0 and this is most common in individuals with little or no relevance to the story. These individuals should generally include background characters or henchmen of the lowest order.

- **Fate 0:** Characters with little or no relevance to the story.
- **Fate 1:** Notable individuals with a great deal of untapped potential.
- **Fate 2:** Movers and shakers in their community, or figures of national interest.
- **Fate 3:** Powerful and competent individuals, with a great deal of recognition.
- **Fate 4:** Characters who possess a deep impact on the setting and cannot easily be ignored.
- **Fate 5:** Amongst the most important people in the world, with massive depths of experience and skill.
- **Fate 6:** Luminaries who will change the face of the world forever.

Remember that supernaturals such as Nemissaries and the Brood replace their Fate with another Trait; Creed in the case of Nemissaries and Synergy for the Brood – both of which count as Fate in all respects for the rules and what we've just discussed.

Whilst these characters might be more powerful, their relative importance is still in line with Fate of the same rank. After all, being more powerful doesn't mean that a character is more important to the story.

Organisation

This chapter also deals with the various rule situations regarding each Attribute and Trait. It's important to note that certain rule situations will involve more than one Trait, but for convenience's sake the rules are not repeated. For instance, Lifting and Carrying involves both Body and Athletics, but since Body comes before Athletics in the text, it is covered there.

Now that's been said, it's very important that the GM familiarizes themselves with this chapter. It's best to have an understanding of how different situations are handled before the game begins. Of course we don't expect you to keep this all in your head at once, but a quick skim through never hurts.

Attributes

Attributes are, in some ways, the most important Traits of your character. They represent the Physical, Mental, and Emotional Self. Like most traits they are rated 1 to 6.

- **Rank 0:** No capacity whatsoever in that attribute.
- **Rank 1:** Very poor ability.
- **Rank 2:** Below average capacity.
- **Rank 3:** A good average capacity.
- **Rank 4:** Very good ability.
- **Rank 5:** Exceptional capabilities.
- **Rank 6:** Maximum of human potential.

Epic Attributes: Unlike other Traits, it is possible to possess effective ratings in an Attribute greater than 6. This is normally accomplished through the use of Attribute modifiers or Supernatural Traits.

Attributes above 6 are handled differently than normal. Instead of increasing the number of dice in a character's Pool, they instead add 1 Automatic Success for each rank above 6.

Example: *A bear with a Body of 8 makes an Athletics check. Assuming it had Fate 1, it would roll 7 dice and get 2 Automatic Successes for this Dice Pool.*

Attributes above 6 also have a greater difference in meaning for each rank. Rank 7 for instance represents an Attribute almost twice as impressive as someone with a rank of 6. A quick overview of how to judge the various ranks follows:

- **Rank 7:** The character's capabilities are approximately 1.5 times greater than a character with a rating of 6. This represents an incredible level of competence above human ability, such as the physical abilities possessed by great cats or horses, and in mental terms the incredibly rare genius possessed by singular individuals amongst humanity. **This grants a Base Pool of 6 Dice and 1 Automatic Success.**
- **Rank 8:** Twice the capability of a character with rank 6, and now falls well outside of human limits. **This grants a Base Pool of 6 Dice and 2 Automatic Successes.**
- **Rank 9:** Twice the capabilities of a character with rank 7. An Attribute of this rank can be used to achieve awe-inspiring feats, making humans seem quite limited in comparison. **This grants a Base Pool of 6 Dice and 3 Automatic Successes.**
- **Rank 10:** Twice the capabilities of a character with a rank of 8, and getting quite epic at this point. Very few members of the animal kingdom or even supernaturals achieve Attributes of this rating. **This grants a Base Pool of 6 Dice and 4 Automatic Successes.**

Etc...

Attributes at 0: Occasionally an attribute can also be reduced to 0, or alternatively a creature may never possess that attribute in the first place. In this unusual circumstance, a character may not generate pools using that attribute, and any derived traits originating from that attribute are not possessed by the character.

This can be modified however, and certain unusual creatures such as spirits or true undead can function in subtly different ways to this, but this will be covered in their individual entries where appropriate.

BODY

Body is the source of a character's physical abilities; their strength, speed and stamina. It also serves as a measure of physical fitness and capability to directly resist harm.

People with high Body tend to be physically tall, athletic and well built, where people with low Body scores tend to be small, frail or unfit.

- **Rank 1:** A small child or 90lb weakling.
- **Rank 2:** A teenager or out of shape adult.
- **Rank 3:** Average adult male.
- **Rank 4:** Athletic person in prime of life.
- **Rank 5:** Athlete or professional body builder.
- **Rank 6:** Olympic level dedication; a truly exceptional human being.

Of all the attributes, Body is the most likely to exceed 6, with many animals possessing scores well in excess of what a normal human is capable of.

IN CASE YOU OPENED THE BOOK HERE...

Remember, as discussed in the Core Rules, any time the system calls for generating a Dice Pool, you add your Fate characteristic to the total Pool.

Because this is always added, it isn't mentioned in quick references to a Pool, such as "roll Body/Athletics". Just remember the total Pool in that instance would be Body + Fate, rolled against Athletics.

This doesn't apply, however, when the rules generate a Pool that isn't from a character, such as in the case of a trap or environmental danger. In such instances just roll the Pool referred to in the appropriate section.

THE GIFTS OF THE MIGHTY

Epic Attributes can do more than just grant a character Successes. They can also give access to totally new capabilities. The most basic of these is **Flickering**, which is a supernatural Feature automatically granted to any character which gains in the course of gameplay both a Prowess and Body at 7 or more. For more information, see page 158 later in this chapter.

- **Rank 7:** A horse or chimpanzee.
- **Rank 8:** A warhorse or a bull.
- **Rank 9:** A silverback gorilla or shire horse.
- **Rank 10:** An elephant.
- **Rank 11:** The largest and most terrifying Broodspawn.
- **Rank 12:** Approaching the upper limits of any living thing.

Body is used to generate pools for a fairly specific set of Skills. It's not the most common of the Attributes to be coupled with Skills. This said, it has a powerful impact on a character's capabilities, particularly in terms of their ability to both deal damage and resist its effects.

Aside from its fairly limited interaction with Skills, there are a number of specific situations presented below for which it is of critical importance.

Lifting, and Dragging: For the most part it is safe to abstract exactly how much your character can lift and drag. Just use common sense and picture what your character could practically do.

CARRYING CAPACITY (OPTIONAL RULE)

For the most part, the HOPE Engine uses the rule of Common Sense for carrying capacity. In a nutshell, imagine what you could realistically carry with you; after all, you've only got so much space.

Groups requiring a rough guide however, can assume a character can comfortably passively carry the same amount they can lift, but as if their Body was 1 lower to reflect the extended effort.

If your character has a proper harness and backpack, they can consider their Body 1 higher for carrying capacity. If they have a particularly good quality harness or pack, or has a Survival score of 4 or higher, they can increase this by a further 1.

However, sometimes it's important to know how much weight your character can move. To do this, look up your character's Body attribute on the table below. This determines the amount your character can lift or drag without specific effort.

A character can also attempt to exert additional effort and roll Conviction/Athletics with a Difficulty of 1 for normal objects, or 2 for soft objects such as a body or a sack of flour. Additionally, there is a penalty of -1 Pool if the object is particularly unwieldy.

If the action succeeds, the character's Body is increased by a number of ranks equal to 1 + Outcome for the purposes of the table. However this comes with a drawback. If a character's body would be moved by more than 2 steps, they take 1 Injured Wound for each point past the second, to represent muscle strain and exhaustion.

Body	Lift	Example
1	5lbs	A cat or chair
2	25lbs	A dog
3	50lbs	A child
4	100lbs	A teenager or large dog
5	200lbs	Heavily set person.
6	300lbs	A small horse
7	500lbs	A motorbike
8	800lbs	Warhorse
9	1200lbs	A car
10	1700lbs	A van
11	2300lbs	A truck
12	3800lbs	A semi-truck
+1	×1.5 approx.	Etc.

Movement Speed: When you need to work out how quickly a character can move, there are three types of speed which matter; **Dramatic Speed**, **Sprinting**, and **Over Land Speed**.

Dramatic Speed comes into effect when you are in competition with another character outside of combat. These situations are handled as opposed Body/Athletics rolls with modifiers being handled just like any other opposed test. Some Qualities might help you and size plays an important role, granting a bonus dice to such tests for each step of size advantage a character enjoys.

Sprinting is a Core Action your character can take, which allows them to move a number of metres equal to the character's Body plus Athletics multiplied by 5. Like with lifting, a character can push themselves further making a Conviction/Athletics roll with a Difficulty of 0, with each Success increasing their effective Body by 2. Just like pushing limits with lifting and dragging, you incur 1 Injured Wound for each point of Outcome above 2.

Size does affect Sprinting, multiplying the total distance that a character may move depending upon their Size as follows:

- **Large:** Multiply movement speed by 1.5
- **Huge:** Multiply movement speed by 2
- **Massive:** Multiply movement speed by 2.5
- **Gigantic:** Multiply movement speed by 3
- **Titanic:** Multiply movement speed by 3.5

Example: *A character wishes to Sprint. They have a Body of 4 and an Athletics of 3. The total of these two traits is 7, so his basic Sprint is 35 meters. The character needs to move faster than this and decides to push their limits. They have a Conviction of 4, a Fate of 1 and an Athletics of 3. This means they roll 5 dice, needing 4s on the dice. The character scores 3 Successes, which inflicts 1 Injured Wound but pushes their effective Body up by 6 points. Because of this, their total Sprint is 65 meters.*

Finally, Over Land speed for a person in good physical condition is approximately 3 miles per hour at an average walking pace, and can sustain this for their Body + Conviction + Athletics in hours without penalty.

Alternatively, a character can move at 6 miles per hour, but this sets a punishing pace, equivalent to a light jog, and the length of time this can be maintained without penalty is half that above.

A character can always push themselves beyond their limits however, but for every hour beyond their limit that they push themselves, they take 1 Injured Wound.

Large creatures can cover more ground and their total land speed is multiplied based on their size as follows;

- **Large:** Multiply movement speed by 1.5
- **Huge:** Multiply movement speed by 2

- **Massive:** Multiply movement speed by 2.5
- **Gigantic:** Multiply movement speed by 3
- **Titanic:** Multiply movement speed by 3.5

CONVICTION

Conviction represents a person's force of will, and desire to live. It is important for resisting pain, or holding true to one's principles. It also has a great influence on a character's personal reserves of inner strength and their ability to dominate others.

People with high Conviction tend to have a powerful presence and self-confidence, whereas people with low Conviction tend to seem timid or weak-willed.

- **Rank 1:** Weak-willed individual, likely has an addictive personality or is a coward.
- **Rank 2:** Insecure or timid person.
- **Rank 3:** Average, well-adjusted adult.
- **Rank 4:** Strong-willed individual
- **Rank 5:** Downright stubborn and determined, and tends to complete virtually any task they set their mind to.
- **Rank 6:** Incredible reserves of willpower as well as determination. Almost impossible to dissuade from their views.

Conviction rarely serves as the basis for Dice Pools, and generally only interacts directly with the Resolve or Keening Skills. Despite this, it is one of the most important Traits a character can possess. It affects in one way or another almost every secondary Trait that a character possesses, and determines a character's defence against social influences. Finally, it has huge importance when dealing with supernatural Traits, and is one of the most important Attributes for Nemissaries in general.

Social Combat: When trying to convince others of your point of view, no factor bears as much weight as Conviction. It forms the base Difficulty of almost all social attempts against a character. Generally speaking, the Difficulty of any given static social action is the average of a character's Conviction and Resolve, or for simple NPCs where the GM doesn't wish to work out full Traits, simply use Conviction less 1. In either case, this total is one higher if the social action would attempt to cross, or otherwise interfere with, one of the character's Motivations.

When a character attempts to engage someone in conversation, normally the player and the GM, representing the NPC, would have a conversation. It isn't always necessary to reduce things to Dice Pools. However the GM should always take into account the character's social ability and not the player's, so sometimes it can be of vital importance to roll dice in social situations.

There are essentially two forms of social interaction where dice are concerned. The first is known as Influencing. This can use several combinations of attribute or Skill depending upon the circumstance. Essentially this represents a situation where one character attempts to persuade another of something, and the other character is not trying to persuade them of anything in return. In this situation the character rolls against a static Difficulty, set as mentioned before.

If the player succeeds, the target will be reasonably convinced of their character's point of view. Players on the other hand will balk at the idea of what their characters can and can't think, and so characters with a Fate trait can spend 1 point of Focus to remain true to their original convictions. If you don't have any Focus however, you're just going to have to roleplay with it. After all, your character is not you.

Example: *A politician trying to persuade you that he's not wasting your money, would be an example of an Influencing social action. In this instance, the politician might roll Passion/Authority if he were giving a vibrant, energetic performance, or Reason/Panache if he were attempting an intellectual argument.*

Next is an Engaging Social Action. This is where two characters attempt to convince one another of their respective points of view. As with most opposed actions, there is no set Difficulty. However characters do get certain benefits. The character with the higher Conviction gains a number of bonus Pool equal to the difference between the two characters' Convictions.

Example: *One of the characters is attempting to sell something to a nomad trader and believes that the item is quite valuable. The trader on the other hand doesn't see the character's point, and is thoroughly convinced the item is of poor quality. In this case, the player, making a passionate defence of his sale, rolls Passion/Panache. The merchant on the other hand is being rather sly, and tries to subtly talk the character around to his point of view, so he rolls Cunning/Panache.*

Just like with Influencing, if the loser has a Fate trait, they can pay Focus to hold fast to their point of view, but doing so is more difficult in this situation than in

HORSES

Just in case it needs to be said, travelling by horseback uses exactly the same system as travelling on foot. The only difference being that horses count as large, so can move by default at 4.5 miles per hour, and generally will have a far greater Body attribute than a human.

Riding a horse in combat or under duress however is a totally different issue and requires the Riding Quality. For more information on horse riding see page 151.

Influencing. By engaging in a debate, the character has at least shown a willingness to see the other character's point of view. Therefore a character must pay 1 point of Focus per point of the victor's Outcome.

Sometimes, characters will need to deal with a crowd of people. In which case they use the average Conviction of the crowd as the Difficulty, and can affect a number of people equal to their Passion without penalty.

After that point, the character multiplies their Passion by itself, and can affect that many people at a penalty of -1 Pool. If there are still more people than that, they multiply this number by their Passion, and the penalty goes to a -2 Pool, and so on. This process continues with every multiple thereafter.

Example: *Tom has a Passion of 5, and is making a public address to a crowd of people.*

- *He can affect his Passion of 5 in people without penalty.*
- *He could affect his Passion times itself in people, which is 25 people, at -1 Pool.*
- *He could affect 25 × his Passion of 5 in people, which is 125 people, at -2 Pool.*
- *He could affect 125 × Passion in people, which is 625 people, at -3 Pool, and so on.*

Fear: No matter how powerful and well-armed they are, fear is always part of people's lives. It can drive us to excel, but also to hatred and paranoia.

We don't always react rationally to situations we don't understand or cannot cope with. To represent this, some creatures or situations have a Fear rating which is expressed in the same way as Difficulties, with 1 representing a tense situation and 6 representing the worst horrors dredged from H.P. Lovecraft's writings.

"BUT I DON'T AGREE WITH THAT!"

Players don't normally like to be forced into doing things, but from time to time we all need to remember that our characters are not us, and that sometimes our characters can be convinced of points of view that we don't necessarily agree with.

That being said, the GM should be careful of using highly charismatic NPCs to force the players to do things. This strays dangerously close to being confrontational and can create a negative experience for all concerned.

Our advice is to use the rules for changing opinions sparingly and for dramatic effect rather than as a hammer to railroad the players.

- **Fear 1:** An ambush by a group of armed men, where your group is outnumbered.
- **Fear 2:** Facing off against an enemy that is both more skilled and better armed than you.
- **Fear 3:** A tiger is looking to make you it's next meal and you have no idea where it is.
- **Fear 4:** A swarm of Brood climbing over the walls of your stronghold.
- **Fear 5:** Facing down a Reaper.
- **Fear 6:** Your worst nightmares literally surrounding you in the flesh.

Fear tests are made using Conviction/Resolve against a Difficulty equal to the Fear rating. Characters can get bonuses and penalties to this roll as normal, and notably if the character is in combat, they get +1 Pool bonus to this roll due to adrenaline.

If a character fails the roll, they must flee the source of the fear as quickly as possible. They won't fight, but will defend themselves if cornered.

If a character succeeds with an Outcome of 0, they are shaken and may not advance towards the source of their fear, but otherwise react in a rational manner.

If a character succeeds with an Outcome of 1 or greater, they overcome their fear in this instance and treat any further Fear tests from that source or a related source within reason as 1 less.

You only ever need to test for Fear once in a Scene, unless a new source of Fear with a greater Difficulty presents itself; in which case the character gets 1 bonus Pool because of the adrenaline rush of overcoming fear in the first place which stacks with the bonus from combat.

CUNNING

Cunning defines a character's wit, intuition and ability to think laterally. It's useful in a wide range of situations, representing not only a character's mental faculties but also their ability to take in their environment and to assess the intentions and ability of others.

People with high Cunning tend to be suave, quick witted and often quite humorous when they choose to be. People with low Cunning on the other hand tend to be rigid thinkers, dull and poor conversationalists.

- **Rank 1:** Fairly slow individual.
- **Rank 2:** Not very quick-minded, but can at least time a joke.
- **Rank 3:** Average wit. Observant and witty from time to time.
- **Rank 4:** Shrewd individual, with a quick wit and keen mind.

- **Rank 5:** Very witty individual, who is almost never caught unawares and reacts quickly and effectively to changing circumstance.
- **Rank 6:** "I have a cunning plan".

Cunning can interact with almost any Skill a character possesses. It's used in social situations with great frequency and also serves to define a character's mental acuity in stressful situations, as well as their perceptive abilities.

Unlike the previous two Attributes mentioned, it has little or no influence of a character's secondary Traits but this is generally more than made up for by its massive influence in every other area of the character's expertise.

Gambling: Most forms of gambling don't involve much skill. These types of games are things such as roulette, Odds and Evens, and many forms of dice games. In such instances a simple way of dealing with them is to have the participants agree to an amount of money they have to spend and everyone rolls 1D6. The person who scores the highest gets the pot. If two players jointly roll highest, they split the pot between themselves.

In short, there are numerous ways of dealing with games of pure chance, and ultimately you can come up with dozens of variations on this simple formula.

However, things get a little more complicated when dealing with games which require skill, such as poker and its variants, or Liar's Dice. In this case the characters involved should agree on a pot, and make an appropriate Skill check.

For example, a character trying to count cards might roll Reason/Perception, and a character whose strategy relies on bluffing, might roll Conviction/Panache.

All characters involved roll their respective Dice Pools, and the character with the greatest Outcome wins the pot.

Alternatively, if you want to draw things out more, you can have it that the person who scores the lowest is knocked out, and the remaining players increase the pot, and continue until one player is remaining. However if you're getting to this level of complexity you may just wish to break out a deck of cards and play poker.

Ultimately, gambling shouldn't take up too much time in the game, and the rules should only get this detailed if the gambling has become important to the Story in some respect.

Perception Checks: Perception checks are a special kind of Skill check, which is normally rolled as Cunning/Perception with the Difficulty based on how obscure the thing you're trying to see is. What makes them different from just an average Skill check, is that various other rules will often refer to a Perception Check. In which case you should use the default Cunning/Perception roll, which represents a rapid appraisal of a situation.

DISPOSITION

Like all Skill checks, social checks can have bonuses or penalties applied to them. However, these are usually less to do with how difficult the task is in the first place, and have more to do with how the target regards you.

A target who strongly dislikes you but is not inherently hostile might justify a Difficulty increase of +1, whereas a person who hates the character and will gladly do them harm might increase the Difficulty by +2.

On the other hand, if a person is pleasantly disposed towards you, this could reduce the Difficulty by anywhere between -1 and -2. Remember that Conviction determines the base Difficulty and that modifiers cannot reduce the Difficulty below 1.

However, don't feel locked into this for general search attempts, looking about and so on. After all, you could just as easily justify rolling Reason/Perception, especially when there's more time available to the characters.

Perception checks of various kinds can be impacted by the environment and characters attempting a task in low light conditions should increase the Difficulty by 1, or 2 in near total darkness.

PASSION

Passion is the burning heart of a character. It defines their sense of self and particularly their ability to convey that to others. It's used to sway people to one's beliefs, to inspire others and to bring hope. It serves as the cornerstone of a character's social capabilities as well as a measure of creativity and strength of soul.

People with high Passion tend to be highly talkative, charismatic and persuasive. People with low Passion tend to be cold, distant, or quiet.

- **Rank 1:** Cold, distant or highly introverted individual.
- **Rank 2:** Shy, but can come out of their shell occasionally.
- **Rank 3:** The average person. Talkative, but without a particularly strong presence.
- **Rank 4:** Charismatic individual, with strong personal magnetism.
- **Rank 5:** These individuals tend to dominate the conversations they are in, and sway those they meet easily.
- **Rank 6:** You could be one of the greatest orators in history if you put your mind to it. No-one will ever forget meeting you.

Passion interacts heavily with a character's Skills. Its primary focus is social and is the most common Attribute used in those situations. It's a focused Attribute, rarely being used for purposes outside of this; that said, characters with high Passion can often avoid many situations that require other Attributes and Skills, simply through their ability to persuade others to aid them.

Like Conviction, it's important for generating secondary Traits but doesn't affect quite as many. Its primary influence is in Focus, Motivations and the use of Anima, though it also possesses a fair degree of interaction with the combat rules, but not nearly to the degree of Prowess.

Seduction: Seduction follows the basic rules for social challenges, but normally takes place as an Extended Action as seduction is generally not possible in a single roll.

Several additional factors besides Disposition can modify a Seduction attempt, most prominently the sexual preference of the target, and where appropriate this can increase Difficulties by up to 2 or make an attempt impossible at the attempt of the games master.

Prowess

Prowess is a character's grace and acuity. It represents fine control over their motions, hand-eye coordination, and to a lesser extent speed of action. It's used to allow the character to make accurate strikes with weapons, move gracefully through the environment, avoid traps and hazards, and impress others with acrobatic displays.

People with high Prowess tend to be graceful, quick, and lithe. People with low Prowess tend to be clumsy, slow, and gangly.

- **Rank 1:** No grace whatsoever, a "Bull in a China Shop" would probably be a kind descriptor.
- **Rank 2:** A little clumsy but not entirely hopeless.
- **Rank 3:** Average, and might be able to juggle with practice.
- **Rank 4:** Graceful, rarely misses a beat, and likely very lithe.
- **Rank 5:** Astonishing grace. The character could be an acrobat or professional dancer with little effort.
- **Rank 6:** Poetry in motion; people will happily pay just for the pleasure of watching you move.

Prowess operates with a relatively narrow range of Skills that, while limited, have a great importance to gameplay. Specifically, it serves as the basis for many of a character's combat-related Dice Pools, and when combined with Body is the cornerstone of any character who wishes to be proficient in that area of expertise.

It tends to have a great many applications in avoiding harm as well, being used for dodging and many rolls to avoid otherwise hazardous situations. It has a lesser relevance to secondary Traits than Body or Conviction, but still serves an important role as a tie-breaker in the case of Initiative.

Controlling Vehicles: From time to time, characters will need to drive cars or pilot aircraft and so on. Doing so can be fairly tricky, and the use and operation of complex vehicles normally requires specialised training.

To represent this, a character wishing to control a vehicle must generally possess the Drive or Pilot Quality relevant to that vehicle. These are found on pages 149 and 151 respectively. Of course, characters without these Qualities can attempt to drive these vehicles, but doing so is tricky.

They increase the Difficulty of all their actions based on how complex the vehicle is. In the case of cars, motorbikes and other vehicles whose operation is fairly straightforward, the Difficulty is just increased by 1. More complex or awkward machinery, such as tanks or trucks, increase this Difficulty by 2, or 1 if the character is already proficient at driving normal motor vehicles.

Aircraft, on the other hand, are a totally different issue. The odds of anyone being able to fly an aircraft without appropriate training are slim to none, and the Difficulty of attempting it should be increased by a minimum of 3.

In any case if the character is proficient with the vehicle, no roll is needed to do basic driving or piloting up to an average cruising speed for the vehicle in question. Of course, things don't always go smoothly, and controlling a vehicle is normally handled through a Prowess/Perception roll based on how difficult a manoeuvre is needed. A quick list of Difficulties follows.

- **Controlling the vehicle at its fast speed:** Difficulty 1
- **Controlling the vehicle at maximum speed:** Difficulty 2
- **Controlling the vehicle on rough terrain or through air turbulence:** Difficulty +1

Riding: You don't generally need specialised training to sit on the back of a horse. In most circumstances, as long as one rider in a group is proficient, the other horses will calmly follow the leader. Things are very different however when trying to control an ill-tempered horse, or in circumstances which make the horse nervous, or require rapid responses from the rider. To control a horse properly in these circumstances requires the Riding Quality, and generally has a Difficulty based on the Disposition of the horse.

Most horses have a Disposition of 0 and just like people they can grow to like or dislike their riders or people around them. The greater the bond of trust, the easier a horse is to control. Situations where a character needs to move with the horse, such as in a high speed chase or

jumping barriers, require Prowess/Athletics rolls. However convincing a horse to do something it doesn't want to do, such as riding through fire, or convincing it to jump a barrier that it would not normally attempt is generally a Passion/Authority roll.

Also, using a horse in a foot race or chase allows the character to substitute the horse's attributes for their own, and allows them to make use of the horse's Fast Movement Quality, granting a rider substantial advantages. However, horses can be disadvantaged by certain circumstances, and a horse's Fast Movement can be negated by dense terrain as noted under its description.

Reason

Reason measures a character's ability to coolly analyse situations. It determines, amongst other things, their overall level of intelligence and ability to recall facts and information when necessary. It serves as the root of a character's academic abilities and is also a cornerstone in the ability to put forward a reasoned argument and debate.

People with high Reason tend to seem clever, well informed, wise and persuasive. People with low Reason tend to seem simple, uneducated or crude.

- **Rank 1:** Very poor intellect, and at the very least struggled in school.
- **Rank 2:** May struggle to read books and retains facts but can at least grasp most concepts.
- **Rank 3:** Average; probably read a reasonable number of books and retains a fairly comprehensive range of knowledge.
- **Rank 4:** Impressive intellect; quizzes are a breeze, and advanced mathematics is certainly on the cards.
- **Rank 5:** If you're not a mathematician or a scientist, you probably should be.
- **Rank 6:** The world's just waiting for its next Einstein.

Reason interacts very heavily with a character's Skills. It serves as a basis for every Pool a character might generate regarding knowledge, and is potentially used with everything from Investigation to Crafting.

Though primarily a mental Attribute, like Cunning it can also serve as a social one when necessary. This occurs most commonly when a character wants to use Reason rather than Passion to get their point of view across.

Reason affects no secondary Traits and has limited use in combat. It does affect various supernatural abilities and its general utility makes it a useful Attribute for any character, and an overwhelmingly important one for those who wish to be knowledgeable or skilled in Crafting.

General Knowledge: Sometimes situations will occur where no specific Skill is appropriate, and where the character just wants to remember a particular piece of information, or find out a generic fact about the World. In this case, the character simply rolls Reason/Academics against a Difficulty based on how obscure the knowledge is.

"But my character's not gay!"

Well this brings up an interesting point; can you seduce someone at all that wouldn't normally find you sexually attractive?

The truth is that the answer is very complicated. Sexuality isn't a black and white issue. There are so many subtle factors coming into play that it's usually impossible to say one way or another. Generally, if you're trying to seduce someone that isn't attracted to you, the GM should probably just increase the Difficulty by 2 and let the roll stand.

The reason why we include the option for the GM to veto the roll is because sometimes circumstances, or the individual, simply make seduction impossible. Even if the individual could be interested, it might be buried far too deep to ever bring forward in a reasonable time span.

Also remember that Nemissaries are shape-shifting entities, which tends to blur the line even further. In the case of those Nemissaries skilled in the Song of Flesh, the outwards appearance of gender is particularly trivial, a fact which often leads to the development of a rather interesting mindset.

"How cunning is it?"

On the subject of cunning plans, a player is sooner or later going to get the bright idea that the only Trait they need to dominate combat is Prowess. On the surface of it this is an accurate observation. Since Prowess forms the character's basic combat pools, it is difficult to best them directly if they specialise in this area. The point there is directly.

GMs should be well aware that there are numerous ways to best a combat monster. After all, Prowess won't help a character if they roll badly and a single blow from an otherwise less skilled adversary kills them outright.

Less directly, if a character sacrifices other Attributes, they can quickly fall prey to clever social attacks such as intimidation, or simply convincing them to aid their enemy.

- **Difficulty 1:** Fairly trivial; "Where's the nearest bar?"
- **Difficulty 2:** Useful information; "What's the name of the local Breaker chief?"
- **Difficulty 4:** Obscure but possible knowledge; "Where's the nearest fuel dump we could get access to?"
- **Difficulty 6:** Highly obscure knowledge; "What date was the Breaker chief born on?" or "What exact date did the Reaper 'Blacklight' first appear?".

Alternatively, a character can also make this roll to simply state a fact about the world so long as it doesn't contradict with anything already established by the story, and the GM should use the Difficulties above for checks to establish this sort of information.

Skills

While Attributes make up the base of your character, Skills represent all the various tricks and abilities your character has picked up through their life. They are a measure of how likely the character is to succeed at any given task, rather than their raw potential.

Unlike attributes, Skills are rated 1 to 4, and never possess ratings beyond this, as there is a limit to how skilled an individual can be.

- **Rank 1:** Intermediate ability, with probably several months experience with the Skill and could probably eke out a living.
- **Rank 2:** Competent; the character could probably earn a comfortable living using their Skill and has likely had a year or two of experience.
- **Rank 3:** Experienced; the character is certainly impressive and probably can make an exceptional wage from their Skill. They are either a prodigy or a professional with several years of experience.
- **Rank 4:** A master of the Skill, the character likely has spent much of their life practicing this Skill, and probably doesn't need to work any longer if they've reached this stage.

Natural Skills

Natural Skills are common to everyone and can be learned without any external training. Collectively, they are the Skills that are used most in our day to day lives, and every character possesses a rating of at least 1 in all these Skills. Higher ratings of proficiency are less common, and only exceptional individuals usually advance these Skills above 2 or 3.

Athletics: This is the general trained physical ability of a person. Jumping, running, throwing and feats of strength are tested off this Skill. Athletics is also used for riding a mount.

In the real world, this Skill is fairly common, possessed at higher ranks usually by athletes, and by the time of Sins has become a necessity of life, with most people possessing at least a rating of 2.

- **Rank 1:** Average person with little or no time for exercise. In setting, an extremely pampered resident of a settlement
- **Rank 2:** A well-toned individual that keeps themselves fit, but doesn't dedicate their life to athletic pursuits. In setting, the average nomad.
- **Rank 3:** Semi-professional athlete or someone who dedicates a significant portion of their time to athletic pursuits.
- **Rank 4:** Impressive professional athlete or someone who excels and spends most of their life living outdoors and exercising.

Examples

- **Running a marathon;** Body, Difficulty 0 for a relatively short and easy track, as high as 3 for a gruelling 40 mile run over difficult terrain.
- **Chasing someone down;** Body or Prowess, Opposed Action against the target's Body or Prowess/Athletics.
- **Sprinting through a wood;** Prowess, Difficulty 1, or 2 if the woods were particularly dense.
- **Impressing the ladies (trying to at least!);** Prowess, Difficulty 0. This type of task is more about generating Outcome than trying to overcome a Difficulty
- **Leaping a gap;** Body, Difficulty 1 for a few metres, escalating to as high as Difficulty 6 for an epic 10m jump.
- **Holding on to a ledge for dear life;** Conviction, Difficulty 2, perhaps Difficulty 3 for doing it for more than a minute or so.
- **Throwing knives;** Prowess, Difficulty 1, or 2 for a reasonably tricky target such as hitting a bull's-eye.
- **Trick riding;** Prowess, Difficulty 0 as this task is generally about how well you succeed rather than beating a Difficulty. That said, dangerous tricks should have a Difficulty of at least 1, and that Difficulty should escalate quickly the more complex things get.
- **Jumping to or from a moving horse;** Prowess, Difficulty 2, or 3 if the horse is particularly large or the character particularly small.

Authority: Command, respect, intimidation; these things flow from the Authority Skill. It measures a character's ability to impose their will on other individuals

directly and can represent either a quiet aura of command or an effective bully.

This Skill is found in the hands of those who have power and want to keep it. The shy and the weak-willed certainly don't possess it, but those who would do more than just fit in and thus command their social groups must.

In the 21st Century, it was found it in the same individuals who possessed Panache, but more specifically in the hands of those who had direct authority such as leaders, politicians and police. Higher rank in the Skill would suit military officers and authoritative leaders.

In Sins, it exists primarily in the hands of community leaders, sheriffs, gang leaders and those who have the presence to diffuse situations without resorting to actual violence.

- **Rank 1:** You can handle yourself okay so long as no-one really challenges you or forces you to back it up.
- **Rank 2:** You tend to get the respect of others, even if you are not necessarily liked.
- **Rank 3:** Few people would pick a fight with you and you can easily command the attention of those around you.
- **Rank 4:** You can break people without ever resorting to violence. Leadership is second nature to you and you are always at least respected if not feared.

Examples

- **Intimidating someone;** Conviction, standard Social Action.
- **Making yourself heard in the din of combat;** Passion, Difficulty 2.
- **Stopping violence from escalating in a brawl;** Passion or Conviction dependent upon the situation, Difficulty as high as 4 depending upon how bad things have gotten.
- **Convincing people not to bother you at a party;** Conviction, Difficulty 1.
- **Working to build a rapport with soldiers under your command;** Passion or Cunning, Sustained Action with a Difficulty of half the average Conviction of your men and a Threshold of the number of soldiers, each roll taking a day or week depending upon the needs of the story.
- **Convincing a terrified comrade to pull themselves together;** Passion, Difficulty of the original Fear rating.
- **Winning a shouting match in a bar;** Passion, Opposed Action against their Passion/Authority.

Logic: Strategy, planning and analysis; these tasks fall under the Logic Skill. It defines a character's ability to analyse a situation and to provide definite answers. It can be used to work out the motivations of opponents, to figure out clues in an investigation, and to decipher the workings of devices and technology.

Like all core Skills, most people possess Logic to some degree but few specialise. In the world of the 21st Century it was most likely possessed by teachers, mathematicians, scientists, and those who enjoy riddles. By the time of Sins, this Skill tends to be possessed by those rare people who have lived to old age, community leaders, experienced soldiers and engineers.

- **Rank 1:** Crossword puzzles are doable but you sometimes struggle for answers. Likely you don't do well with complex puzzles.
- **Rank 2:** Characters do fairly well with puzzles at these stages and can work out most situations given time.

- **Rank 3:** Chess is a breeze and complex equations and mathematics come easily. Certainly a character with this rank could support themselves comfortably as an educator and are rarely ever caught short in terms of analytical ability.
- **Rank 4:** Few people can match you, and strategy is second nature. Likely you could circumvent most problems through careful thought and there are few concepts you are incapable of grasping.

Examples

- **Playing a strategy game;** Reason, Opposed roll with an opponent, or for a quick resolution, a Difficulty equal to half the opponent's Reason.
- **Working out a plan of attack;** Reason, Difficulty 1, or higher depending upon how entrenched the enemy is or how complex the situation. Working out a winning strategy for two evenly sized armies but where the enemy has superior firepower might be Difficulty 2. Working out a similarly useful plan where you are outnumbered 10 to 1 might be as high as Difficulty 4 or 5.
- **Making decent orders in a military situation under fire;** Cunning, Difficulty 2, maybe 3 if the situation were particularly desperate.
- **Working out a criminal's next move from available data;** Reason, Difficulty 1 with Outcome granting clues to what the criminal might do following that.
- **Reverse engineering a Pre-Fall device;** Reason, Sustained action with a threshold and Difficulty based on the complexity and obscurity of the device. Difficulty of 0 for well-known devices with well understood functions such as guns, going to as high as 5 for completely unknown electronic devices. Thresholds should be based approximately on how large and complex the object is. A WW1 era rifle might be 3, whereas an AK-47 might be 5. An object as large as a car or a generator could have a Threshold as high as 10, and working out the operations of a vast device such as a power plant might be 50 or more.

Panache: The ability to charm others, to persuade them of your point of view and to adapt to social situations falls under the purview of the Panache Skill. It measures a character's ability to be a suave, charismatic speaker or to be a charming rogue, always with a ready quip.

Panache, as an ability, is not linked to appearance. It's found in the hands of those who easily dominate their environment, becoming the life of the party. Higher ranks were reasonably common in the world we know, and mostly appear in those who make socialising the primary focus of their day to day lives.

In the world of Sins it has become less common and tends to exist at higher ranks only in the communities that have the relative safety necessary for prolonged socialising. Despite this, a fair few wanderers have a great deal of proficiency with this Skill, using their ability to charm or con others as the cornerstone of their lives.

- **Rank 1:** It's not that you're terrible at getting your point across, but you tend to find yourself overshadowed by more prominent individuals.
- **Rank 2:** You tend to get your way and are good at making yourself the centre of attention and steering conversations where you wish.
- **Rank 3:** Most things you want tend to come to pass, and you can usually talk your way through any problem that stands before you. Few people can resist your advances and fewer still can deny you anything.
- **Rank 4:** You can easily make a living off your charm and wit alone. Even in a harsh world like Sins you can convince others to help you and talk rings around your foes, quickly drawing others to your defence.

Examples

- **Making a good impression;** Passion, Difficulty 0, may be higher if the targets are predisposed not to like you.
- **Conning someone;** Cunning, Social action against their Cunning rather than Conviction.
- **Swaying someone's opinion in a debate;** Reason, standard Social action.
- **Making an impassioned plea;** Passion, standard Social Action but applying to a crowd rather than an individual.
- **Making someone feel stupid;** Cunning, standard Social Action.
- **Working to build up social credibility;** Cunning, Sustained Social Action with a Difficulty of 0 or higher if you are not well liked, and a Threshold of 6. Rolls take place over days or weeks at the GM's discretion.
- **Restoring someone's reputation;** Reason, Sustained action as above, but a Difficulty 1 to 2 points higher depending upon how badly the other person screwed up.

Perception: The core abilities of sight, hearing and touch are all covered by Perception; it represents your ability to perceive the world around you, and to a lesser extent notice the moods and attitudes of other people.

In the 21st Century this Skill is uncommon as people in the developed world tend to be somewhat isolationist.

It is however a must for certain professions, particularly those of a military or investigative bent. Like most survival-orientated Skills, Perception is common in the hands of characters in the Sins setting, and is an important tool in day to day survival.

- **Rank 1:** Can find car keys in a pinch but likely would struggle with anything more complicated; certainly not an expert at reading people.
- **Rank 2:** Individuals with this rank tend to be observant of their surroundings and pick up on the more subtle cues of their companions.
- **Rank 3:** Professional investigators and people who make their living out of watching the world. Very little is missed, and the character is exceptionally difficult to surprise.
- **Rank 4:** Keen-eyed, these characters miss little or nothing. They notice the smallest details of a scene and are extremely difficult to deceive, reading the moods of those around them with casual ease.

Examples

- **Sizing up the competition;** Cunning, Difficulty 0. Success gives a general indication, and Outcome gives more.
- **Searching a room;** Reason, Difficulty 0, higher if objects are hidden or if very few clues remain as to what the character is looking for.
- **Listening in on a conversation;** Cunning, 0 from across a table, as high as 3 for a whispered conversation on the far side of a room.
- **Determining someone's profession from their appearance;** Reason, Difficulty 1, 2 if very few indicators are present.
- **Determining the sequence of events leading up to a murder;** Reason, Difficulty 1 for a common killing, 2 for a staged death, or as high as 4 if a killer has gone to specific effort to obscure the crime scene.
- **Working out that someone's lying to you;** Cunning, this is generally a Opposed Action with your opponent; though for quicker resolution the Difficulty should be half the opponent's Cunning.
- **Reading another person's intentions from across a room;** Reason, Difficulty 3.

Resolve: There comes a time when everyone must say no, stand for their principles or keep going against impossible odds or terrible pain. To govern these things, characters turn to the Resolve Skill. It defines a character's ability to make full use of their innate discipline and willpower. Without it, even the most strong-willed individuals will falter.

Politicians and Panache

Politics differs across the world, and one of the things you'll quickly notice is that the description makes no reference to politicians. This comes from the writers of this book being based in Britain where politicians tend not to be charismatic. Generally, if politicians had Panache, more people would probably vote for them.

The ability to twist one's words and to avoid ever saying something concrete is generally handled through Cunning and Logic rather than Passion and Panache, whereas inspiring speeches or pressing mindless rhetoric definitely do fall under the purview of Panache.

The Importance of Resolve

Resolve is an unusual Skill primarily because it normally interacts only with Body and Conviction. This can make it seem like a Skill with fairly limited applications. In reality, Resolve is extremely important as it interacts with numerous situations that aren't immediately obvious.

For a start, it's difficult to resist fear or social actions without Resolve, and to player characters in particular it represents a large part of their ability to resist the darker impulses of a Nemissary's nature, and to fight various supernatural impulses.

In the modern world, few people put in the time and effort necessary to advance this Skill. It was found only in the hands of those with deep convictions, boundless faith or the rare individuals that had once succumbed to, met and then overcame their temptations.

By the time of Sins, in a world where simply choosing to live each day can be a hard decision, Resolve has become an absolute necessity for many. Inevitably, those who have the hardest lives have the highest ratings in this Skill; slaves who refused to be broken, those who defied the Reapers, and people that genuinely believe in a better tomorrow.

- **Rank 1:** New Year's Resolutions are a real problem but general commitments don't pose much of an issue.
- **Rank 2:** You can go cold turkey on things if you need to, and you are difficult at best to keep down.
- **Rank 3:** Most would describe you as having an iron will, and few things can genuinely tempt you.
- **Rank 4:** You are almost impossible to sway and torture would likely have little effect on you.

Examples

- **Setting your own broken bone;** Conviction, Difficulty 3.
- **Willingly holding on to a broken glass window;** Conviction, Difficulty 4, or 1 to save your own life.
- **Withstanding torture;** Conviction, Opposed roll with the torturer.
- **Meditating;** Conviction, Difficulty 1.

Learnt Skills

These Skills are not things that everyone possesses. Generally they are taught by a tutor rather than picked up through trial and error. Ratings of 0 are entirely possible and even likely for many individuals.

Those who have Learnt Skills tend to dabble in a few of them, possessing ratings of 1 or 2, and only excel in a select area, often having much higher ratings in a single Learnt Skill. Remember that characters cannot use a Learnt Skill if they possess no ranks in it.

Crafts: From the earliest humans to the modern day, our ability to construct tools has been one of the most defining aspects of our species. In a world like that of Sins, this ability takes on the same critical importance as it did to our distant ancestors. As a Skill, Crafts defines a character's ability to both manufacture goods for themselves and to assess the quality of those things made by others.

Throughout history the degree to which people possess this Skill has waxed and waned. Historically, many people had it at low levels simply to construct and maintain their own dwellings. By the 21st Century, high levels in this Skill were rare as more and more construction was given over to machines and the old arts were transformed into little more than a hobby.

With the march of years this Skill has become increasingly common, particularly amongst those with the spark of creativity or the necessary intellect and discipline to make their livelihood reconstructing wonders of the past age.

- **Rank 0:** You couldn't build a prefabricated bookcase and if asked to evaluate someone's work they'd get more sense out of a cat.
- **Rank 1:** You understand the basics of crafting, you can follow instructions and build simple constructs with ease.
- **Rank 2:** You are quite capable of altering or improving upon existing designs and able to follow far more involved and complex instructions.
- **Rank 3:** Capable of working now without instruction or tools, you can both innovate new designs or copy existing ones simply by observing their functions.
- **Rank 4:** You are a master of your art and there is little in this world you cannot build. Even the most sophisticated machines of the past will give up their secrets to you with time and care.

Examples

- **Evaluating someone's work;** Cunning, Difficulty 1.
- **Building a simple shelter;** Reason, Difficulty 1.
- **Crafting new items;** Various, see the equipment rules on page 187.
- **Repairing an item;** Prowess, Difficulty 1 normally, as high as Difficulty 5 if the item is in particularly bad condition.
- **Picking a lock;** Prowess, Difficulty 3 normally, modified up or down for each step of Quality.
- **Understanding the workings of an item;** Reason, Difficulty 2 for simple machinery, up to 6 for something as complex as a computer network or rail-cannon.

Keening: A rare trait amongst humans, this Skill defines a character's capacity to listen to and understand the Broodsong and to make sense of other subtle supernatural energies in the world.

With Keening, characters can gain a glimmer of understanding into the actions of the Brood and detect the presence of Anima and the emotions of others. With enough Skill it's even possible to detect the echoes of the dead and fragments of knowledge from the past or even the future.

This Skill was almost entirely unknown in the 21st Century; perhaps a handful of individuals in the world possessed any rating at all in it, and those that did were often driven mad by their ability, unable to make sense of the voices or strange music they found they could perceive.

- **Rank 0:** Mercifully you remain deaf to the horrors around you, but in this world innocence can kill.
- **Rank 1:** Your nerves occasionally go on edge long before the Brood actually begin an attack.
- **Rank 2:** From time to time you hear them; their screaming voices at the edge of your mind.
- **Rank 3:** Sometimes the Broodsong shows you what they want. You see danger before it's too late but the faces of lost loved ones haunt you.
- **Rank 4:** If you survive this long, you understand them too well. Madness or glory await.

Examples

- **Detecting someone's Aura;** Cunning, see page 154.

- **Working out the Resonance of an area;** Reason, see page 56.
- **Detecting the presence of Broodspawn;** Cunning, Difficulty of 0. You detect any zone of Ambient Synergy which falls within 1 km per point of Outcome.
- **Communing with a Shard;** Passion, Difficulty 1 for Nemissaries or Difficulty 3 for humans.
- **Working out a Shard's disposition;** Reason, Difficulty 2, or 3 with very few facts.
- **Working out whether someone's a Nemissary or not;** Reason, Difficulty 3.

Knowledge: The accumulation of academics, history and lore is expressed through the Knowledge Skill. It offers a wide range of capabilities and defines a character's general literacy and breadth of available knowledge.

Amongst the educated of the 21st Century it was a Skill that was often highly rated. Even the average population usually possessed a rating of at least 1 and more commonly 2, representing their average level of literacy and understanding of the world.

Things are not so bright after the Fall, and very few individuals now possess this Skill. Those that do often find themselves held in high esteem by their communities and are seen as great authorities on knowledge, whether they truly are or not. That said, there are specialised groups that keep traditions of literacy and learning alive, meaning that whilst high ratings in this Skill are rare, they are not completely unheard of.

- **Rank 0:** You can read and write to a basic extent and do simple math.
- **Rank 1:** You are fluent in language and have a fairly good understanding of the world around you.
- **Rank 2:** You are knowledgeable on a few topics and can hold your own in most discussions.
- **Rank 3:** Your knowledge is genuinely deep. Even in areas you don't study you likely know a few useful titbits of information here and there
- **Rank 4:** You are an authority on almost everything and can certainly pen a book on any subject you desired.

Examples

- **Deciphering a Pre-Fall document;** Reason, Difficulty 1.
- **Remember an obscure historical point;** Reason, Difficulty 2.
- **Pick out a clue amongst a mass of documents;** Cunning, Difficulty 2.

Just to be clear

Just in case it needs to be said, we're not trying to say that Keening is the cause of mental illness in the modern day or the Sins setting; just that from a 21st Century perspective, the abilities of Keening could be very easily misinterpreted as a psychosis.

- **Argue a point of academic knowledge;** Passion, Social Action.
- **Break a code through patient effort;** Reason, Sustained action of Difficulty 1 to 3 depending upon complexity, Threshold of 1 per page in the document. Rolls take 1 day.
- **Break a code through a flash of inspiration;** Cunning, Difficulty 3 to 6 depending upon the complexity of the document.

Medicine: Whether to save lives or to harm, Medicine defines a character's understanding of human physiology, both how to treat it and to destroy it. It also measures a relative understanding of chemicals, drugs and herbal medicines and to a lesser extent the manufacture of such substances.

In the 21st Century, Medicine scores at rank 1 were reasonably common, but anything higher was rare. Even doctors generally only had this Skill to about rank 2, or 3 in the case of experienced practitioners, and only a handful of people ever possessed it at rank 4.

By the time of the Sins setting, ratings at 1 or even 2 are still fairly common, representing people's understanding of how to patch and look after basic wounds. Ratings higher than this are almost unheard of. The sophisticated knowledge necessary for surgery or the creation of advanced drugs is almost unknown outside of specialist institutions, and any community with a doctor of any appreciable Skill will consider themselves blessed.

- **Rank 0:** You might know the recovery position and a few simple tricks but nothing more advanced. Putting a first aid kit in your hands is potentially very unwise.
- **Rank 1:** You can sort out stitches and bandages and know the basics of care.
- **Rank 2:** Setting a broken bone isn't beyond you and you find yourself pretty knowledgeable in areas surrounding the human body.
- **Rank 3:** You can easily be a professional doctor and likely your care is amongst the very best.
- **Rank 4:** You are capable of the most advanced surgeries and virtually nothing in the medical sphere of knowledge remains unknown to you.

Examples

- **Determining the Quality of Care;** Reason, see page 147.
- **Diagnosing an illness;** Reason, Difficulty 0 for common illnesses and as high as 4 for particularly obscure ones.
- **Performing First Aid;** Cunning, see page 146.
- **Making a poison;** Reason, Difficulty based on the Virulence of the toxin, see page 192.
- **Baffling a target with medical knowledge;** Cunning, standard Social Action.
- **Working to find a cure for a disease;** Reason, Sustained Action, Difficulty equal to the Virulence of the disease (see page 298), Threshold equal to the disease's Virulence × 10. Rolls normally are made over weeks, or days if dramatically appropriate.
- **Removing a bullet;** Prowess, Difficulty 1.

Stealth: Keeping a low profile is a hard thing to master; not being seen at all is a different order of Skill entirely. Stealth allows characters to move without being detected, representing the knowledge of how to abate sound and to move from shadow to shadow without being detected.

True mastery of this Skill has always been rare. In the 21st Century this Skill was usually only found in the hands of professional killers, successful thieves, and private investigators. Some groups such as Spec Ops or wilderness survival experts also possess this Skill and tended to put it towards more laudable applications.

In the Sins setting, it is a somewhat more common ability, possessed normally by nomads, mercenaries, drifters, scavengers and other individuals where avoiding a battle, even temporarily, is of grave importance.

- **Rank 0:** You've played Hide and Seek as a child but never advanced much beyond it.
- **Rank 1:** You can go unnoticed in darkness and you are reasonable at not drawing attention to yourself.
- **Rank 2:** You can easily surprise people and find that you can actually move some distance in real silence.
- **Rank 3:** Few people can spot you and the darkness is your friend.
- **Rank 4:** Silence is a gift you've learned well. Even the best would rarely find you,

Examples

- **Picking someone's pocket;** Prowess, Opposed action against their Cunning/Perception.
- **Remaining hidden;** Cunning, Difficulty 0 in darkness or shadow, 1 with reasonable cover, 2 in plain sight. Outcome+1 sets the Difficulty for others to detect you.
- **Shadowing someone;** Cunning, Opposed action against the target's Cunning/Perception.
- **Performing a card trick;** Prowess, Difficulty 1.
- **Distracting someone;** Cunning, Difficulty of half the target's Cunning. Success makes picking their pocket one Difficulty easier for another thief.
- **Getting the drop on someone;** Cunning or Prowess, Opposed Action against the target's Cunning/Perception.
- **Moving silently across a room;** Prowess, Difficulty 1, or 2 or even 3 for particularly noisy surfaces.
- **Working out a good plan of entry;** Reason, Difficulty from 0 to 3 based on a building's security.

Survival: Nature is a cruel, uncaring creature, but for those who understand it, it can provide everything a human being needs to survive. To make good on the circumstances of the natural world, a character needs the Survival Skill. It defines their ability to find shelter, navigate through hostile environments and to avoid safe food and water.

In the 21st Century, this was a Skill largely reserved for dedicated hobbyists, soldiers and professionals living in the wild. Ratings higher than 1 were almost unheard of in the general population and most would-be experts possessed ratings of around 2 or 3.

After the Fall, the situation couldn't be more different. Almost every human being alive possesses a rating of at least 1 in this Skill, with even town and city dwellers possessing a ranking of 2, and Nomads reaching at least 3. Higher ranks are not uncommon either, especially for long term nomads and scavengers, and ratings of 3 or even 4 are not uncommon.

- **Rank 0:** You're more of a city dweller and while you may be able to pitch a tent, where to find food and water is a mystery to you.
- **Rank 1:** You understand the basics of survival, such as where to make camp and how to find clean water.
- **Rank 2:** You are almost never lost and could survive for an extended time in the wilderness.
- **Rank 3:** Alone in the wilds you have no need to return to civilisation.
- **Rank 4:** You could keep not only yourself but a large party alive under the most extreme conditions.

Examples

- **Tracking someone;** Cunning, Difficulty 1 under ideal conditions or as high as 3 for tracking in falling snow or sand.

- **Finding edible food;** Reason, Difficulty 2 in most of the world, 1 in particularly fertile areas, or 3 or even 4 in wastelands.
- **Crafting basic survival gear;** Cunning, Sustained Action with a Difficulty based on available tools; 0 if plentiful materials are available and as high as 3 in a desert. Threshold of 3 times the number of tools needed. Rolls take place over an hour.
- **Obscuring your trail;** Cunning, Difficulty 0, Successes determine the Difficulty of tracking attempts.
- **Creating a false trail;** Prowess, Difficulty 1. Detecting the false trail has a Difficulty equal to Outcome +1.
- **Stripping a carcass;** Prowess, Difficulty 0.

COMBAT SKILLS

The brutal struggle of life and death has always been a part of the human condition. Combat Skills are the ways in which mankind has learned to both kill and defend themselves. These Skills also go beyond the simple knowledge of how to kill and represent a general understanding of the topics involved with their fighting style such as history, maintenance, and general trivia.

Archery: A highly specialised area of knowledge, the Archery Skill determines the ability to maintain and utilise a bow to its full deadly potential. It also implies the basic knowledge of the construction of bows and arrows, though only to the most basic quality.

In the 21st Century this Skill was extremely rare, but tended to be rated highly amongst those unusual individuals that possessed it. In Sins, this Skill has taken on a new life and has become an effective tool in the survival of many communities. The fact that arrows stop the Brood's ability to regenerate mean that many communities find them extremely effective for defence; particularly for keeping down Broodspawn felled by the more easily used firearms.

- **Rank 0:** Your experience with bows is theoretical at best.
- **Rank 1:** You might not be able to hunt reliably, but you are still a reasonable shot.
- **Rank 2:** In times of crisis you are a valued person. Hunting is definitely something you could do for a living.
- **Rank 3:** Quite aside from the Brood, you are deadly with a bow. Even experienced gunslingers would think twice before offending you.
- **Rank 4:** You are quite terrifyingly deadly with your chosen weapon, felling targets at great range and with incredible accuracy.

Examples

- **Using a bow in combat;** Prowess, see page 106.
- **Attempting to fire an arrow as far as you can;** Body, Difficulty 0, Outcome determines how far the arrow will fall as dramatically appropriate.
- **Restringing a bow;** Prowess, Difficulty 1.
- **Making arrows from available components;** Reason, Sustained Action. See crafting rules, page 187.
- **Judging the range of a shot;** Reason, Difficulty 1.
- **Splitting an arrow;** Prowess, Difficulty 4. (It's actually physically impossible to split an arrow from end to end, but you can get your arrow to go into another.)

Fight: Visceral, personal and dangerous, Fight is the art of using your body and everything around you as a weapon. It is a Skill linked to speed, aggression and violence. It can also be a measure of a character's ability to defend themselves and to overcome their opponent through non-violent means. It implies a knowledge of the body's physique and how to maintain appropriate fitness.

Uncommon in the 21st Century but certainly not unheard of, Fight was a Skill most violent individuals possessed at least at 1. It was usually only found in higher ratings with professional fighters and members of various military organisations.

In the world of Sins, it's decidedly more common but usually seen as a last resort. Ultimately, normal people don't want to be close to the Broodspawn and so this Skill remains fairly unusual. In some ways, little has changed and the gladiators and soldiers of the current age are still the ones most likely to possess this Skill.

- **Rank 0:** Maybe you've been in a scuffle or two but you've no real Skill at the art.
- **Rank 1:** You certainly know how to throw a punch and could likely defend yourself in a pinch.
- **Rank 2:** No-one particularly likes the idea of going a round with you and you could certainly make a reasonable living off your talents.
- **Rank 3:** You are an incredibly skilled and dangerous individual. Even unarmed combat with the Brood doesn't concern you.
- **Rank 4:** You might be Bruce Lee reborn; it's not so much of an issue of surviving combats, but whether you allow your opponents to.

Examples

- **Engaging in close combat with an opponent;** Prowess, see page 106.
- **Performing a kata;** Prowess or Conviction, Difficulty 1.
- **Judging an opponent's combat ability;** Reason, Difficulty 0 if you've seen the person fighting, 3 if you have not.
- **Teaching someone the basics of fighting;** Cunning, Difficulty equal to 6 minus their Prowess.

Marksmanship: Shooting with great accuracy and knowledge of the care and maintenance of ranged weaponry falls under the Marksmanship Skill. This includes all direct ranged weaponry such as firearms, crossbows, grenade launchers and the like, but does not include specialised areas of knowledge linked to archery.

In the 21st Century this Skill was rare in most countries but fairly common such as places like the United States and the war-torn regions of the world. Generally, it was only possessed in high ratings by elite paramilitary groups, and the vast bulk of ranged weapon users were definitely amateurs.

In the Sins setting, the Skill is more common but not by much. Only dedicated combatants tend to possess the Skill, as little ammunition is available for target practice and training, meaning communities tend to cluster what ranged weapons they have into the hands of certain highly trained individuals.

- **Rank 0:** You've maybe seen people fire guns, but you have no training. It would be frankly irresponsible to expect you to competently use a firearm.
- **Rank 1:** You can shoot with reasonable accuracy and understand all the basic safety requirements of your weapons.
- **Rank 2:** You are a damn fine shot, and make an excellent soldier or hunter.
- **Rank 3:** You make people nervous. No-one likes the idea of facing you down.
- **Rank 4:** God help anybody who is in your crosshairs; you are a world class sharp-shooter, and no-one in their right mind picks a fight with you at range if they can help it.

Examples

- **Using a firearm in combat;** Prowess, see page 106.
- **Target shooting;** Prowess, Difficulty 1 with Outcome giving better grouping or setting score. Optionally, use ranged combat rules from the Combat chapter.
- **Performing maintenance on a weapon;** Reason, Difficulty 1.
- **Counting how many rounds your opponent has left;** Cunning, Difficulty 3 for clips, 2 for cylinder.
- **Identifying make and model of a gun;** Reason, Difficulty 1, 2 for obscure makes.

Melee: The ability to utilise weaponry to its full and deadly effect is covered by the Melee Skill. It represents an understanding of the various forms that personal close combat weaponry takes and how to utilise it effectively. Whereas Fight can utilise any weapon in a generic sense, only those skilled in Melee can bring out the full potential of various weapons. Its advanced practitioners are particularly deadly, using bladed or blunt weaponry to cut down opponents before they have a chance to react, and in some cases make relatively poor weapons such as knives into exceedingly deadly ones.

In our own time, Melee is a rare Skill, usually found only in the military and in highly specialised athletic competitions. Even then, its practical ratings were limited by the general rarity of its use in the modern age.

In Sins things are very different. Bladed weapons and spears in particular have become commonplace, leading to a resurgence in this Skill. Whilst few people want to get near to the Brood, severing portions of their anatomy or impaling them on spears are amongst the few ways to permanently stop the Broodspawn, meaning that small communities are often totally reliant on hardened individuals with this Skill. Such people often possess this Skill at ratings of 2 or even 3, and many members of a community will be at least competent with a rating of 1.

- **Rank 0:** "Pointy end goes in the other man" is about the limits of your knowledge.
- **Rank 1:** You can handle yourself with a blade, and know enough to keep your opponents at bay and to attack when an opportunity presents itself.
- **Rank 2:** Whether it's with blade or spear, you are not a good man to cross.
- **Rank 3:** You're more than a match for the average Broodspawn. Few melee combats present a challenge to you.
- **Rank 4:** You are a true master with a weapon and most would be dead before they could even draw on you. If you had lived in another age, people would still whisper your name.

Examples

- **Striking someone with a weapon;** Prowess, see combat rules, page 106.

- **Repairing a blade;** Reason, Difficulty 0 to just get rid of burrs, 1 for rust. Alternatively, see crafting rules on page 187 for effectively making a new weapon.
- **Holding a stance;** Conviction, Difficulty 1.
- **Appraising the value or quality of a weapon;** Reason, Difficulty 1.

Specialities

Specialities represent the areas of knowledge your character possesses that are not covered by the core Skill list. They are both broader in their application but also more specialised in nature than Skills.

Guidelines Expanded

The Core Rules touch on the guidelines for Specialities in brief. Essentially there are three core principles which apply as to whether a Speciality is valid or not. These checks and balances are included because players are allowed to create their own Specialities in the course of the game so it's important to lay down some basic limits to prevent abuse.

The first rule is that a Speciality must always be more specific than a Skill. What we mean by this is that the area of knowledge covered by the Speciality must be more focused than any of the existing Skills.

Take Crafts for example. It deals with making items, repairing them and appraising them, so a Speciality would have to be more specific than this. Taking Crafts as a theme, you would be perfectly within your rights to choose "Appraisal", "Physical Construction" or "Repair" as Specialities.

You couldn't take "Manufacturing" as a Speciality because it would be too close to the actual Skill "Crafts". This is because you could argue that Manufacturing as a Speciality would apply to all three of the ways in which the Skill can be used.

The second rule is a Speciality cannot be designed to apply to one specific roll. The reason is that these types of Speciality are either too focused and unlikely to ever get used or if worded cleverly could be used with extreme frequency. For instance, you can't choose "Initiative" as a Speciality as this is an actual type of roll in its own right. You could though choose "Ambushes" and this would affect Initiative – the important part being it would only affect Initiative under certain circumstances.

The third rule, and perhaps the most important, is that the group and GM should agree that a Speciality is appropriate. If the rest of the party think that it's unbalanced then it probably is. You should work with them to come up with a better option in the same vein.

Remember that the GM can always veto a Speciality but should never strip them from a player. In the event that a Speciality becomes disruptive in a game, the solution is not to punish the player but to help them make a new more appropriate Speciality.

Secondary Traits

Secondary Traits help to round out characters. As explained in the basic rules, Secondary Traits advance as a character's Core Traits are enhanced. They cover a range of areas and this chapter explains in more detail the various aspects of their use and implementation in the game.

Motivations

The rules for Motivations are covered in the Core Rules. Below, you will find an expanded list of Foundations and some additional ideas on how to deal with Drives.

Expanded Foundations

Foundations are the most basic element of a Motivation. As already discussed in the Core Rules, they should be simple and direct, primarily serving as an emotional anchor for the Motivation. Most things players are likely to suggest are probably appropriate. The only Foundations that would generally not be considered appropriate are ones linked to sloth or apathy, as a character would never actually be able to fulfil them; the act of doing something would conflict with the Motivation.

Expanded Drives

Drives require more detail than Foundations as they are the things that characters practically work towards in order to gain Focus and fulfil their Motivations. They should reflect the Foundation of a Motivation and should fall within certain reasonable limits.

They shouldn't be absolutely impossible to complete, though ludicrously difficult Drives are perfectly fine; particularly considering that there are pros and cons to weigh when actually resolving Motivations.

They also shouldn't be too generic or designed in such a way as to abuse the system. For instance, taking a Motivation to walk to the shop is downright silly. On the other hand, taking a Motivation that can be easily completed is fine as long as it fits; for instance, Hate (Kill my Brother) is fine – after all there are downsides to completing a Motivation.

Example Motivations

Here you will find a list of example Motivations for characters. They are listed first by Foundation and then potential Drives which attach to that Foundation.

Charity: Found an orphanage; give my possessions to make a community a better place; offer help where help is needed.

Determination: Triumph against impossible odds; uphold my oath no matter the cost; recover everything that was lost to me during The Fall.

Faith: Restore the faith I have lost; help people to understand God's love; punish those who stand against my faith.

Fear: Never put down roots; trust nobody; surround myself with allies.

Hate: Kill my wife's murderer; destroy the Breakers; end the practice of slavery.

Hope: Find my lost children; restore this community to its former glory; convince other Nemissaries to make the world a better place.

Jealousy: Destroy the town of New Babylon; seduce my friend's wife; be the wealthiest man in town.

Joy: Find rare music; see people genuinely happy; make Old Joe smile.

Love: Protect my wife; give my child a better life;; see other peoples' lives made better.

Lust: Visit a brothel; convince Maia that she really does want to sleep with me; allow myself to be seduced.

Pride: Humiliate my enemy; make my masterpiece; build a community others will be in awe of.

Remember that this is not an exhaustive list but it can serve as a starting point to help you build unique and interesting Motivations for your character.

Focus

The ways in which Focus can be used are outlined in the Core Rules. However, the Plot Twist is an additional way of utilising Focus to build and develop your character throughout your campaigns.

Plot Twist

Another way in which Focus can be spent involves making small alterations to the story. A character, usually a player, spends a variable number of Focus points and asks to make an alteration to the World.

How this works is that a player states a change they would like to occur. The GM decides upon a number of points of Focus this would be worth and the player has the option of spending those points to make the change happen. Some examples follow;

- **1 Point:** A minor change. Example: An unarmed character finds they have a knife in their boot, or it turns out a character visited the village some time ago, and happens to have an old friend there who runs a shop.
- **2 Points:** A significant change. Example: The same unarmed character fumbles in the dust, and manages to find an old but serviceable axe discarded by the wayside with which to defend themselves, or a character wandering a desert happens to stumble across a merchant caravan.
- **3 Points:** A major change. Example: An unarmed character actually did bring their weapons with them all along, and was able to conceal them. Alternatively, characters wandering through a desert stumble across a lush oasis and the remnants of an old caravan largely picked clean, but still containing essential food supplies.

Vitality

The mechanics for Vitality and Wounds are covered in the Core Rules. Below, you will find an extended view at recovering Wounds and healing in general. These rules are **optional** and not intended for use with Nemissary characters. Like all optional rules, they should be used only with the consensus of the group.

Advanced Healing

As discussed in the Core Rules, characters heal their wounds in order starting at the worst with Deadly and proceeding to Injured.

Recovering from Deadly Wounds: Normal human characters are pretty much screwed. Without immediate medical attention the chances of recovery are miniscule at best. In the case of normal characters, Death is a certainty, but for characters important to the plot, a Luck check should be made. If this is successful, the character gets a single Body/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 3. This roll ignores all Wound or pain-related penalties applying to the character. If successful, the character is said to stabilise and removes the Deadly Wound they have suffered.

Recovering from Critical Wounds: Recovering Wounds of this type is difficult and dangerous. First of all the character must rest completely. They can do no more than an hour's exercise a day or the process of healing is ruined. They then make a Body/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 1.

Success enables them to heal 1 Critical Wound over the next 3 months. For each point of Outcome gained, the character may choose to extend the healing time by another month. During each of these months they heal one additional Critical Wound

Recovering from Mauled Wounds: A character wishing to recover Mauled Wounds must have no Critical Wounds

and spend 3 weeks in total rest as described above. They then make a Body/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 1.

Success enables them to remove 1 Mauled Wound and each point of Outcome enables them to heal an additional Mauled Wound during that time.

Recovering from Injured Wounds: Characters may remove 1 Injured Wound per day of total bed rest.

Healing with Medical Attention: With proper access to care, a character can recover from all types of injury quicker. When a character wishes to provide medical attention they must make a Reason/Medicine roll, applying any Wound penalties that the recipient is suffering to this roll. This establishes the **Quality of Treatment**.

For the treatment to be effective, the person who made this roll must spend at least 1 hour a week in the company of the patient, and either that character, or someone else with a Medicine Skill of at least 1, must spend 1 hour a day making sure the treatment continues uninterrupted. Assuming these conditions are met, they then apply the effects of this roll as noted below. If, for any reason, the treatment is interrupted, the patient suffers 1 Mauled Wound and the Quality of Treatment is reduced by 1. As long as this number is not then 0, treatment can resume after 1 week.

A character suffering the Dying condition that receives medical attention does not need to make a Luck roll to attempt to stabilise and gains a number of bonus dice equal to the Quality of Treatment.

For other types of injuries, characters receive a number of bonus pool to their recovery rolls equal to the Quality of Treatment. In addition, they may spend more time per day doing activities without worrying about disrupting their activity; specifically patients may remain active for 3 + the Quality of Treatment in hours per day with no ill effects.

Qualities

The Core Rules touch briefly upon Qualities. Presented here is the full list of Qualities split into three sub-headings to make reading them easier; **Primary Qualities** which grant a range of straightforward benefits to the character, **Background Qualities**, which represent friends, allies and associates and other attachments the character has picked up in their travels, and **Meta Qualities** which as their name suggests are various unique or paranormal capabilities the character has picked up.

Some Qualities will also have **Innate** mentioned in their Requirements. This means that the Quality is something which cannot be learned or acquired through normal gameplay unless it seems particularly appropriate to the story for the character to purchase it; in which case the GM has final authority over whether the Quality may or may not be purchased.

Player Input

Players should not abuse the Plot Twist feature, but on the other hand the GM should not discourage it either. It can be a wonderful tool to help make the game a collaborative effort. A GM can also waive the cost entirely if they feel the change requested would help the story in some way. This is a great way to get quiet players to come out of their shells, and to make the world feel more alive.

Above all else, please don't use this feature to make the characters pay for having rich back stories or good ideas. Just because a good idea doesn't fit with the plot you intended, don't shoot it down immediately.

Hell, being surprised is sometimes the best part of GMing, and few things are as pleasant as seeing players and their characters grow.

Second Opinion

Sometimes a better medical practitioner will present themselves after the initial treatment has been started. In this case, a new test for Quality of Treatment may be made using the patient's current Wound penalties.

If this test beats the original Quality of Treatment, use the new rating instead from then on. However, if this test does not exceed the original Quality of Treatment, treat it as if treatment had been interrupted, thus inflicting 1 Mauled Wound on the patient and the normal consequences.

Nemissaries and Healing

It pains us to say it, but all the healing rules you've just read are pretty much irrelevant where Nemissaries are concerned. They are included to give a reasonably realistic view of humans recovering from damage and to keep the Nemissary powers of regeneration in perspective. Considering that Nemissaries are quite capable of shrugging off shotgun blasts to the torso, normal healing for them goes pretty much out of the window.

Rules for Nemissaries and Regeneration are found on page 200.

Primary Qualities

These Qualities affect the character's Dice Pools or Secondary Traits in various direct ways. They are normally acquired through direct training and cannot normally be lost.

Name: All-Consuming Motivation

Requirements: Character must have 1 or more Motivations.

Effect: One of your character's Motivations is very powerful and becomes an Obsessive Motivation. Unlike normal Motivations, it may be Invoked up to 3 times per Chapter.

Name: Alluring

Requirements: Body 2, Passion 4.

Effect: Your character is noticeable, and attractive by almost any definition of the standard. You gain +1 Pool to social interactions with all targets with whom you are sexually compatible. This benefit may explicitly stack with other Qualities.

The downside to this Quality is that your looks may often draw unwanted attention, and once per Story the GM may either have a character become smitten with you or otherwise use your beauty to create a complication.

Name: Bright Soul

Requirements: Passion 5, Conviction 4.

Effect: Your character may Invoke a single Motivation twice in each Chapter.

Note: *Normally you can only Invoke each Motivation once per Chapter.*

Name: Capricious Luck

Requirements: Only one Player may possess this Quality.

Effect: Three times per Chapter, you may force yourself or any other character to reroll a single Dice Pool. In addition, once per chapter, the GM can force YOU to reroll any one Dice Pool in the same manner.

Note: *A Dice Pool which has been rerolled may never be rerolled a second time.*

Name: Code of Honour

Requirements: Conviction 4.

Effect: Your character has an additional Motivation with the Foundation of "Honour" and the Drive of "Uphold my Beliefs" or something similar. The character can also use their code of ethics to defend other Motivations which align to it, increasing the Difficulty of social actions directed against the character by 1 in such situations.

The downside of this is that if the character knowingly acts against their code of ethics, they lose 1 Focus point, and lose access to this Motivation until the end of the Story.

Note: *One potential exception to this is if the character is tricked into betraying their code of ethics. The GM might allow the character to only lose access to the Motivation for the single Chapter instead of the Story.*

Name: Daredevil

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character gets a thrill out of dangerous and deadly situations. When performing an Action which has a Difficulty greater than the Skill used for that Action, the character may choose to spend 1 or more Focus points. These points do not count against any normal expenditure limits of Focus and don't grant any direct benefit to the action being undertaken. The maximum number of Focus points that may be gambled in this way is the lower of the character's Conviction or Passion.

If the action is successful, then the character gains a number of Focus points equal to the number they spent plus 1. If the action fails, the spent points are lost for no gain.

The character can also gain 1 Focus on entering combat against overwhelming odds. The definition of this is up to the GM, and to count the combat must have potentially serious implications for the character. For example, a boxing match against a superior opponent would count, but a sparring session with your old master would not.

Name: Dedicated

Requirements: Passion 4, Conviction 3.

Effect: The Difficulty of hostile mental or Social Actions involving your Motivations is increased by 1. Additionally, the first time you regain Focus from a Motivation each Story, you regain 1 additional Focus.

Name: Determined

Requirements: Conviction 3.

Effect: The Difficulty to affect your character with Social actions is increased by 1.

Name: Devout Faith

Requirements: Conviction 4, Permanent Spite of 3 or less.

Effect: Your character treats their Faith like an additional Motivation with a Foundation of "Faith", and a Drive appropriate to the religion in question; most commonly something along the line of 'uphold the tenets of my faith' or 'maintain my belief in the face of adversity'. If the character acts in a manner seriously contrary to their religious beliefs, then they gain 1 Temporary Spite.

Note: *This gain of Spite only applies to truly serious breaches of a character's faith. A Christian committing murder or a Muslim speaking blasphemy against Allah would count, but eating meat on a Friday or missing a single prayer session is not sufficient to trigger the gain in Spite.*

Name: Dire Hit

Requirements: Body 5.

Effect: Your character has been trained to strike hard and deep. The character increases their Impact by 1 if they would already possess it, and gives them the option to spend up to 3 Focus prior to an attack to increase that attack's Damage by the amount spent. If the attack fails to hit, the Focus and bonus Damage is lost.

Name: Drive

Requirements: Cunning 2, Perception 2.

Effect: Your character is fully trained to operate land vehicles and suffers no penalties for using their Skills to use them in difficult and dangerous manoeuvers.

Name: Eidetic Memory

Requirements: Innate.

Effect: You can recall most details with a successful Reason/Resolve check, with the Difficulty based on how obscure the information is. In addition, when making analytical Reason checks in calm surroundings, your Reason is considered 1 higher.

The Vanity Tax

Just to be clear, you don't have to take a Quality for your character to be attractive – after all, physical attraction is an incredibly vague thing; what one person finds attractive others can find repellent. The Quality "Alluring" is meant to represent those rare individuals that are almost universally attractive.

Characters should always have their appearance described regardless of this Quality. The GM should feel free to grant bonus dice or otherwise mess with Dice Pools if they think that another character would be positively or negatively inclined to your appearance.

Losing Qualities

In gameplay it is possible for Qualities to be lost. The most common way in which this can occur is if circumstances remove a Background Quality from a player or the character takes a permanent change to their Traits which would mean they no longer meet the Quality's requirements. When this happens, any CP invested in those Qualities should be marked off and any CP used to acquire them returned to the player.

The whims of fate might rob you of your assets, but players shouldn't be made to feel that buying Qualities is an unwise use of their CP. Remember that CP is never lost; once you have it, it isn't going anywhere. This is not the kind of game that strips you of your hard earned experience for bad luck or poor judgement.

Name: Experienced

Requirements: Character's Passion and Conviction must total at least 7, Innate.

Effect: Your character has seen a great deal of the world, and you begin the game with an additional 7 Character Points to spend during the Growth phase of Character Creation, for a total of 20 Character Points.

Your character's greater experience means that they have had to sacrifice a great deal along the way, and as a consequence the maximum number of Motivations you may possess is reduced by one. If your character is a Nemissary, they also begin the game with an additional 1D6 Temporary Spite.

Name: Fearless

Requirements: Conviction 4.

Effect: Your character gains 1 Automatic Success on all attempts to resist Fear and the Difficulty to intimidate your character is increased by 1.

Name: Graceful

Requirements: Prowess 4, must not have a Body higher than 4.

Effect: Your Prowess is considered to be 1 higher for the purposes of non-combat movement-based Pools. In addition, your character's Threat is increased by 1. For more information on Threat see page 113 in the Combat Rules.

Name: Hardy

Requirements: Body 3, Conviction 3.

Effect: Your character has one additional Mauled and Critical Wound.

Name: Huge

Requirements: Body 4, Innate, Special (The character may not purchase this Quality if their Prowess is 5 or higher. Modifiers to Prowess do not remove this Quality).

Effect: Your character is massive, standing somewhere between 7 and 8 feet tall. As a result they are considered to be of the Large size rather than Medium size.

Name: Impaired

Requirements: Innate.

Effect: Your character has a significant disability, be it mental or physical, that influences their life in various ways, often inflicting a -1 Pool penalty on the character appropriate to the specific disability in question.

The player should role-play this disability, and when it disadvantages the character but they ultimately overcome it and carry on they should gain 1 Focus.

Name: Implacable Resolve

Requirements: Conviction 3.

Effect: Your character's base Focus pool is increased by 1. You also gain 1 Focus point at the beginning of each Chapter after the first in a Story.

Name: Impressive Speaker

Requirements: Passion 4, Cunning 3, Conviction 3.

Effect: When interacting with crowds, both your Cunning and Passion are considered to be 1 higher. If given the opportunity to speak in front of large groups or to otherwise exert your authority and you choose not to do so, lose 1 Focus.

Name: Inspiring

Requirements: Passion 4, Conviction 3.

Effect: Your character can inspire those around them by spending a Focus point and making a dice roll appropriate to the situation at hand. Normally, this will be Passion/Panache or Passion/Authority. The Difficulty of this roll is equal to the number of characters you are attempting to motivate.

If you succeed, the Focus point is spent, and each character targeted gains 1 Focus, which must be spent before the end of the Scene or it will disappear. If the roll is not successful, the initial Focus point is lost and the character may not attempt to use this Quality again this chapter.

Note: *A character may never be successfully targeted by the Inspiring Quality more than once per Chapter.*

Name: Lucky

Requirements: Character does not possess Capricious Luck.

Effect: Once per Chapter you can force yourself or any other character to reroll a single Dice Pool, and you may choose whichever result you prefer.

Note: *A Dice Pool which has been rerolled may never be rerolled a second time.*

Name: Mobile

Requirements: Body 3, Prowess 3, Cunning 3.

Effect: You've trained yourself to move quickly and comfortably in a combat situation. As a result, the Move Minor Action is a Free Action for you and the cost of the Reposition Option is always 1 Outcome.

Name: Pilot

Requirements: Reason 3, Perception 3, Cunning 2, Knowledge 2.

Effect: Your character is trained to fly an aircraft. You can do so without needing to make rolls under ideal conditions, and you can use your Skills as appropriate to perform complex and dangerous manoeuvres.

Name: Quick

Requirements: Cunning 4, Prowess 4.

Effect: +1 Pool to the first action you take in a combat, and 1 Automatic Success on Initiative checks.

Name: Ride

Requirements: Body 3, Cunning 2, Perception 2.

Effect: You are trained to ride and move with a horse, enabling you to ride one at speed without great discomfort and also to perform all the basic maintenance required to keep your animal fit and healthy. With this Quality, you can also use your Skills to prompt the horse to perform desperate and dangerous manoeuvres without you being thrown from the saddle.

Name: Roll With It

Requirements: Prowess 4, Cunning 4.

Effect: You have been trained to better deal with Impact. As a result, the amount of Outcome you need to spend in order to ignore an opponent's Impact is reduced by 1. You may use the Reposition combat option for free when you successfully ignore an opponent's Impact. This functions exactly as normal, with the exception that you move only half the normal distance when Reposition is used in this way.

Name: Savvy

Requirements: Cunning 3.

Effect: Your character lowers the Difficulty of their Social Actions which oppose an opponent's Motivations by 1.

Note: *This Quality effectively negates the Difficulty increase for targeting an opponent's Motivations.*

Name: Strong

Requirements: Body 3.

Effect: Character receives +1 Body for the purposes of lifting and carrying, and for calculating their Unarmed Damage.

Name: Tough as Nails

Requirements: Body 5.

Effect: Character receives +1 Body for the purposes of resisting physical negative effects such as poison or disease. In addition, they increase their Resilience by 1.

Name: Veteran

Requirements: Experienced Quality, Innate.

Effect: Your character is an old hand but past their prime. They gain 21 Character Points during the Growth stage of character creation, giving them a total of 34 Character Points to spend on character advancement. **This total replaces any CP gained from the Experienced Quality**, because as stated, the specific effects of multiple Qualities do not stack. **Remember though, this does not negate the drawback from the Experienced Quality.**

With this Quality, old age has begun to creep in on you and your character's Body and Prowess begin the game 1 lower than normal. In addition, your character's advanced age means that the Difficulties of beneficial Medicine checks are increased by 1.

In the event that a character with the Veteran Quality becomes a Nemissary or this Quality is taken by a Nemissary at Character Creation, then the penalty above is ignored. Instead, in any Chapter in which the character gains 1 or more Temporary Spite, they gain an additional Temporary Spite. This effect may take place only once per Chapter.

BACKGROUND QUALITIES

These Qualities are unique in that they may be lost or gained in the course of gameplay if it is appropriate to the situation at hand. If a character ever loses a Quality of this type which they have gained through the use of Character Points or a Milestone, that character may immediately gain the effects of a Milestone so as to either replace the Quality

"I LOST MY GUNS. DO I GET MY QUALITY BACK?"

Oh my, no…

Well, actually a better response would be if a player lost a Quality because of their own stupidity, then they don't really deserve to trade the Quality back in. Remember that if circumstances outside of a player's control or the shifting nature of the story forces a Quality to be lost or become useless, they should **always** get the free Milestone; the exception being the players deliberately trying to abuse the system or terminal stupidity.

or gain some other benefit. Background Qualities gained as a result of gameplay don't give you anything if you lose them – after all, you didn't pay anything to get them.

Name: Assets

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character is particularly well equipped, gaining triple the normal amount of starting equipment.

Name: Forbidden Knowledge

Requirements: GM Approval.

Effect: Your character knows information which is both potentially dangerous and very useful to the larger story arc they are a part of. When you utilise this forbidden knowledge to help drive the story, your character receives 1 Focus point. If this Quality becomes irrelevant during the course of play, it is lost and the character recovers the CP as normal.

Name: Powerful Friends

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character has various powerful friends, which should be given an area they have influence over, and the character may at any point spend 1 Focus or make an appropriate dice roll, usually Cunning/Panache, with a Difficulty chosen by the GM. Success allows the character to gain the assistance of these powerful allies. This should be appropriate to the story, and the GM should work with the players to make this Quality useful in the campaign.

Name: Property

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character owns land or has a business. In either case they have a self-sustaining means of generating resources. In game terms, the characters should be able to retreat to this area to recuperate, and if the GM chooses to violate this sanctuary the character that owns it gains a Focus point. In addition, depending upon the needs of the story, this property should generate a reasonable quantity of money or goods, equivalent to 1 Rare item per Chapter.

Note: *We've left the amounts a little nebulous with this Quality, as it can represent quite a lot of different things. Given the relative power of Nemissaries, it's likely that money will become somewhat irrelevant during the course of the game and thus as long as the players don't abuse it, their property should be able to generate whatever seems within reason for the situation at hand. Also, if the characters lose this property through no fault of their own, they can claim the CP invested back.*

Name: Sworn Brothers

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character has joined one of the powerful independent factions such as the Breakers or Pyreflame, and is considered a ranking member of that organisation. The effects of this are various, allowing the character to gain resources, allies or information as needed, but the character will also be expected to uphold the values of their organisation and fight to defend it.

If the character leaves this organisation during the course of the game, they may remove this Quality and regain the CP spent in the normal way.

Meta Qualities

These Qualities affect the character in ways both direct and indirect. They are normally particularly effective but often serve as a double-edged sword and are usually quite specific in their requirements.

Name: Awakened

Requirements: Conviction 4, Reason 3, Human only.

Effect: Your character is fully aware of their own Anima Pool and is able to detect Anima using the same Difficulties as a Nemissary. Furthermore, they may now actively spend Anima to power any supernatural abilities they may possess.

Name: Calling

Requirements: Conviction 4, Must be a Nemissary which does not possess the Iron Soul Feature.

Effect: Your character's ability to manifest Songs is particularly broad, granting you an additional Favoured Song. This means that the character will have 3 Favoured Songs. The price for this power is that the Nemissary's remaining two Songs become Forbidden, and no Arietta may be used or purchased from them.

Name: Inner Reserve

Requirements: Awakened Quality.

Effect: Your character has gained deeper mastery of their Anima and increases their total Anima pool by 3. They also regenerate 1 additional point of Anima per day.

Name: Inured

Requirements: Conviction 4.

Effect: Your character has become inured to the maddening effects of the Shards. As a result, you no longer gain Obsessive Motivations as a result of the Communion power. For more information see page 280 in the GM's Toolkit.

Name: Quickening

Requirements: Awakened Quality.

Effect: Your character has gained the ability to improve themselves through the use of Anima. To represent this, the character gains access to the Quickening Feature, see page 162.

Name: Shard-Marked

Requirements: None.

Effect: Your character has the attention, and at least tacit approval, of one of the more powerful Shards in the world. The Difficulty for interacting with this Shard is reduced by 2 and the Shard will likely use its powers to help your character in desperate situations.

One potential downside to this is that the Shard may frequently push your character into adventures and complex situations.

Name: Sleep of the Dead

Requirements: Conviction 4, Passion 3, Character must be a Nemissary.

Effect: You recover Anima easier than others of your kind, regaining either 1 Dark or Light Anima per night of uninterrupted sleep so long as your Neutral Anima pool is full.

Name: Ward

Requirements: Conviction 5, Awakened Quality.

Effect: Your character has learned to turn their Anima against the monsters of the world, and accordingly gains the Ward Feature, see page 162.

Supernatural Traits Expanded

The setting of Sins is home to a great many creatures with capabilities well beyond human norms. These are covered by the various supernatural Traits that such entities possess. Individual types of Supernatural possess their own unique rules but all operate from a basic framework of fundamental Traits. The section below covers each of these Traits in additional detail, building upon what was laid out in the Core Rules.

Anima

Every living thing possesses Anima, but the vast majority of life has no means of utilising this precious resource. Supernatural creatures are different however. For many, like Nemissaries, their existence is dependent upon acquiring and renewing their supplies of Anima.

The different Supernaturals in the setting, such as the Brood and Nemissaries, handle this resource in various ways, but certain key facts remain the same for every character utilising Anima.

Types of Anima

In nature, Anima is simply a source of energy – a representation of life existing in every living thing and the environment. In animals and plants this is a pure source, existing as **Neutral Anima**. Conscious minds cause Anima to change its nature, charging it over time with positive or negative emotions, thus creating **Light** and **Dark Anima**.

- **Light Anima:** Linked with positive emotions, life and growth.
- **Neutral Anima:** Not linked to any specific set of emotions, and primarily representing stasis and self-will. It is also unique in that it may be spent as either Light or Dark Anima as a character chooses.
- **Dark Anima:** Linked to negative emotions, decay and entropy.

In human beings Anima exists in all three states, shifting from one to the next as the individuals emotional state changes. Sometimes, this Anima can also exist as ambient energy in the environment, or be localised in inanimate objects. In either case, this is normally to do with extremes of emotion; places such as monuments, churches and recreation halls are often charged with a small quantity of Light Anima, whereas those areas linked to suffering or death normally possess similar quantities of Dark Anima.

Anima Pools

All living things have an Anima Pool. This pool has a maximum based on the size of the creature in question and whether or not it is sentient.

- **Tiny:** Creatures of this size have an Anima Pool so small as to count as 0, though this does not mean they have no actual Anima and they can still be sensed by effects which detect it. In this case they count as having 1 Anima.
- **Very Small:** Creatures of this size have a maximum Anima pool of 1. Sentient creatures of this size (such as human infants) have a Anima Pool of 2.
- **Small:** Creatures of this size have a maximum Anima pool of 2. Sentient creatures of this size (such as human children) have a maximum Anima pool of 4.
- **Medium:** Creatures of this size have a maximum Anima pool of 3. Sentient creatures (such as teenage or adult humans) have a maximum pool of 6.
- **Large:** Creatures of this size have a maximum Anima pool of 4. No natural sentient creatures of this size exist, but if they did they would have a maximum Anima pool of 8.

- **Huge:** Creatures of this size have a maximum Anima pool of 5. No natural sentient creatures of this size exist, but if they did they would have a maximum Anima pool of 10.

Barring outside interference this pool will always be at its maximum. As mentioned, for non-sentient creatures this will be Neutral, and for sentient creatures it will fluctuate.

For humans, it may become necessary to determine exactly how many points of each type of Anima they possess. Normally, a human's Anima pool will be balanced between Light and Dark, but if their current emotional state is disturbed it will likely favour one or the other.

For significant but not overwhelming emotional changes, this will normally be a swing of 1 point in either direction and last for about a Scene. For massive emotional turmoil, it can shift by as many as 2 points and persist for days or even weeks.

Example: *Laurence is on a date with a friend of his. That evening, things go well and Laurence's emotional state is definitely pushed towards Light Anima. His pool would normally be 6, split evenly with 3 Light and 3 Dark Anima. At this point, it will have shifted to 4 Light Anima and 2 Dark Anima.*

Later that evening, he comes home to find one of his parents dead and the other transformed into a Broodspawn. Screaming in panic he flees from the house, calling for help. This shifts his emotional state again and would be considered a major change, pushing him 2 points towards Dark. He now has 4 Dark Anima and 2 Light Anima and will likely remain this way for a number of days or even weeks.

In humans, these changes tend to express themselves as visible mood swings. Astute characters can notice this with a Cunning/Perception roll.

Ambient Anima

As noted, Anima can pool in the environment. Normally, this is very slight and has no particular effect other than to give an indication of what an area might be like to those who can sense Anima. In exceptional circumstances though this ambient Anima can accumulate, creating what is known as an **Aura**.

Auras rate between 1 to 6 and can be any of the three types of Anima. Light and Dark auras are uncommon but not unheard of. Normally, these sites have a rank of 1 or 2. Neutral auras are almost unheard of, and are unique in that they are not created by extreme emotion over time; instead representing the pure untainted energy of the natural world.

Auras can have an effect on how people behave. This effect comes into play when an aura's rating is greater than an individual's Conviction. At Ranks 1 to 2, it is subtle and shouldn't be represented mechanically. Its effect is easiest to observe in normal humans, and tends to colour their perspectives in favour of the type of Anima it represents. Neutral auras are calming, Light auras make people happy and energetic, and Dark auras make people nervous and cold.

Where auras are more powerful, such as auras rated at 3 or 4, things become more extreme. Characters affected are easily drawn towards the feelings represented by the aura. This is rarely dangerous, but in already unbalanced individuals it can tip them over the edge into violence or suicide. It's also possible for positive results to emerge, such as feelings of affection or forgiveness, though unfortunately human nature makes such expressions rare.

Finally, auras at ranks 5 and 6 can be extremely dangerous. Characters affected often act in completely irrational ways, being pulled to extremes of violence, suicide or apathy. All these effects can be resisted in the same way as a social Action and if Focus is spent the character is immune to the effects of that aura for at least one scene.

Replenishing Anima

In living things like humans or animals, Anima replenishes slowly over time. A character will regain one third of their total Anima pool per week. This can be increased further by the individual taking at least 12 hours of rest, excluding sleep; in which case Anima recovers at one third of their total pool per day.

Nemissaries, the Brood and most supernatural creatures replenish Anima differently from humans. Nemissaries can gain this Anima back in numerous ways, and the full rules for doing so are described in the Nemissary chapter starting on page 209.

Brood regain Anima through the power of Synergy and through eating human corpses, though it's worth mentioning that most low-ranked Broodspawn don't benefit from Anima in a direct sense. For more information on Broodspawn and Anima, see their section starting on page 267 in the Brood chapter.

Spending Anima

Characters capable of spending Anima are limited in how much they can use in any given Round. This total is normally Fate plus Passion. A truly desperate character can exceed this limit at a terrible toll to their body.

Note: *Nemissaries replace their Fate with their Creed, and as a result may spend a total amount of Anima equal to Creed plus Passion. Broodspawn on the other hand do not normally spend Anima as outlined in their chapter later in this book, starting page 267.*

A character can spend more Anima in a Round than their normal limit by willingly taking Baleful Injured Wounds. Each Wound taken in this way allows the character to spend an additional number of points of Anima equal to their Passion.

Note: *For this effect to occur, the character must actually take the Baleful Wound. If some effect would cause you to remove a Wound before you take it, you cannot spend the Anima.*

Example: *Tristan is one of the rare humans capable of using his Anima. He has a Fate of 1 and a Passion of 3, meaning he can spend a maximum of 4 Anima in a Round.*

He wants to use a particular power available to him, but doing so would cost 5 Anima. Since he can only spend 4 safely, he'll have to resort to desperate measures. Since the total Anima he will have spent is 5, he takes 1 Baleful Injured Wound.

Sensing Anima

Any being with the Keening Skill can feel the relative strength of Anima in their vicinity. This has numerous practical applications; not least of which is the ability to sense the presence of beings with access to their Anima Pool.

Doing so requires the user to make a Cunning/Keening roll, with success allowing them to detect all entities in their immediate vicinity capable of utilising Anima. The Difficulty of this roll is 0 for a character capable of actually utilising Anima, or 2 for anybody else. Points of Outcome on this roll can be used to detect additional facts about specific Anima users detected.

- Detect whether the individual has more Light or Dark available.
- Detect the Fate of an individual.
- Detect whether an individual has any active supernatural effects that require Anima.

Answers gained in this way are per-target, and gaining information about multiple individuals requires the spending of additional Outcome.

Characters capable of using their Anima pool can also attempt to deliberately obscure this fact in any given scene by making a Conviction/Keening roll, against a Difficulty of their own Fate -1.

Once suppressed in this way, the character cannot be detected through the use of Anima sensing, but is still vulnerable to detection if they utilise a Song with the Echo keyword.

Characters with both Conviction and Keening of 4 or greater can suppress their Anima presence without the need to make any rolls.

Characters can also utilise their ability to sense Anima to feel the relative wellbeing of an individual. This requires a Cunning/Keening roll, Difficulty 0, with Success allowing the Nemissary to discover how close that target is to death and how much health they have lost. Points of Outcome can provide additional information, such as more subtle underlying illnesses.

How to use Auras

Auras can be an excellent tool for setting up mood or for driving a story along. They can make otherwise normal or rational people act in erratic and unpredictable ways, both of which can be incredibly useful from a storytelling point of view.

They can be used as a blunt tool to provide explanations for murder, sudden changes of emotions or other such extreme behaviour in an individual. In a more subtle way they can also be used as part of an investigative game as a form of clue, pointing characters towards misdeeds of the past like the site of a series of previous murders.

Supernaturals and Anima Pools

Nemissaries, Broodspawn and other similar creatures do not work their Anima pools out in this way or recover Anima in the ways laid out here. The rules for how they interact with Anima are covered in their respective chapters, but this doesn't mean what's laid out here isn't relevant.

Though it's of less importance to the Brood, both types of Supernatural can feed on Anima, making how much Anima and of what type various creatures have available particularly relevant.

Sensing Auras: A character can utilise their ability to sense Anima to read the auras of people or places. Reading the aura of a location is easy and automatic for those with the ability to sense Anima.

Reading the auras of people is more complex and requires a Conviction/Keening roll against a Difficulty of 6 minus the target's Passion. Success allows the character to read basic information in a person's aura such as their emotional state.

Outcome can be used to pick up on more subtle signs such as strong or weak auras, or whether the individual has been exposed to the presence of a Shard, or the aura of another individual. At the GM's discretion, detecting a person's aura can give a character a +1 Pool bonus when dealing with them in a social or investigative context.

Blood Synergy

Some powers or effects require a physical supernatural link with the target and this is noted as Blood Synergy. This link can either be two-way or one-way. The simplest methods of establishing a two-way link are for two characters to have sex, share medical equipment, or simply transfuse Blood.

Drinking another character's blood or bodily fluids will establish a one-way connection, as will consuming flesh or a small amount of hair or fingernails from the target. In addition to this, certain supernatural effects can create Blood Synergy with a target, and unless otherwise specified this connection is always one-way.

A character's **Blood Synergy connections each persist for a number of days equal to their Conviction, becoming inert once this time elapses.**

Example: *Lisa is attempting to establish Blood Synergy with a local Sheriff. After seducing him and spending the night in his bed, she establishes a two-way Blood Synergy connection. As her Conviction is 4, she can hold onto this connection for four days. As the Sheriff's Conviction is 3 and this is a two-way connection, he would also possess a Blood Synergy connection to her for 3 days.*

If Lisa had simply stolen some of his fingernails or hair then she could have established a one-way connection to him which would have lasted likewise for 4 days, but would have not allowed the Sheriff a chance of establishing a connection.

Other Supernatural Traits

The various Supernaturals also possess other specific Supernatural Traits. The chapters on Nemissaries and the Brood, and the GM Toolkit's section on Shards specifically cover them in detail and thus these Traits are not expanded upon here.

Supernatural Features

Similar to Qualities, Supernatural Features are unique things about characters. As discussed in the Core Rules they are not purchased in the normal way but are gained through various means during the game. Most supernatural creatures possess some or all of the following features in one respect or another, and certain Qualities – specifically Meta Qualities – can also grant humans access to some of these Features.

For supernaturals, these changes are usually permanent and irreversible, with any effects or abilities gained through them being considered always on. This can be a hindrance as much as a help, as not every Supernatural Feature is designed to aid characters.

For normal humans, things don't always work this way. A Quality may allow a human to spend Anima to gain access to a particular Feature. In these instances, the Feature remains active only as the duration specified under the Quality, and then only so long as the character spends whatever costs are required. When the duration ends, so does the Feature, unless the character can pay the cost again to maintain it.

In addition, some Features are gained simply by possessing a minimum rank in certain Attributes. These Features are in effect whenever a character meets their prerequisites, meaning that temporary boosts to Attributes may enable these Features but if the boost is ended or lost, so is the Feature.

With the sole exception of Enhancements, Features may never be stacked. If two sources grant you the same Feature, it only applies once. For instance, if a power gives you Regeneration Type 1 and a separate effect gives you Regeneration Type 2, you still may only get one of those Features.

Regeneration

Characters with this Feature can heal from damage at an incredible rate; sometimes subtly, and sometimes so rapidly as to make them almost immune to harm.

How Regeneration Works

This Feature is unusual in that it can exist as one of three types. This will always be specified as either Type 1, 2 or 3 Regeneration. All the types of Regeneration share certain features, particularly that **Regeneration does not function against Impaling Damage and all but Type 3 Regeneration is incapable of affecting Baleful Damage.**

The effects of Regeneration for each of these types are split into their consistent effects and rapid effects. The consistent effects take place over minutes and hours, and always involve recovering from a certain number of Wounds over a set period of time. **This healing takes place in the same way as normal Wound recovery, restoring the most severe Wounds first** and then moving on to each lesser type in turn.

The rapid effects of Regeneration take place when a character would suffer one or more Wounds as a result of damage compared against their Thresholds. When this happens, each Wound inflicted is converted into a Wound of the next lowest type to a minimum of an Injured Wound unless otherwise stated.

Just to be clear, **the rapid effects of Regeneration never apply to damage paid as a cost or any effect which inflicts a set number of Wounds on a character**.

Unless otherwise stated, the consistent effects of Regeneration occur only outside of combat, but the rapid effects may take place at any point a character receives damage that is compared against their Thresholds.

Temporary Regenerations: Regeneration is usually permanent, though certain situations can grant it temporarily. The rapid effects obviously apply but the consistent effects can only take place if the Regeneration is maintained. If it lapses before a specified period of time is up, any Regeneration which happens in that time is lost.

For instance, a character with Type 2 Regeneration must keep it active for at least one minute in order for any Wounds to be restored, as Type 2 Regeneration restores a number of Wounds per minute.

Regeneration and Enhancements: One complication of Regeneration comes with Enhancements that are not Innate. This occurs because Regeneration cannot distinguish between the changes wrought to one's body through Enhancements and those inflicted by Damage.

The consistent effects of Regeneration will act over time to remove Enhancements from a Nemissary's body. For these purposes, any Enhancement that is not stacked is treated as a Mauled Wound, whereas a stacked enhancement is treated as a single Critical Wound. Regardless of the type of Regeneration, Enhancements are removed before other Wounds.

The rapid effects of Regeneration can also be seriously hampered by Enhancements, though the effects of this differ, depending upon the type of Regeneration involved.

Suppressing Regeneration: Sometimes Regeneration is not helpful. There is time that a character might want to play dead or otherwise stop the effects or their Regeneration. If a character gained Regeneration through a power or ability that had a cost, then there is nothing you can do about unless the power can be turned off for some reason.

Those that possess Regeneration as a permanent Feature have other options. First, such a character may always pay a cost of one Focus to suppress their Regeneration for a single Instance or for 1 Scene. Secondly, a character may take a Minor Action and pay a cost of 1 Focus to suppress their Regeneration indefinitely. To reactivate their Regeneration, a character simply concentrates as a Standard Action.

Type 1 Regeneration

This level of Regeneration is common to Nemissaries and the weakest of the Broodspawn. Its effects, whilst useful are also relatively easy to overwhelm. That said, its effects shouldn't be underestimated, particularly when combined with a Nemissary's other gifts.

Consistent Effect: With Type 1 Regeneration active, a character recovers one Wound every minute, or every 10 minutes for Critical and Deadly Wounds. Regeneration of this level may not heal Overkill Wounds.

Rapid Effect: Rapid Type 1 Regeneration reduces the severity of Wounds that are not Baleful or Impaling as normal, but does not function against any attack which would inflict a Critical Wound or greater. The rapid effects of Type 1 Regeneration do not function if a character has 1 or more Enhancements that are not also Innate.

"Fire! Kill it with Fire!"

Regeneration is extremely powerful, but it's also easy for a prepared character to stop. Fire and Impaling weapons are the great equalisers. For instance, there's nothing at all to stop you using normal damage to put a character that regenerates down, and then using fire and Impaling weapons to finish them off.

One thing to remember is to be careful with Impaling weapons, as while these do stop Regeneration they are rendered moot if they are removed and the body isn't destroyed in a more permanent fashion.

Characters turning an advanced Broodspawn into an amusing pincushion might be in for a rather unpleasant surprise if they recover all their precious spears and then leave the mangled body alone, only for a very irate and completely recovered Broodspawn to jump them a few minutes later.

Type 2 Regeneration

Most common amongst the Brood, Type 2 Regeneration is fearsome. With it, characters can walk through hails of gunfire and shrug off all but the most devastating of attacks with barely a pause.

Consistent Effect: Whilst active, a character with Type 2 Regeneration recovers a number of Wounds equal to their Body every minute. Deadly Wounds are not recovered in this way, but instead one such Wound is recovered every minute. Type 2 Regeneration ceases to function if an Overkill Wound is taken.

Rapid Effect: All damaging hits that are not Impaling or Baleful are reduced as normal. In addition, a character with Regeneration of this type removes one non-Innate Enhancement at the start of each Turn.

Type 3 Regeneration

Rare and terrifying, anything with Regeneration at this level is almost impossible to kill. Only the complete destruction of such a creature's body will stop it, and these monstrosities recover Wounds so quickly as to be almost immune to any Wounds that cannot either impale or burn them.

Consistent Effect: With this Regeneration active, a character recovers from all Wounds over the course of 1 minute. A character with this Regeneration active may not gain, and immediately removes, any non-Innate Enhancements.

Rapid Effect: All Wounds that are not Impaling or Baleful are reduced twice. This means that to inflict a minimum of an Injured Wound, an attack must cause enough damage to exceed the Critical Vitality Threshold.

Type 3 Regeneration reduces Baleful Wounds in the same way that other Regeneration types affect normal Wounds but may not reduce Impaling or Baleful Wounds originating from fire.

As mentioned under Consistent Effects, a character with Type 3 Regeneration cannot have Enhancements that are not Innate active at all for any reason.

Visceral and Nasty

Regeneration is not a pretty business. It heals injuries but often in a haphazard fashion. Its effects may be beneficial but the sight of a body's muscles pulling its own broken bones back into place, teeth and eyes running out of a face like wax to reform, and flesh creeping like fingers over a burnt frame can all be the stuff of nightmares.

Many normal humans tend to react badly to seeing regeneration, and at a GM's discretion this can potentially count as Fear inducing.

Secondary Considerations for Regeneration

In humans, Regeneration normally produces a number of curious side-effects when maintained in the long term. First of all it retards the aging process. People with access to Type 1 Regeneration slow their aging to approximately one half of normal, Type 2 to one quarter of normal and Type 3 seems to stop the aging process altogether.

Aside from this it massively increases the body's metabolism, meaning that characters will need to eat a great deal more food than normal. Anybody with Type 1 Regeneration will need to eat at least double, Type 2 quadruple, and Type 3 fully ten times as much food per day, even when not regenerating. Likewise, hunger sets in at a similarly accelerated rate, potentially proving detrimental to normal humans maintaining high levels of Regeneration.

Some other odd characteristics are also likely to occur, such as rapid growth of hair or nails and, in unusual cases, accelerated distribution of melanin in the skin. In practical terms this means that characters with regeneration tan at a massively accelerated rate and, in some cases, temporarily change their base skin colour altogether.

Some relatively harmless, but disturbing, side-effects can also occur, such as excess blood in the upper layers of the skin, bleeding from bodily orifices, and cramps and diarrhoea. Most, though, would consider this a small price to pay for the ability to heal a hole in the front of their head.

Flickering

This Supernatural Feature is common to any entity which possesses both Body and Prowess of 7 or more. It allows such a character to move with incredible speed and grace by putting a massive strain on their body.

Any character with this Feature may, when given an opportunity to act, choose to Flicker. When they do this, they take 1 Baleful Injured Wound which may not be negated through any effect which does not have the "Epic" keyword.

When Flickering, a character ignores the Threat from all other characters that are not also Flickering. This means that such a character will not normally trigger an Opening.

In addition, **for each point by which both the character's Body and Prowess exceed 6**, they gain the following benefits:

- +1 Pool.
- +1 Impact.
- Movement is doubled. When stacked, this becomes tripled, quadrupled and so on as per the overriding rules on page 99.

The effects of Flickering occur immediately and can change what advantages will apply in combat. Particularly, the character's increased Threat may allow them to count as Engaged or not at their discretion.

Dire Impact

This Feature is automatically possessed by any Nemissary or Broodspawn who currently possesses a Body of 7 or more. A character with this Feature places immense strain on their body in order to move with such incredible speed and force that they trigger an explosive shockwave centred on one of their targets.

A character with this Feature may choose to trigger its effects when making an Aggressive Action which also uses the All Out Attack Manoeuvre. When triggered, the character takes one Baleful Injured Wound. They then apply their attack as normal, with the exception that after attacks have been resolved, a detonation takes place.

This detonation must be centred on a single target of the character's choosing and the Damage and Blast are both equal to the character's Impact rating +5. If the opponent chosen was successfully hit, then the blast will be resolved like an accurately thrown explosive. If not, it will be treated as a missed thrown attempt.

Just as with a directed explosive, if you hit, the nominated target is exempt from the Blast, but all other targets except yourself are affected normally. If you miss, all targets including the nominated one but not yourself are affected by the Blast and may respond normally. For more information on the rules for explosives, see page 125 in the Combat chapter.

Mechanics aside, this should always be described in a suitably dramatic way. Not only that, but almost any conventional building, structure or scenery will be annihilated resulting in a drastically changed combat environment.

Enhancements

Enhancements are a special type of Supernatural Feature, that like Regeneration are a cluster of separate abilities, all of which function in a similar way. They are split into two broad types, **Positive** and **Negative**, and may also be noted as an **Innate Enhancement**.

Flickering into a Dire Impact

A character who has both Dire Impact and Flickering available to them may activate both at the same time, so long as the attack requirements for Dire Impact are met. When used in this way, the strain on the Nemissary's body is incredible. Instead of the two Baleful Injured Wounds they would take, they take a Baleful Mauled Wound which also results in a single Baleful Injured Wound as normal. This is an explicit exception to the rule that Features cannot be stacked with one another and may be used only by taking the Wounds as described.

Another Price

Enhancements have one drawback which is a little more nebulous in terms of the rules; that is, they may affect your appearance, and can obviously make social situations very difficult.

For the most part, these penalties are up to the GM – after all, bulging biceps might not freak anybody, out but wings and tentacles certainly will. If you need a hard and fast number, simply apply a -1 Success penalty to Social Actions which rely on subtlety for every three Enhancements a character possesses.

Unlike other Features, a character can possess many separate Enhancements, each noted separately for the character and each of which may be gained or lost independently, usually as the result of Arietta. The exception are Innate Enhancements which are normally gained during character creation or as a result of Broodspawn Evolution.

When a character gains this Feature, it will be referred to as the "X Enhancement", such as "Increased Attribute (Body) Enhancement", or "Decreased Size Enhancement". If an effect would grant a character an Enhancement twice, it would be listed in a similar way but with a descriptor for its number, such as "Increased Attribute (Body) Enhancement × 2"

Enhancements count as Qualities for the purpose of stacking benefits. This means that if you have a Quality which increases strength and an Enhancement that increases strength, only the better benefit applies.

Enhancements can stack with one another, but only if they come from the same Arietta or Effect. If two separate Enhancements would grant you improved strength for instance, you would still only get one instance of that effect. To actually get the effect twice, a single power or ability would need to explicitly give you "Increased Attribute (Body)" twice.

JUST TO CLARIFY

To pre-empt certain players and to make sure we're all absolutely clear on this point, you may never for any reason gain access to Enhancements without a power or effect explicitly saying it gives you them.

Secondly, you never stack these powers together. The only ways – and we do mean the only ways – to stack them, are for a single individual power to explicitly allow you to buy multiple copies of an Enhancement at once, or for your character to possess Innate Enhancements and then combine them with normal Enhancements. In this case, the normal Enhancements still obey all the rules about stacking we've just discussed.

The only powers in this book that can stack normal Enhancements are *Grace of the Undying* and *Flesh Unrestrained*. The only Arietta which allows you to gain Innate Enhancements is *Arsenal of Flesh*. For more information on these powers, see pages 251 to 253 in the Songs chapter.

Innate Enhancements may be freely combined with one another and with Enhancements to give you a total rating. In this instance, the source of the Innate Enhancement is irrelevant. Unless otherwise stated, only Enhancements gained through a Brood's evolution, an animal's natural form, or possessed as a result of being the Defiled Shaping are considered Innate Enhancements in this way.

Example: *Thomas' character is an experienced Nemissary with the Song of Flesh. Using this, he gives himself several separate Enhancements. Though he can give himself many individual Enhancements this way, he cannot stack them.*

Likewise, if both the Song of Flesh and another Supernatural Feature gave him the same Enhancement, they would still not stack. The only way he could acquire multiple copies of a single Enhancement is if a more potent Song of Blood power allowed him to buy multiple copies of an Enhancement at the same time.

However, if the character were a Broodspawn or one of the Defiled Shaping which already possessed an Innate Enhancement, then this Enhancement could stack with the others. So, if the character already had one rank of Innate "Increased Prowess", and then used the Song of Flesh to separately give himself a rank of "Increased Prowess", the two would stack together to give him a total of +2 Prowess.

POSITIVE ENHANCEMENTS

The Positive Enhancements listed below represent broadly "beneficial" modifications to a character, however dark and twisted some may be.

Breed True: By consuming Broodspawn Flesh, the character can harbour a litter of 1D6 Broodspawn inside them which will mature to a small size over the course of 3 months , before erupting. This process is painless to the host.

Corrosive Blood: Any time an opponent inflicts damage to the character in Close Combat, they are splashed with acid inflicting Damage to the attacker equal to the attacked character's Body. If a weapon used in this attack is not made from Bone or Voidglass, its damage is reduced by 1 to a minimum of 0, at which point the weapon is destroyed.

Cosmetic: The character possesses an alteration, be it subtle or overt which changes their appearance. At the GMs discretion, this may grant up to +1 Pool where appropriate.

Enhanced Lifespan: The character's natural lifespan is doubled and aging is halved. This is applied after any change to aging rate as a result of Regeneration.

Gender Change: The character's gender is reversed in all respects.

Increase Body: The character's Body is increased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Increase Cunning: The character's Cunning is increased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Increase Prowess: The character's Prowess is increased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Increase Reason: The character's Reason is increased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Increase Size: The character's size is increased by 1 step. See page 92 and 130 for further details.

Multiple Arms: The character gains Reach 1, and +1 Pool in close combat. They may carry additional weapons as appropriate but gain no special benefits for using more than one ranged weapon as this power does nothing to change visual acuity.

Multiple Eyes: The character's all-round vision is superb, granting them +1 Success to Perception and Initiative checks.

Multiple Legs: The character is considered 1 Size category larger for the purposes of movement speeds and gains 1 Automatic Success on checks related to running, jumping or feats of physical strength. This does not include Damage or Close Combat.

Natural Armour: The character gains +2 points of Resilience which is counted as natural, meaning it may be combined with normal armour worn by the character.

Natural Weapons: The character's unarmed attacks deal +2 Damage and the character is considered to be armed from a mechanical point of view.

Night Vision: The character can see in the dark and does not suffer Blind Fighting penalties.

Ovipositor: By successfully restraining and biting an opponent, the character may lay a small egg deep in the opponent. If not surgically removed, the egg will hatch in 1D6 days, inflicting a Damage 12 hit to the target, and creating one or more twisted offspring which will expire within an hour. Removing this egg requires a surgical procedure with a Difficulty of 3.

Each time after the first this Enhancement is acquired, the character may select one of the options below;

- Restraining an opponent is no longer required to implant the egg, and Unarmed Damage alone, such as scratches, will suffice.
- The Damage inflicted by the hatching of the egg inflicts an additional 1D6 Damage.
- The erupting offspring inflicts only a single Injured wound.
- The egg is particularly difficult to spot, requiring a Difficulty 3 Perception check to find in the first place.

Tentacles: The character's unarmed attacks gain the Reach 2 Quality and grant +1 Pool when attempting to restrain an opponent.

Tremor Sense: On the ground the character can see without eyes and is almost impossible to surprise, negating any penalties due to darkness and granting +1 Pool to Initiative.

Wings: The first time a character acquires this Enhancement, they gain vestigial wings that make them awkward, giving them -1 Pool in Close Combat, but allow them to glide over a reasonable distance.

This can be several hundred metres or even a few kilometres given favourable wind conditions, allowing them to potentially gain large bonuses to stealth or surprise attacks. A character with the Enhancement at this level moves at approximately 3 times their normal rate when gliding. In combat, they may use the Flying rules but may not gain height or take off again if they find themselves Grounded. Also, attacking at close range will force the character to stop flying.

If this Enhancement is stacked a second time, the wings become fully functional. The character can now fully utilise the Flying rules and no longer suffers the penalty to Close Combat.

Taken a third time, the wings become powerful muscular appendages which may be used in combat to distract opponents, increasing the character's Close Combat Pool by +1 and increasing their overall flying speed to 6 times that of their normal movement.

If the character is carrying an excessive weight, such as another individual or a great deal of equipment, they will lose 1 effective rank in this Enhancement. If they only have this Enhancement at the first level, they will not be able to glide but are still considered awkward and ungainly in combat, taking the -1 Pool penalty.

A character with wings can choose to bind them, removing any penalties or bonuses gained from this enhancement.

Negative Enhancements

These Enhancements are primarily detrimental to the target.

Decrease Body: The character's Body is decreased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Decrease Cunning: The character's Cunning is decreased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Decrease Prowess: The character's Prowess is decreased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Decrease Reason: The character's Reason is decreased by 1 for the purposes of generating Dice Pools and Derived Traits. This is not considered a permanent modification for the purposes of experience costs, or qualifying for Requirements.

Decrease Size: The character's size decreases by 1 step.

Hideous Appearance: The character is rendered hideous. The Difficulty of all social interactions is increased by 1.

Pain Trigger: When exposed to a specific sound or chemical, the character is wracked with pain, suffering a -1 Pool penalty and 1 Baleful Injured Wound at the beginning of each Scene they are exposed to it.

Shortened Lifespan: The character's lifespan is halved and they age twice as fast. This is applied after any modifications from Regenerations. For Nemissaries, this means that in any Chapter in which they gain 1 or more temporary Spite, they gain one additional temporary Spite. This effect may apply only once per Chapter.

Quickening

A character with this Feature may spend Anima to grant themselves bonus Pool on a 1 for 1 basis to a particular action they are about to undertake. These bonuses apply only to that Action and so would benefit only a single Combat action in a Round. This can be done on as many actions as the character wishes in a single Round, but the character is still bound by the normal limits of Anima expenditure in a given Round.

Ward

Through this Feature, the character can create supernatural barriers of varying intensity. These Wards may either occupy an area – a **Location Ward** – or be centred on the character as an **Immediate Ward**.

Location Wards

To create a Location Ward the character spends 1 Focus and then begins a Sustained Action using Conviction/Keening. The Difficulty may be any number the character wishes and the Threshold is 1 for every 10m radius area that will be affected. The total Threshold may be no greater than Conviction + Keening, and each roll takes 1 hour and costs 1 Anima.

Assuming the character has enough Anima to complete the task, the Ward will be established and is considered to have a strength equal to its Difficulty. Any creature that does not possess the Fate Trait, such as Nemissaries or Broodspawn, must succeed on a Conviction/Resolve roll with a Difficulty equal to the strength of the Ward to enter it.

If they succeed at the roll they may enter and don't need to test again. If they fail, they may still make further attempts but each attempt after the first inflicts a Mauled Wound on that character.

The Ward will last for 6 – its Strength in days, at which point it can be sustained for the same period again by its creator spending 1 Anima and 1 Focus.

Immediate Wards

To create an Immediate Ward, a character spends 1 Focus and 1 Anima. They then make a Conviction/Keening roll against a Difficulty of 0. If they succeed, every creature in the immediate vicinity that does not possess Fate, such as Nemissaries and Broodspawn, must make a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty equal to the Ward's Outcome +1.

If they succeed, they can operate as normal, but if they fail any attempt to move closer to the character will inflict a Mauled Wound. This damage is immediate and takes place before every action that character takes that would move them closer to or Engage the creator of the Ward.

To sustain the Ward, the character must not move and must pay 1 Anima each round after the first. If they move, the Scene ends, or they can no longer pay Anima, the Ward collapses.

HELP
NY HOT DOG

CHAPTER VI

CHARACTER CREATION

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BUILDING A CHARACTER

The heart of the game is the characters and the players who portray them. In this chapter, you'll find the rules for building those all-important individuals; whether you want to build a Nemissary with the power to change the world, or a human desperately struggling to survive.

PART 1 – CONCEPT

The first step with any character is to decide what you want to play. This can be bewildering at first and so it often helps to start with small ideas such as "I want to play a soldier" or "I fancy playing a merchant".

At this early stage, there's nothing wrong with thinking in such broad terms. You can then go on to refine the process further. Alternatively, the group as a whole can lay down concepts – either single words, or brief sentences – and players can then construct character concepts from these ideas. For example concepts by Creed, see pages 46 to 55, or alternatively pages 301 to 303 for common human archetypes.

Once you've got a basic concept, a good next step is to name three or four things that you think your character might like; for example "my character likes to fight, he likes the colour red, and he has a thing for music". Next it often helps to think of things your character dislikes, such as cowardice, sand in their shoes, and vinegar.

If you are playing a Nemissary, you should take a little time to think about how your character made the transition and what changes that might have wrought upon them. It often helps to think about your character's concept in two pieces; what they once were and what they have now become.

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR LIFE

Lastly, before you start building the character proper, you might want to consider asking yourself the following questions:

- How was your character born? Were your parents rich or poor? Were you born in a well-armed town, or in a tiny settlement in the middle of nowhere?
- Are your family still alive? If so, do you have any brothers or sisters, cousins or relatives?
- How would others describe your character? Are you tall and handsome, or short and plain?
- What does your character desire the most? Does your character search for meaning, do they want wealth and prosperity, booze or women?
- Do they have any friends or companions? A doctor they see with some regularity, or a childhood sweetheart he whiles away precious hours with?
- What does your character find attractive? Do they prefer men or women? Are they less choosy? Do they find art beautiful, or do they prefer the rising sun?
- Where do they call home? Where have you chosen to make a life for yourself and what do you think of that place?
- Is your character married? Do you have a wife or husband? Are you widowed? Do you have any children?
- Does your character love anything or anyone? Do you have a lover, a child, or just a favourite weapon called "Vera"?
- Do they have any recurring mannerisms? An odd twitch, or a habit of tapping their feet maybe?
- Do you have any distinctive physical features? An old scar perhaps, pockmarks, or calluses from long hours working?
- How did your character learn their skills? Is it a family tradition, did they learn under a teacher, or did they carve their knowledge out for themselves?
- What does your character think of authority? Do they resent the power of those in charge? Do they like to work within the system, or do they rail against it?
- Which religion does your character follow? Are you even religious at all?
- Did you believe in the spiritual? Were you worried about taboos or horoscopes, or did you prefer to trust in what you can see and feel?
- Does your character have any prejudices? Do they dislike any certain groups of people? Do they dislike religious people, or do they just plain not like poor people?
- How do you mean to change the world? What little glimmer of hope lies inside you, that you might make something glorious or terrible of this life?

AND SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR DEATH

Just like before, it's a good idea to try and answer some of the following questions about your character:

- How did you die? Were you selected by another Nemissary to receive his gift, murdered by the Broodspawn, or taken still living to the heart of a Hive in an attempt to breed new Harbingers?
- Where did you die? Did your character die where the game begins, or have you travelled a vast distance from the site of your death?
- How old were you at the end? Had you lived a full life, or was your future stolen from you by circumstance?
- Which Shard did you use to complete the Second Breath? Was there a Shard close to you, or did you have to undertake a desperate journey before the Brood swallowed you again?

- What was your Rebirth like? Was it a quiet revelation or a gruelling fight through your own nightmares to live again?
- Which Creed did you seek? Did you find your Creed quickly or was it hard to find a purpose in death?
- What ideology do you belong to? Do you prefer to stay apart from the conflicts of your own kind, or do you want to change the world with others at your side?
- Do you see yourself as a monster? Do you feel trapped in your new form, or do you revel in the power that you now possess?
- To what extent has your Hollow emerged? Do you deny it at every turn, or do you embrace the pain inside you?
- Are you alone? Did others help you through the Second Breath? Did you emerge with a group?

Practical Concerns

After you've gotten a feel for the character, you will want to start thinking about the types of things your character will be proficient at, and this leads to what Attributes and Skills will be most important to them. A good way of doing this is to think of the types of things your character would do in their daily life, and let this lead you to the tasks that they would likely excel in.

Part 2 – Body and Mind

Hopefully you should have a fairly strong grasp of what your character is going to be like and an understanding of the essential rules of the game. Once both those things are covered, it's time to put pen to paper.

Step 1 – Little Things

You'll want to start by filling in your name, your character's name and their concept at the top of the character sheet. You'll also need to fill in some more details here as character creation goes on, but you don't need to worry about them now.

Step 2 – Attributes

Now it's time to assign your character's Attributes. As mentioned in the Core Rules these are very important and form the basis of your character's Pools.

A character's Attributes start at a specific rank depending upon whether they are playing a human or a Nemissary. They then get a pool of points to spend upon raising those Attributes. For humans, all the Attributes start at 1, whereas for Nemissaries they begin the game with 2.

Characters may then allocate a total of 13 points to their Attributes. These points are spent on a 1 for 1 basis and no Attribute may begin the game higher than 5 for humans or 6 for Nemissaries.

Dots on Paper

Worrying about things like concept might seem a waste of time to some people; after all, it's what your character can do and not who they are that matters. Ultimately, this is a very narrow way of thinking. Whilst it's fine to build concepts around abilities that you want to have, to really get the most enjoyment out of a game, a character needs to be more than just the mechanical capabilities they possess.

Sins isn't a game about just gaining treasure and notching the next bad guy off your list. It's about hopes and dreams, fear and despair. The game is a story and the stories we cherish are those where we really care for the characters, both for their successes and their failures.

Having said that, however you choose to play the game is your choice; we just wanted to point out that characters can be much more than what's written down on paper.

Mixed Groups

Sooner or later someone is going to want to play a human in a group full of Nemissaries or vice versa. Frankly there is nothing wrong with this but you do need to keep in mind that Nemissaries are far more powerful than humans and this difference in power only grows with time.

In general, we recommend that groups stick to one type of character or the other. Also in a world like Sins, humans tend to lend themselves better to short term stories with a very definite plot arc whereas Nemissaries are more suited to long term growth and development.

Just remember, with all that said, power is far from the only thing which makes a character interesting; humans have done incredible things in the past and will do so again. Also, as the world of Sins expands, Nemissaries are not the only entities who will make their powers felt in a changing world.

- **Body:** A character's physical capacity and a measure of general athletic capability.
- **Conviction:** A measure of strength of will and determination.
- **Cunning:** How quick-minded a character is, and how good they are at adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Reason:** A character's analytical capability, and a general measure of intelligence.

TRAITS REFERENCES

To help with character creation, we've provided a set of quick references to where you'll find detailed descriptions of each Trait in the book.

Attributes: Pages 128 to 136

Qualities: Pages 147 to 153

Skills: Pages 136 to 145

Specialities: Pages 170 to 170

Motivations: Pages 145 to 146

Vitality: Pages 87 to 91.

The *Iron Soul* Feature: Page 215

Shaping Features: Page 170

Creed: Page 171

Spite: Page 202

Songs: Pages 225 to 261

If none of this makes sense to you, it's probably because you haven't read the Core Rules of the game, and we would again suggest reading them before starting to make a character.

- **Passion:** How outgoing and charismatic a character is, along with an indicator of their force of personality.
- **Prowess:** A character's grace, poise and balance, determining how well the character deals with delicate tasks, and playing a part in how quickly a character can react in a given circumstance.

Characters start with the following ranks in Attributes:

- **Humans:** All Attributes are rank 1
- **Nemissaries:** All Attributes are rank 2.

Characters then allocate 13 points amongst their Attributes.

- A human's starting maximum rank is 5.
- A Nemissary's starting maximum rank is 6.

STEP 3 – QUALITIES

Characters get to choose a number of Qualities for themselves, defining unusual capabilities or background traits available to the character. You get to choose any 3 Qualities for which your character possesses the prerequisite Traits.

Primary Qualities

- All-Consuming Motivation
- Alluring
- Bright Soul
- Capricious Luck
- Code of Honour
- Daredevil
- Dedicated
- Determined
- Devout Faith
- Dire Hit
- Drive
- Eidetic Memory
- Experienced
- Fearless
- Graceful
- Hardy
- Huge
- Impaired
- Implacable Resolve
- Impressive Speaker
- Inspiring
- Lucky
- Mobile
- Pilot
- Quick
- Ride
- Roll With It
- Savvy
- Strong
- Tough as Nails
- Veteran

Background Qualities

- Assets
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Powerful Friends
- Property
- Sworn Brothers

Meta Qualities

- Awakened
- Calling
- Inner Reserve
- Inured
- Quickening
- Shard Marked
- Sleep of the Dead
- Ward

Each character may select 3 Qualities for which they meet the prerequisites.

Step 4 – Skills

Players next get to assign ratings to their characters' Skills. These are the various talents your character has picked up throughout their life, whether through dedicated training, or trial and error.

Like Attributes, Skills start at variable numbers and a character then gets to spend points to increase their Skills. Unlike Attributes, Skills cost an increasing amount and must be purchased sequentially. All characters begin with 1 point in each Natural Skill and Nemissaries begin the game with 1 point in the Keening Skill.

Characters receive 21 points to allocate to Skills, with each rank costing a number of points equal to the new rank. Skills must be purchased one rank at a time. As a result, getting a Skill at rank 3 requires you to also pay for rank 1 and 2 which would mean that raising a Skill from 0 to 3 in one go would cost you 6 points.

The maximum rank that Skills may be raised to at this step is 3, and the maximum any Skill may be raised to after this point is 4. Additionally, human characters may not raise Keening above 1 at this stage.

Natural Skills:

- **Athletics:** How well trained the character is in athletic tasks such as sports or running.
- **Authority:** How good the character is at projecting their presence, whether to intimidate or simply to assert authority.
- **Logic:** The ability to analyse situations and to work out solutions to complex problems.
- **Panache:** A measure of how good the character is at interacting with and manipulating people.
- **Perception:** A measure of the character's observational skills, and their ability to extract minute details from their surroundings.
- **Resolve:** How good the character is at steeling themselves against events, used for resisting torture, or enduring depravation.

Learnt Skills:

- **Crafts:** How good your character is at building and repairing various devices.
- **Keening:** Allows a character to listen to, analyse, and resist the Broodsong.
- **Knowledge:** How well-schooled a character is, their general level of education, and their likelihood of knowing a given fact.
- **Medicine:** Used to treat injuries, and assess the condition of people.

Forgotten Skills?

You might be wondering where the Skills for Drive or Pilot are, as well as the Skills which represent certain specialised tasks. Rest assured that these haven't been forgotten. It's simply that from a purely mechanical point of view, Skills need to be equally valuable to one another. This means that certain Skills didn't make the cut.

However, to represent these sorts of things, the HOPE Engine uses Qualities. For instance, being able to drive a vehicle is a Quality in the HOPE engine, and the rolls for driving a car primarily use Perception or other Skills where appropriate. After all, even flying a plane can arguably come down to a series of Academics and Perception checks, and so is better summed up as a Quality granting a character proficiency in this area rather than a full Skill in its own right.

For further details, see Skill Qualities under Traits and Dramatic Systems, on page 147.

- **Stealth:** Indicates how good the character is at going unnoticed, and doing things without being detected.
- **Survival:** A character's ability to survive in the wilderness, to set traps, and feed themselves.

Combat Skills:

- **Archery:** Specific training in using a bow, and care for the weapon. It also implies a basic knowledge of how to manufacture additional ammunition for the weapon.
- **Fight:** The character's general ability to fight, whether using bare fists, or an improvised weapon.
- **Marksmanship:** The use, maintenance and knowledge of firearms.
- **Melee:** A character's ability to properly utilise and care for close combat weapons.

Each character starts with the following ranks in Skills:

- All Basic Skills begin at Rank 1.
- Nemissaries only begin the game with Keening at Rank 1.

Characters then get 21 points to spend on Skills, with each increase costing a number of points equal to the new rank.

- Skills must be purchased in sequence, starting with rank 1, then 2, and so on.
- The maximum Skills may be raised to is 3.
- For human characters, Keening may only be raised to 1.

STEP 5 – SPECIALITIES

Characters now get to pick a single Speciality for themselves. This should be an area of expertise which is narrower in focus than a Skill but can apply frequently to various rolls a character undertakes. Some example Specialities are listed below, but this list is by no means exhaustive, and players are free to create their own within the guidelines laid out on page 145.

- **Anatomy:** Stabbing someone in the heart, telling whether someone is male or female at a glance, figuring out how someone died.
- **Awareness:** Studying an environment, observing people.
- **Bar fighting:** Avoiding a fight with that drunk over there, fighting with that drunk over there, breaking a bottle over someone's head.
- **Command:** Making people do what you want, organising a resistance, keeping people calm in a panic.
- **Compound bows:** Firing compound bows, maintaining them, fletching, recognising particular workmanship.
- **Computers:** Programming, building and using computers.
- **Crossbows:** Maintaining and using crossbows, making bolts, restringing the crossbow, recognising certain makes.
- **Determination:** Resisting advances, never giving up, helping others through their problems.
- **Drugs:** Making them, selling them, using them, you get the picture.
- **Foraging:** Finding food, identifying poisonous plants, finding medicinal herbs.
- **Free-Running:** Movement in city environments.
- **Handguns:** Repairing one, making one, reloading one, knowing about one.
- **Hiding:** Staying unnoticed, making a hidden shelter, concealing an item.
- **History:** Local area knowledge, avoiding the mistakes someone else made, coming up with details on the fly.
- **Improvised Weapons:** I wonder if that glass will kill someone?, "I'm going make this pencil disappear…"
- **Intimidation:** Getting people to back down, frightening someone to get information, avoiding a fight in the first place.
- **Investigation:** Speaking with people to find information, sorting through paperwork, working out the master plan.
- **Larceny:** Picking a pocket, performing a card trick, spotting a thief.
- **Literature:** Debates, impassioned speeches and historical background information.
- **Locks:** Picking them, making them, blowing one to bits.
- **Marathons:** Long distance running, time consuming chases.
- **Metalworking:** Forging a sword, repairing a gun, making a metal barricade.
- **Performance:** Singing, dancing, playing an instrument.
- **Physics:** Constructing advanced technology, working out a ballistic arc, figuring out how to demolish a building.
- **Resistance:** Withstanding torture, going without food, overcoming pain.
- **Riddles:** Working out someone's passcode, figuring out what the bad guy is up to, and obviously working out riddles.
- **Rifles:** Maintaining your weapon, cleaning it, clearing jams, building and repairing rifles, recognising certain models or makes.
- **Seduction:** Exactly what it sounds like.
- **Sneaking:** Moving quietly across a room, preparing an ambush, stabbing someone in the back.
- **Swords:** Pointy end goes in the other man.
- **Tracking:** Finding people, covering up your own tracks, telling how many people moved a certain way.
- **Traditional Archery:** Lining up your sights, volley fire, using a longbow.
- **Weight Training:** Lifting objects, breaking down doors.
- **Woodcrafts:** Making a bow, whittling birthday presents, constructing a sturdy shelter.
- **Wrestling:** Breaking someone's arm, fighting up close and personal, and who doesn't love a good suplex?

Choose either pick one Speciality from those listed above or create one of their own with GM approval.

PART 3 – REBIRTH

Human characters skip this step.

Now the roots of your character are completed, you need to add the elements specific to being a Nemissary.

STEP 1 – SHAPING

The first step is to choose the character's **Shaping**. This is chosen from one of the three options below, and a character may gain a particular Feature according to their chosen Shaping.

- **Reborn:** Born of the Brood, representing the standard by which other Nemissaries judge themselves.

- **Chosen:** Born of desire, these Nemissaries willingly accepted their gifts at the hands of another of their kind. They receive the **Maiden's Gift** Feature.
- **Defiled:** Born of hate, the bastard children of the Brood are rare and are forever haunted by the Brood's deliberate attempts to transform them into Harbingers. As a result they gain the **Mother's Gift** Feature.

Choose one of the three Shapings; note the associated Feature and its effects.

Step 2 – Creed and Hollow

At this point the character's **Creed** and **Hollow Nature** need to be defined. These affect which Songs will be the easiest for a character to learn. If Creed and Hollow Nature are different, they each grant a Favoured Song to the character. On the other hand, if both would provide the same Favoured Song, that character gains the **Iron Soul** Feature.

The character may pick one of the five Creeds listed below:

- **The Sword:** The children of War and Conflict, favouring the element of Fire and the **Song of Flesh.**
- **The Tower:** The bringers of Order and Law, favouring the element of Earth, and the **Song of Bone.**
- **The Veil:** Disciples of Pleasure and Experience, favouring the element of Water, and the **Song of Blood.**
- **The Mirror:** Keepers of Secrets and Lore, favouring the element of Air, and the **Song of Will.**
- **The Mask:** The children of Broken Dreams, of many lives and none, favouring the element of Void, and the **Song of Brood.**

The character picks a single Hollow Nature from the list below:

- **The Monster:** The raging beast that wishes to destroy everything that it sees, favouring the element of Fire, and the **Song of Flesh.**
- **The Tyrant:** Desiring to rule over everything before it, the Tyrant is everything twisted that Law has to offer, favouring the element of Earth and the **Song of Bone.**
- **The Defiler:** This creature wishes to warp everything it touches, leaving no benevolent thing or place uncorrupted. It favours the element of Water, and the **Song of Blood.**
- **The Deceiver:** Lies define this monster. Nothing it says can ever be trusted, and no knowledge will ever escape it untainted. It favours the element of Air and the **Song of Will.**
- **The Traitor:** This fiend's greatest desire is to be one with the Brood again, to watch the whole world and all its pain consumed in the comfort of the Broodsong. It favours the element of Void and the **Song of Brood.**

Choose the character's Creed and Hollow Nature, record favoured Songs.

If a character possesses only a single Favoured Song they gain the **Iron Soul** Feature.

Step 3 – Choose Arietta

It's time to choose the character's actual supernatural abilities as expressed through the five Songs, which represent the broad areas of supernatural power to which a Nemissary has access, and their accompanying Arietta, representing the specific powers the Nemissary possesses. The five Songs are as follows;

- **Song of Flesh:** The power to change a Nemissary's physical appearance and capabilities, and later to reshape flesh on a larger scale, even creating new life, absorbing flesh, and regenerating at impossible rates.
- **Song of Bone:** This power allows the Nemissary to alter the properties of bone, both in the environment and themselves, creating deadly weaponry or tearing foes apart from the inside. At its higher levels, it allows the Nemissaries to craft the extraordinary material known as Voidglass from normal bone.
- **Song of Blood:** This power allows a Nemissary to delve into the control of their own inner nature, allowing them to spread or cure plagues at whim. This ultimately leads to the refinement and control of Anima inside a Nemissary's body, and overcoming many of their natural weaknesses.
- **Song of Will:** This power represents the least visceral of the Nemissary's capabilities, but is nevertheless potent, allowing the Nemissary to control the minds of others, to feel out and disrupt the use of other Songs. This eventually leads to the ability to devour Anima from the environment, and to control the very nature of their own being.
- **Song of Brood:** This power is perhaps the most mistrusted and feared of all Songs, and allows the Nemissary to directly command the Brood. At lower levels they can disrupt the Brood's Synergy or pull knowledge from their consciousness. Ultimately as a Nemissary's power increases, they can wrestle control of armies, opposing even the Brood Mothers for dominance.

Each Song possesses a range of Arietta of varying levels for a character to purchase. A starting Nemissary has 7 ranks worth of Arietta. These are split between the Songs available to the Nemissary.

A character may have up to Rank 2 Arietta from their Favoured Songs, and Rank 1 Arietta from their non-Favoured Songs.

Pick 7 total Ranks worth of Arietta.

No Arietta's Rank may be greater than 2 from a Favoured Song, or 1 if it is from a non-Favoured Song.

PART 4 – GROWTH

Characters now get to spend 13 Character Points. These may be used in varying ways to customise the character. The costs for doing so are as follows:

- A character may spend 7 points to raise an Attribute by 1. This may now increase a starting Attribute to 6 but no higher.
- A character may increase a Skill's rank by spending a number of points equal to the desired Rank. This may increase a starting Skill to 4 but no higher, and may also be used to buy a new Skill at rank 1.
- A character may spend 3 points to gain a new Speciality.
- A character may spend 3 points to gain a Quality for which they meet the prerequisites.
- A character may spend points to purchase Arietta with a Rank equal to the points spent. The maximum Rank for Arietta follows the rules outlined in Part 3, Step 3.

Characters may spend 13 CP to improve their Traits;

- **Attributes:** 7 CP.
- **Skills:** Next rank in CP.
- **Specialities:** 3 CP.
- **Qualities:** 3 CP.
- **Arietta:** Listed Rank in CP.

PART 5 – LAST THINGS

Nearing the end, it's time to work on the things which flow from the choices you've already made.

STEP 1 – RECORD FATE, CREED AND SPITE

A character begins the game with Fate based on their total CP. For starting characters, this will always mean that they begin the game with Fate 1.

Aside from Fate, players also need to note their starting Creed rank, a measure of their supernatural potency, and Spite which is a measure of their Hollow's strength.

Nemissary characters begin the game with a Permanent Creed and Spite rank of 1. They also possess a number of Temporary Creed and Spite based on their Shaping as noted below;

- **Reborn:** 1 Point of Temporary Creed and Spite.
- **Chosen:** 2 points of Temporary Creed and Spite.
- **Defiled:** 3 points of Temporary Creed and Spite.

STEP 2 – MOTIVATIONS

Players now need to establish their characters' Motivations which are the things they strive for and the values they hold dear. A player gets to pick a number of Motivations based upon their Passion and Conviction.

Add the character's Passion and Conviction together. If the total equals 5 or less, you begin the game with 1 Motivation. If the total is 9 or less, you begin the game with 2 Motivations. Finally if the total is 10 or more you begin the game with 3 Motivations.

Each of these has a Foundation, representing the basic emotional component of the Motivation, and a Drive which represents the more detailed overall goal linked to it.

The Foundation of each Motivation may be picked from the list below or created using the guidelines on page 83;

- Anger
- Charity
- Despair
- Determination
- Faith
- Fear
- Hate

- Hope
- Jealousy
- Joy
- Love
- Lust
- Need
- Pride

Drives don't have to be chosen at the start of play but it can certainly help a character if you have them. For more information on Drives and Motivations in general, see page 83.

Players also need to note the maximum number of times each Motivation may be Channelled. This is equal to the average of their Passion and Conviction.

Players can pick up to a number of Motivations based on the total of their Passion and Conviction;

- **2 to 5:** 1 Motivation.
- **6 to 9:** 2 Motivations.
- **10 or more:** 3 Motivations.

Step 3 – Focus

Focus is a powerful resource representing a character's stamina and willpower, and is used to allow them to escape from deadly and unwinnable situations or to turn the odds in their favour.

A character's starting Focus is equal to their Fate plus the average of their Conviction and Cunning.

Record starting Focus:

Fate + ((Conviction + Cunning)÷2)

Step 4 – Vitality

Players need to now work out their character's Vitality Thresholds and Wound Tracks, together representing the amount of punishment they can take before succumbing to injuries.

A character's Vitality Thresholds fall under the following types and are worked out as noted:

- **Injured:** A character's Injured Wounds are equal to their Conviction, including any modifiers from Qualities.
- **Mauled:** A character's Mauled Wounds are equal to their Conviction -1, including any modifiers from Qualities.
- **Critical:** A character's Critical Wounds are equal to their Conviction -2, including any modifiers from Qualities.
- **Deadly:** Characters have a single Deadly Wound.
- **Overkill:** Characters have a single Overkill Wound.

Youth and Experience

The rules assume that the average character is between the ages of 18 and 30. Some players however may wish to generate characters outside of this age range, and the Quality "**Experienced**" can be used to represent this.

However, this still doesn't account for particularly young or old characters. Some players may want to play hardened veterans but feel that character creation simply doesn't provide enough CP to cover this. In these situations, we recommend that the matter is resolved in one of two ways.

In the case of particularly young characters, we recommend that they are assumed to be prodigies, possessing a wealth of skills, but generally not very impressive attributes.

For older characters, we recommend that this character has "lost their edge", and no longer possesses the impressive range of abilities which they once had in their prime, and that these characters should justify experience less as learning new skills, but rather as recovering what age and apathy has taken away.

"Why 1+?"

Some of you might be wondering why all the Wound Thresholds work off a base of your Body and then add +1. This is because in combat, a draw doesn't hit an opponent under normal circumstances. This means that you will always hit an opponent with at least 1 Outcome. As a result, you are essentially getting +1 Damage for free, and that's what the +1 to your Wound Thresholds is about.

Advanced Characters

You won't always want to create a starting character. Sometimes the GM might want to build an NPC or the group might want to start with more powerful characters. In either case, this is straightforward and just results in additional CP, Fate, Creed and so on. For more information on this, see the GM's Toolkit, Page 279.

Characters also have the Vitality Thresholds that damage must surpass to inflict Wounds, as calculated below::

- **Injured:** Equal to 1 + half the character's Body, rounded down.
- **Mauled:** Equal to the 1 + the character's Body.
- **Critical:** Equal to 1 + double the character's Body.
- **Deadly:** Equal to 1 + triple the character's Body.
- **Overkill:** Equal to 1 + quadruple the character's Body.

Record Vitality and Wound Tracks as noted above.

Step 5 – Anima Pools

A Nemissary begins the game with a maximum Anima Pool of 4 Neutral, 3 Light and 3 Dark Anima. The character must also increase their maximum Light and Dark Anima pools by a total number of points equal to the average of their Passion and Conviction. Characters begin the game with a full Anima pool.

Record starting Anima:

- 4 Neutral Anima
- Creed × 3 Light Anima
- Creed × 3 Dark Anima
- Increase Light and Dark Anima pools by a total number of points equal to the average of the Nemissary's Passion and Conviction.
- Nemissaries begin the game with their Anima pools full.

Step 6 – Equipment

Characters are assumed to possess the basic necessities of life. No-one growing up in the world of Sins, or waking up in it for that matter will survive for long without basic equipment.

Each character begins the game with basic survival gear and 1 weeks' worth of rations. They may also select one of the following packages, or two of the following packages if they are a Nemissary:

- 1 Very Rare item, 2 Common items.
- 1 Rare item, 2 Uncommon items, 4 Common items.
- 4 Uncommon items, 4 Common items.
- 2 Very Rare items.
- 2 Rare items, 4 Common items.
- 8 Common items.

Each of your character's choices may be selected from any appropriate items, up to the listed rarity, so long as it is reasonable for your character to possess them. Any choices which remain unspent are then converted into cash based on the setting area the game is taking place in (see page 187).

Character Creation Example

Jane has set out to build a character for her group's Sins game. Before she begins, she checks with the GM and the rest of the group what kind of characters and concepts would be fine for the game. She establishes that pretty much anything she makes will be fine, as long as they can reasonably be in the area the GM specifies.

She mulls over a few ideas in her head and decides she wants to play a character who is reasonably good at combat. She writes a few ideas down and comes up with the concept of a hard-worn gunslinger.

With a concept in mind, she goes through some basic questions about her character's life. Taking some of the notes she's written, she explores them with the rest of her group. She decides her character will be in their mid-twenties and be one of the Reborn. She also decides she wants to be of the Architect faction and decides to call her character Mia Kendle. She holds off on deciding on a final Creed for now and starts working on her Traits.

As she's creating a Nemissary, she starts with a rating of 2 in each Attribute. She then spends her 13 points to get the following Attribute ranks. She assigns a rank of 5 to her Prowess and Conviction, 4 each to her Passion, Cunning and Reason, and finally a rating of 3 to her Body. With this done, she moves on to Qualities.

Deciding she wants to play a character that's seen a lot of the world despite her young age, she chooses the Experienced Quality. To go along with this, she uses her two remaining Qualities to purchase Strong and Hardy.

With Qualities out of the way, she begins dealing with her character's Skills. She thinks about what her character might possess, and starts like all characters by assigning a rank of 1 to her Natural Skills, and a rank of 1 in Keening as she wishes to play a Nemissary. She then gets to assign 21 points to her Skills which gives her the following; Marksmanship at 3, Athletics, Perception, Panache, Authority, and Resolve all at 2, and finally Logic, Keening, Crafts, Survival, Knowledge and Medicine at 1.

With her Skills complete, she chooses her Speciality. As none of the standard ones strike her fancy, she decides to make her own. Initially she chooses Combat Veteran, but when discussed with the GM they both decide that this Speciality is far too broad and potentially open to abuse. As a result she changes this to Battlefield Operations. Both she and the GM agree that this Speciality will apply to all Actions Jane undertakes whilst on a live battlefield, which for the game's purposes here means an environment where a dozen or more combatants are fighting.

Next, she turns her attention to the supernatural side of her character. As she already decided she wants to play one of the Reborn, she doesn't get a Shaping Feature and so moves on to choosing a Creed and Hollow Nature.

She first considers the Sword because it fits her skillset well, but decides in the end that she prefers the idea of a sort of wandering judge and settles on the Tower. Deciding to choose something relating to her martial side now, she picks the Monster for her Hollow Nature, giving her the Favoured Songs of Bone and Flesh.

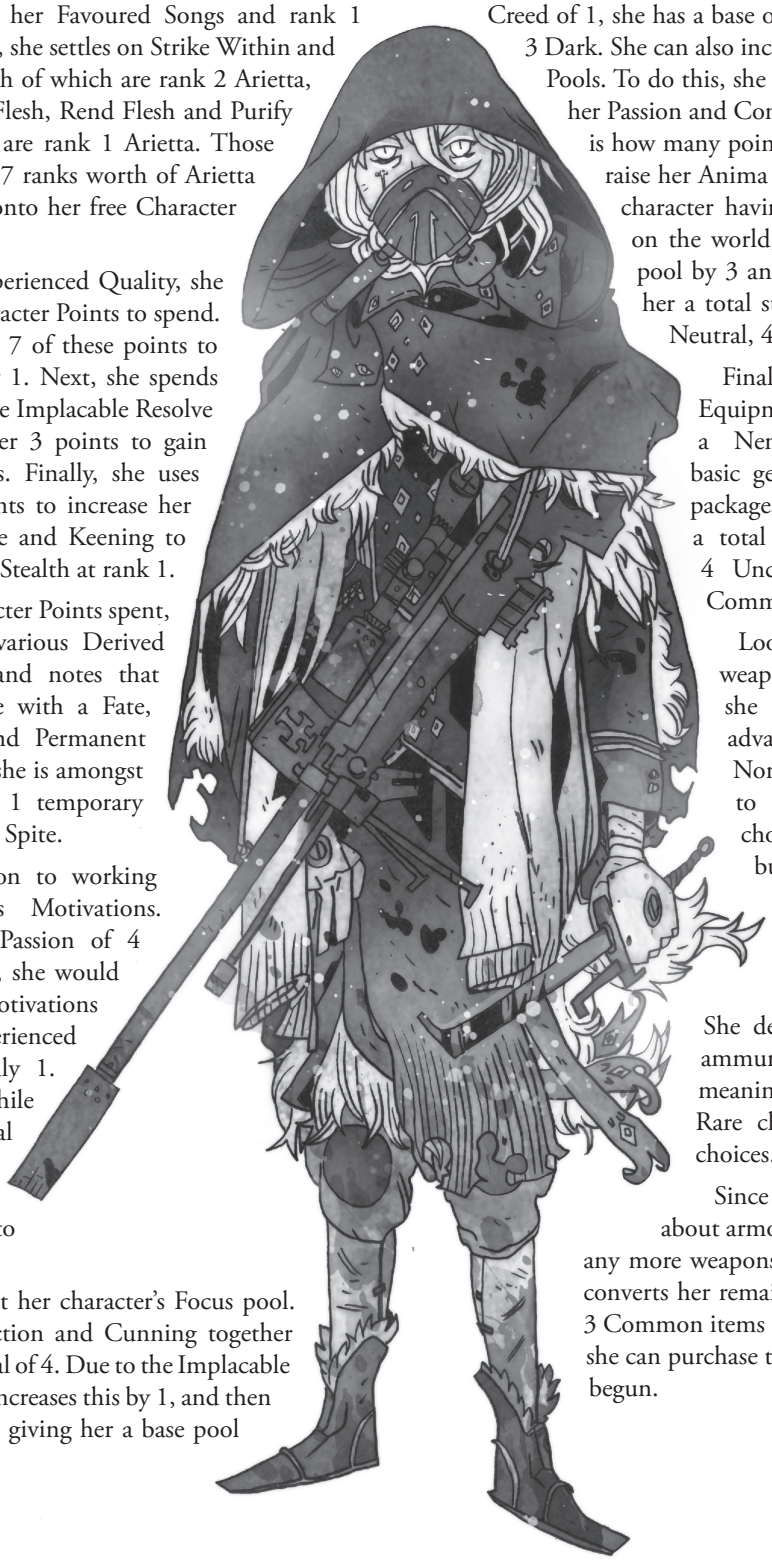
She then gets to choose 7 ranks of Arietta, which may be up to rank 2 in her Favoured Songs and rank 1 otherwise. Ultimately, she settles on Strike Within and Quicksilver Flesh both of which are rank 2 Arietta, followed by Restore Flesh, Rend Flesh and Purify Anima, all of which are rank 1 Arietta. Those combined add up to 7 ranks worth of Arietta meaning she moves onto her free Character Points.

Because of her Experienced Quality, she has a total of 20 Character Points to spend. She decides to spend 7 of these points to increase her Body by 1. Next, she spends 3 points to acquire the Implacable Resolve Quality, and a further 3 points to gain a Speciality of Rifles. Finally, she uses her remaining 7 points to increase her Knowledge, Medicine and Keening to rank 2, and purchase Stealth at rank 1.

With all her Character Points spent, she works out her various Derived Traits. She checks and notes that she begins the game with a Fate, Permanent Creed and Permanent Spite all at 1, and as she is amongst the Reborn she has 1 temporary Creed and temporary Spite.

She then moves on to working out her character's Motivations. Because she has a Passion of 4 and Conviction of 5, she would normally have 2 Motivations but due to the Experienced Quality she gets only 1. She thinks for a while about her potential Motivation and comes up with Hope (Bring justice to the world).

Now she works out her character's Focus pool. She adds her Conviction and Cunning together and halves it, for a total of 4. Due to the Implacable Resolve Quality, she increases this by 1, and then adds her Fate to this, giving her a base pool of 6 Focus.



After this is dealt with, she works out her Vitality. With a Conviction of 5 and the Hardy Quality, she has 5 Injured Wounds, 5 Mauled Wounds, 4 Critical Wounds, 1 Dying Wound and 1 Overkill Wound. With a Body of 4, her Damage Thresholds are Injured 3, Mauled 5, Critical 9, Dying 13 and Overkill 17.

She next calculates her Anima pools. Since she has a Creed of 1, she has a base of 4 Neutral, 3 Light and 3 Dark. She can also increase her Light and Dark Pools. To do this, she works out the average of her Passion and Conviction, which is 4. This is how many points in total she can use to raise her Anima Pools. Since she sees her character having a fairly cold outlook on the world, she increases her Dark pool by 3 and her Light by 1, giving her a total starting Anima pool of 4 Neutral, 4 Light and 6 Dark.

Finally, she decides on Equipment. Because she is a Nemissary, she gets the basic gear plus two equipment packages. She uses these to gain a total of 1 Very Rare item, 4 Uncommon items, and 6 Common items.

Looking through the weapons and equipment list, she decides to purchase an advanced combat shotgun. Normally, she would have to use another Very Rare choice for the ammunition, but since shotguns have the Simple Munitions Quality, she only needs to use one of her Common choices. She decides to take 3 sets of ammunition for the weapon, meaning she has used 1 Very Rare choice, and 3 Common choices.

Since she's not too worried about armour and isn't interested in any more weapons for the time being, she converts her remaining 4 Uncommon and 3 Common items into Trade Goods so that she can purchase things once gameplay has begun.

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SOS

CHAPTER VII

EQUIPMENT

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EQUIPMENT RULES

The Core Rules, and to a greater extent the Combat Rules, discuss the effects of equipment. In this section, we will expand upon those concepts, introduce new ones and provide you with a wealth of varied and interesting equipment for your characters to use. This section also discusses direct trading of equipment and how to use cash in the game. Finally, there are also rules for crafting your own items for use or sale.

CORE ITEM TRAITS

As the Core Rules laid out, normal items have three sets of Traits; Effect, Rarity and Size. As Effect has already been explained in the Core Rules, you'll find below an overview of the remaining two types of Traits.

ITEM RARITY

An item's rarity is a measure of how difficult it is to find. It's also used as a quick way of assigning equipment during character creation, as the basis for the Trade rules, and is important in item crafting as described later in this chapter.

All items are rated with one of the following grades of Rarity, and if no Rarity is stated for an item it can be assumed to be of Common availability.

Common: The item would appear in most marketplaces, and many people would have such items in their home or on their person.

Uncommon: These items still occur with relative frequency, but tend to be purchased in specialised shops, or on full market days. Most people probably possess one or two uncommon items, but don't normally carry them on their person.

Rare: These items are difficult to find, but by no means impossible. A specialised shop would probably sell a handful of examples, and most people, if relevant to their status in life, might possess one or two rare items. These will normally be treasured and probably not displayed.

Very Rare (V. Rare): These items are problematic at best to acquire. Even highly specialised shops or traders will be unlikely to simply have one lying about. It can often take a great deal of time and effort to track down an item of this rarity. Few people own them, and fewer still would travel with them.

Extremely Rare (Ex. Rare): These items are almost impossible to track down, requiring weeks or months of effort. They are either rarely ever produced, or extremely expensive to manufacture.

Impossibly Rare (Imp. Rare): No default items exist at this step of Rarity. Only fine quality examples of Extremely Rare items would qualify as this step. This is the last step of rarity which is ever traded openly, and is normally reserved for unique examples of their kind.

Impossible (Imp): This category exists purely for masterwork versions of Extremely Rare items. Creations of this magnitude are essentially never bartered or sold. In the highly rare scenario that they are created, it is a one-of-a-kind event: often the culmination of a lifetime's work.

SIZE

In addition to Rarity, items are given a Size rating. This is more than just a literal measure of how large the item is, and also accounts to a certain extent for bulk and weight.

Normally items will always have their size listed in their description or on a table of reference. If they do not, the GM should assign a Size to the item based on the categories below, keeping in mind that particularly awkward or heavy items should generally be considered one or two size categories larger when trying to work this out.

Tiny: These items are about the size of a marble or a pen, and are normally very light, though enough of them might have a bit of weight to them. Most coins are also this size.

Very Small: These objects can normally be concealed in the palm of a hand. They might be a fairly large ring, a letter, a derringer, or perhaps a necklace.

Small: These objects generally won't fit in the palm of your hand but are still easily concealed. A can of pop or a knife are good examples of small items.

Medium: These objects are fairly substantial and usually are somewhere between six inches and a foot long. Good examples are a portable radio, a large handgun, or a machete.

Large: These objects are fairly hefty and substantial, and normally require two hands to use properly. Good examples would be shotguns, a backpack or perhaps a baby carrier.

Very Large: These objects are the upper limit of what can comfortably be carried by a person. They include such things as a full body harness, a light machinegun, long spears or a television set.

Item Quality

Items are not all created equal. Some are far superior to others and a few are hardly worth using at all. Below you can find an overview of the various degrees of Item Quality, and unless otherwise stated it should be assumed that an item is of Normal quality.

These rules hold true for all standard items but the specific mechanics associated with weapons and armour may vary slightly, and if so are noted below. Also, where quality comes into effect on a living creature such as an animal or a slave, it should be taken into account when working out their Traits, but again the stated rules here would not apply.

Terrible quality: These items are on their last legs, or else were made horrifically in the first place. They actually incur a -2 Pool penalty and will generally break the first time a roll is failed using one of these items. In addition, these items may not be repaired. In the case of items which have less tangible traits, they will generally be an extremely undesirable example. Clothes may be ratty and torn, or food would be rotten and so on.

Terrible quality items cannot normally be purchased and few would willingly buy them even if they could. If for some strange reason you did want to acquire one they are 2 rarity steps lower than normal.

Poor quality: These items are either of shoddy manufacture, or have undergone persistent abuse and neglect. These items impose a -1 Pool penalty for their use, and they are far more likely to break and are much more difficult to repair, increasing the Difficulty to do so by 1.

In terms of items without a specific use, Poor quality items will be generally inferior examples. Clothes might be lacklustre or poorly stitched, and food will probably be stale or unpalatable, but otherwise okay to eat.

Poor quality items are somewhat cheaper than normal, being purchased at 1 rarity step lower than normal.

Normal quality: This is the quality at which most items are produced. Most competent craftsmen create items of this quality. There are no special benefits, penalties or price changes associated with items of Normal quality.

Really Big Things

The size rules presented here do not correspond with the sizes of people or objects, and these operate on a totally different scale. If a strict comparison is needed, you can assume that an adult human is Very Large on the item scale. Certain items discussed in this chapter are also not able to be applied to this scale, but are generally not the kind of thing characters carry around.

For most of these items, this should be fairly obvious; after all characters won't generally be carrying their car or motorbike on their back. Having said that however, Songs can do certain interesting things – wait, no, never mind, don't even go there…

Fine quality: These items are exquisite, and increase their benefits by +1 Pool. Alternatively these items will be particularly impressive examples of their kind. Clothes would likely be elegant and impressive, and food would be sweet and fresh for example.

Fine quality weapons are handled just like other items gaining a +1 Pool bonus. Fine quality armour on the other hand functions differently, providing any one of the following effects;;

- Reduce the armour's Pool penalty by 1.
- Grant the armour the 'Comfortable' trait.
- Remove the 'Complex' trait from the armour.

Fine quality items are more difficult to acquire, and their rarity is increased by 1 step.

Masterwork: These items are truly flawless, and beautiful in every respect. They increase their Pool benefit by +2, but do come with one downside. Their impressive construction makes them difficult to repair, increasing the Difficulty to do so by 1.

Masterwork weapons gain a +1 Pool bonus like above, but also gain +1 Damage. Masterwork armour increases its Resilience by 1 and may apply one of the same benefits available to Fine quality Armour.

Masterwork items, when offered for sale at all, are incredibly expensive, and are considered to be 2 rarity steps higher than normal.

Weapon Traits

Weapons possess most of the same basic traits as other items but also possess some traits of their own. The specific traits differ depending upon whether the weapon is intended for ranged or close combat.

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPON TRAITS

Close combat weapons possess all the same traits as normal items with the addition of **Damage** and **Weapon Qualities**. Damage, as outlined in the Combat Rules, is added to your character's Body to work out the amount of harm you can inflict on a successful attack. Weapon Qualities on the other hand are various features common to weapons which can affect combat in numerous ways.

RANGED COMBAT WEAPON TRAITS

Firearms and bows possess a Size and Rarity just like normal items but most do not modify a character's Pool unless they are of superior or inferior quality. Both firearms and bows possess a Damage trait just like Melee weapons and have a unique trait, **Range**.

For bows, Damage functions just like it does for close combat weapons. For firearms and crossbows however, the effect is different. The weapon's total damage is applied and the character's Body is ignored. A weapon's Range trait is used to determine how far the weapon can be used in combat. Both these traits are described in detail in the Combat Rules on page 121.

Finally, firearms alone have the **Ammo** trait. This trait tells you how much ammunition the weapon has before it needs to be reloaded. There are two special considerations that apply.

Some weapons possess a "-" instead of an Ammo rating, and this means that the weapon has to be reloaded on each shot and does not carry ammunition internally. This applies most commonly to bows but can also apply to some firearms such as a speargun.

Some weapons also have a "+" next to their Ammo rating, which notes that the weapon can have rounds chambered. In most circumstances this is discouraged as having rounds chambered in the gun can be a little risky, and in certain circumstances the gun could fire prematurely.

Once per Story, the GM can force a character carrying a weapon with chambered rounds to make a Luck Check, and if they fail a round discharges, hitting the most appropriate target for half the weapon's damage.

WEAPON QUALITIES

Each weapon includes a listing of any Qualities it possesses. These function in a similar way to normal Qualities possessed by characters but with the exception that certain Qualities can stack as noted in their description. For instance, both Reach and Impact will stack with any Reach or Impact that the character produces on their own. That said, a trait like Voidglass or Impaling cannot stack in this way as it isn't explicitly allowed under its description.

Any Qualities come into effect while the character is using the weapon. When a character has a weapon readied or drawn and is capable of using the weapon, all its Qualities come into effect. Likewise, if a character draws a weapon during a round, any of its Qualities will be considered to be in effect from that point onwards. The inverse is also true and if a character drops or loses a weapon, they loses any of the Qualities attributed to it. For characters wishing to use two weapons at once, refer to the combat rules on page 123.

Arcing: These ranged weapons can be fired along an arcing trajectory through the air, allowing them to circumvent cover and increase their range at the cost of accuracy.

Effect: A character may fire the weapon with an arcing trajectory by incurring a -1 Pool penalty. This lowers the bonuses provided by cover to targets by 1 and increases the weapon's Range by one step.

Armour Piercing: These weapons are particularly adept at punching through armour.

Effect: Weapons with this Quality halve any Resilience provided by a target's armour.

Auto-Fire: Weapons with this Quality are capable of firing rapidly, whether through burst fire or a simple auto-loading mechanism.

Effect: This Quality may stack and as a result has a rating of 1 or greater. When attacking with this weapon, the character may opt to use more ammunition to gain greater accuracy and damage. For every rank in this quality a weapon possesses, the character may use an extra D6 of ammunition to increase their Pool by 1. The ammunition used and Pool benefit are cumulative, and all ammunition used in this way is added together before being reduced by the character's Marksmanship.

Example: *A character has a gun with Auto-Fire 3. This means they could use up to 3 additional D6 for working out ammunition expenditure to gain an additional +3 Pool. The character decides they want to use 2 additional dice to gain a total of +2 Pool. This means they roll in total 3D6 – Marksmanship to work out how much ammunition is expended.*

Ballistic: This Quality means that the weapon uses a small, highly accurate round travelling at extreme velocity.

Effect: All weapons with this Quality halve any Resilience gained through armour that a target possesses, unless that armour has the Hardened Quality. If both this effect and Armour Piercing would occur at the same time, the target's armour is instead completely ignored. Note that this Quality is only considered to be in effect if the target's armour does **not** possess the Hardened Quality.

Note: All firearms possess this Quality whether it is listed or not.

Blast: These weapons impact a large area and are extremely effective at damaging multiple targets.

Effect: Blast can stack and is normally rated between 1 and 12. Blast is used to determine the radius of effect of a weapon, with each point of Blast meaning an attack will radiate out 1 metre. For more information on how explosives work and specifically how Blast interacts with the combat rules, see page 125 in the Combat Rules chapter.

Bone-Sculpted: These elegant and lethal weapons are crafted by a Nemissary skilled in the Song of Bone, transforming this mundane substance into something far lighter and more durable than steel.

Effect: These items may only be crafted by a Nemissary who possesses both the Shape Bone and Enduring Bone Arietta.

Bow: These weapons utilise the physical strength of the user rather than a mechanical system to give them their deadly effects.

Effect: This weapon is a bow and uses the Archery skill rather than Marksmanship. Unlike other ranged weapons, a user may add their Body to this weapon's Damage. However, this comes at a price.

First, a user must have a Body at least equal to the bow's Damage. If they do not, the bow will be unsteady and inflict a -1 Pool penalty when in use. Having Body too high can also be a problem, and a user may only safely use a bow if their Body is no more than double the damage rating of the bow. If their Body is higher than this amount, they must either accept a -1 Pool penalty or risk snapping the bow. If they choose to risk snapping the bow, roll 1d6 per use, and on a result of a 1 the bow breaks.

Example: *A character has a body of 5. They could use a shortbow or a longbow with no issues. If that character were a Nemissary and later boosted their Body to 7, they would be in danger of breaking the short bow, so would either have to take a -1 Pool penalty or roll 1d6 to see if the bow is destroyed after each shot.*

Compact: These weapons can be coiled up or otherwise be made smaller quite quickly.

Effect: When not in use, this weapon is considered two size categories smaller to a minimum of Tiny.

Dangerous: These weapons are dangerous to use and can be as harmful to their wielder as they are their enemies.

Effect: Whilst this weapon is in use, there is a chance for the wielder to harm themselves. If on any roll they make they gain no Successes or have all their Successes reduced to 0 due to penalties they are considered to have immediately struck themselves with this weapon as if they had taken a hit with no points of Outcome. Note that reducing Successes in an Opposed roll does not count towards this.

Gaining Weapon Qualities

Weapons can gain Qualities they don't have listed under their description – the most common instance this happens is with Reach and Impact, both of which can be generated simply by a character possessing certain traits.

A few types of weapons also have a trait which applies to them all equally. For instance, though it's not listed on each weapon, all firearms have the Ballistic Quality and all bows and crossbows have the Impaling Quality.

"Big Bada-Boom!"

The rules for Blast weapons are not intended to simulate large scale explosives: only hand grenades, rocket launchers and the like. If characters make the highly unlikely and very suicidal decision to utilise large scale explosives in combat, they deserve everything they get. For more information, see page 125.

Entangling: These weapons are particularly effective at entangling opponents and making it difficult for them to attack back.

Effect: The character using this weapon can choose to lower their Pool by 1 to attempt to entangle the opponent. If they succeed on their attack, regardless of whether damage is inflicted or not, the target is considered "Entangled".

When Entangled a target takes a -1 Success penalty to their actions and may not move further away from their opponent until they use a Standard Action to untangle themselves. Alternatively, if the target's Body is 5 or greater, they may use a Minor Action to untangle themselves.

If a weapon with this Quality is not used at range against an opponent, then the character will need to hold on to the weapon in order for the effects above to take place. Also, they cannot move away from their target. If they let go of the weapon or wish to move away, the target is no longer Entangled.

Flamer: These weapons are amongst the most effective and feared in the world of Sins, but are also some of the most dangerous to their own wielders. Such items are bulky, requiring a full harness and a backpack to provide the fuel the weapon needs.

Effect: A weapon with this trait may never benefit from Burst Fire rules and may never be used on a target at a Range greater than 20m. Attacks from this weapon are always considered to be Incendiary and ignore armour that does not have either the Enclosed or Fire Resistant Qualities.

Any time the character is attacked, there is a chance that the fuel tank will ignite. Every time the character takes a wound in combat, roll a D6. On a score of a 1, the fuel tank ignites. You then roll 1d6. If you roll 3 or less, the backpack explodes.

Alternatively, an enemy can target the backpack at -1 Pool. The fuel tank itself is considered to have a Resilience of 3 and if the opponent's Damage is 6 or more the fuel supply will ignite, and if the damage would be 9 or more, or any damage involving an incendiary weapon, the backpack will ignite and explode.

If the fuel tank ignites, the character will be hit as if they were affected by their own weapon with 3 additional damage, and will be set on fire as per the rules on page 93.

In the event the backpack explodes, the wielder will take damage equal to five times the weapon's base damage. Also, the weapon then explodes as per an indirect explosive with a Blast rating equal to the weapon's unmodified damage. This effect ignores the unfortunate wielder as they've suffered enough and are probably already dead.

Full Auto: These weapons can unleash all their ammunition in a single devastating hail of fire, the effects of which test the nerve of even the most stalwart combatants.

Effect: Weapons with this Quality may opt to unleash all their remaining ammunition in a single devastating attack. For every 10 full rounds of ammunition expended, the character's Pool and Damage are increased by 1 for that attack. The benefits and ammunition expenditures are cumulative up to a maximum of +5 to both Pool and Damage, and may not be combined with Auto-Fire in any way.

Opponents targeted by Full Auto double the benefits of Cover versus the attack. The effects of Full Auto override the normal rules for expenditure of ammunition during an attack. As a result, **weapons firing using Full Auto cannot Stall**.

If using a chain-feed with this weapon, it is considered to consume the weapon's default ammunition in rounds per Full Auto attempt. **A character may make only one Full Auto attack in any given Round**.

Impact: These weapons hit home with impressive force and are frankly dangerous to block.

Effect: This Quality is unusual in various respects. First of all it can stack, and secondly you can get it without a weapon having it by default.

Weapons with an Impact rating deal damage when an opponent beats you in an Opposed close combat roll. The damage dealt is equal to the total Impact rating that your character possesses.

As noted, Weapons can gain an Impact rating even if it's not listed. To work out whether you gain an Impact rating, add the weapon's Damage to your character's Body. For every point this total exceeds 5, you are considered to have one point of Impact. **All these sources explicitly do stack with one another to work out a character's total Impact**.

Example: *A character with a Body of 4 wielding a fire axe, which has a Damage of 4, would possess a total of 5 ranks of Impact; 3 from the combined Damage and 2 from the weapon's Impact trait itself.*

Assuming the character attacked or was attacked in close combat and their opponent won, that opponent would suffer 5 Damage, likely taking Wounds in the process.

Impact isn't infallible. Certain Outcome Options in combat can render it ineffective and various qualities and the effects of an extremely high Body Attribute can modify it further. Page references for game mechanics which can affect Impact are as follows;

- Impact in Combat, page 113
- Outcome Options, page 117
- Epic Attributes, page 128
- Qualities (Dire Hit), page 149
- Qualities (Roll With It), page 151

Impaling: These weapons are particularly good at driving into a target, and if left there are highly effective against the Brood.

Effect (Close Combat): If a target hits with this weapon, they may elect to leave it in the target which functions in the same way as if they had attempted to impale a target with a conventional weapon, but without the normal penalties to do so. All other effects still apply as discussed on page 117.

Effect (Ranged Combat): Any damage inflicted by this weapon is considered Impaling damage, as discussed on page 90.

Incendiary: This weapon Quality means that the weapon utilises heat and fire as its primary means of inflicting damage, making it very effective against the Brood, and a pretty horrifying weapon across the board.

Effect: Any damage inflicted by this weapon is considered to be fire damage as discussed on page 93. This will normally mean that the weapon also inflicts Baleful damage instead of normal damage to its targets.

Launcher: These weapons hurl a deadly projectile such as a grenade or gas canister rather than use conventional rounds.

Effect: The damage on a weapon with this Quality represents the concussive force with which it hurls a projectile. Additional effects are based upon the type of ammunition used, which may be any explosive of the Very Small size.

Resolve the attack as normal using the Damage of the explosive used, plus the Damage of the weapon itself. If the weapon hits, resolve damage against the target normally, then resolve the explosive's Blast as per the rules for a thrown explosive on page 125. Remember that damage is applied only once to the original target in the event of a successful hit.

In the event that the attack misses, treat it like a missed grenade throw as explained in the rules for explosives on page 125 in the Combat Rules.

Loud: These weapons make a lot of noise when used and this trait is most commonly found on firearms.

Effect: The character is automatically detected by any targets within earshot when this weapon is used. Additionally, if used in an enclosed space without ear protection, the weapon will inflict a -2 Pool penalty until their next action due to the ringing in the character's ears. Other characters without ear protection within Close range of the character will take a -1 Pool penalty until their next action.

Note: All firearms possess this Quality whether noted in their description or not. Firearms which have a suppressor are not considered to possess this Quality.

Missile: Weapons of this type are balanced so that they may be thrown and used as a simple but effective ranged weapon.

Effect: This weapon may be used to make a ranged attack. When you do this, you roll Athletics rather than Fight or Melee and apply the normal effects of ranged combat such as the Shooter's Advantage and Cover. This means that certain Qualities such as Reach or Impact will be ignored, and damage is worked out like a Bow using the weapon's base damage + the character's Body.

Reach: These weapons possess a longer reach than normal, potentially affecting combat in various ways.

Effect: Like Impact, Reach is unusual. First of all it may stack with itself and other effects, and secondly you can get it without having a weapon which possesses the quality.

In combat, you apply a penalty to an opponent's close combat rolls equal to your Reach. This represents your ability to keep them at bay and otherwise interfere with their actions.

As mentioned, Reach can be acquired without a weapon having the quality and stacks with any Reach that a weapon might have. Also, **for every size step a creature is above Medium, they gain +1 point of Reach**. Additionally, extremely high Prowess scores and certain Qualities may also grant Reach in and of themselves. Unlike other Qualities, **all these sources explicitly do stack with one another to work out a character's total Reach**.

As mentioned in the Combat Rules, when two characters with Reach compete in an Opposed Action, their Reach is compared, with the greater of the two being reduced by the lower and then applied.

For more information on things which modify Reach, see the following page references:

- Reach in Combat, page 113
- Epic Attributes, page 128
- Qualities (Mobile), page 150

Recoil: These weapons have a hell of a kick to them, and are often difficult to fire multiple shots with.

Effect: The character's Marksmanship skill is ignored when working out how much ammunition is expended in a Round.

Relic: Rare beyond words and poorly understood, these weapons were the height of technology immediately prior to the Fall. Most have devastating power and command the envy and fear of almost anyone who understands their value.

Effect: Weapons with this quality are considered 1 Rarity step higher for the purposes of trading the item. In addition they are temperamental and difficult to maintain. After each time the weapon is used in a combat situation, a Reason/Crafts (4) roll must be made. If successful, the weapon continues to function correctly. If not, it requires specialist repair by those with access to advanced pre-Fall knowledge, such as the Artificers. Alternatively a character may attempt to repair the weapon themselves. This functions like an attempt to manufacture a weapon with a Rarity one less than the damaged one.

Rending: These vicious weapons create horrifying damage in their target, which leads to rapid blood-loss and is exceptionally difficult to heal.

Effect: Weapons with the Rending quality inflict Baleful damage. If such a weapon also possesses the "Voidglass" keyword, it gains an additional ability. If such a weapon causes any Wounds to be lost by the target, they lose 1 additional Injured Wound which cascades as normal.

Simple: These weapons are easy to use, requiring no formal training to make proper use of them.

Effect: A character does not suffer the usual -1 Pool and Damage penalty when using the Fight Skill instead of Melee to wield a weapon with this quality.

Simple Munitions: These weapons use simple, easy to construct ammunition.

Effect: Ammunition for this weapon is bought at 1 rarity step less than normal. If this would reduce the effective rarity of the ammunition below Common, multiply the number of rounds that may be acquired by 1 + 1 for each step below Common.

Single Shot: These weapons are single action, firing only one round of ammunition at a time.

Effect: When attacking with this weapon, the character ignores the normal D6 expenditure of shots and simply fires one round per attack.

Slow Reload: These weapons are awkward and difficult to reload. Common examples are basic shotguns and revolvers.

Effect: The weapon requires two appropriate Actions to reload instead of one. Normally this means two Minor Actions but in the event of a Stall this could mean two Standard Actions.

Two-handed: These heavy weapons normally require two hands to be used effectively.

Effect: A normal human-sized character must use this weapon in two hands. If their size is greater than that of a normal human they may potentially be able to use a two-handed weapon in one hand. For more information see the Combat Rules on page 123.

Variable: These weapons are designed to be used in one or two hands, providing great flexibility to the wielder.

Effect: This weapon, at the wielder's discretion, may be used as a two handed weapon; in which case their Pool is increased by 1.

Voidglass: A weapon with this quality is made from the rare and precious substance known as Voidglass, which cuts through armour with ease and causes Wounds which are incredibly difficult to heal without supernatural means.

Effect: Damage from Voidglass weapons ignores resilience from Armour unless it also possesses the Voidglass Quality. In addition, all damage from Voidglass weapons is considered Baleful damage.

Bows with the Voidglass weapon quality do not possess the effects above as their arrows are not necessarily Voidglass. If you are using Voidglass arrows, you do still get the effect above.

Alternatively, bows with the Voidglass quality may be used as an improvised medium melee weapon that has all the effects listed above and is at no risk of breaking. Additionally, they ignore the normal limits imposed on Body in relation to the bow's damage. For more information, see the Bow Quality above.

Bullets and other ammunition for firearms with the Voidglass quality will quickly damage any weapon that is used to fire them beyond repair as the bullets will strip and shatter the barrel and shear through the firing mechanism. The only way to counteract this is to use a firearm which also possesses the Voidglass quality to fire the Voidglass ammunition.

Armour Traits

As with weapons, Armour possesses various Traits which are described below.

Basic Armour Traits

Armour possesses all the same traits as other items, but like weapons have traits in addition to these. Specifically, these are **Resilience**, **Pool** and **Qualities**.

An armour's Resilience is added to any Resilience a character already possesses for the purpose of reducing damage. For more information, see page 87.

An armour's Pool rating serves as a modifier to the character's Dice Pools involving manual dexterity when using the armour. This applies to all combat rolls and usually any Dice Pool derived from Prowess

Armour also has Qualities, representing individual quirks of different types of armour, and function in a similar manner to weapon qualities.

Armour Qualities

Armour can possess any of the following Qualities. Unless otherwise stated, these Qualities function in the same way as those described for weapons previously in this chapter.

Bone-Sculpted: These strange suits of armour are crafted by a Nemissary skilled in the Song of Bone, transforming this mundane substance into something far lighter and more durable than steel.

Effect: These items may only be crafted by a Nemissary who possesses both the Shape Bone and Enduring Bone Arietta.

Long Term Effects of Armour

In real life, people don't wear armour 24/7. Even relatively comfortable equipment such as light ballistic vests quickly become uncomfortable and tiring after any serious length of time in use.

Though not mandatory, we suggest that characters should accumulate a -1 Pool penalty after they have worn armour for a number of hours equal to their Body. After each additional period of time passes, this penalty should increase by 1 and fade at a rate of 1 every hour as a character rests.

If you use this optional rule, it should stack with the effects of the Tiring armour Quality and be negated completely by the Comfortable Quality.

Comfortable: Easy to don and comfortable to wear, armour of this type is designed specifically to be used for long periods of time.

Effect: Armour with this Quality is comfortable enough to allow a character to eat and sleep in it and as a result can be worn as a form of clothing.

Complex: These armours date back to an older era or otherwise require a great deal of time to don.

Effect: This armour requires a full Scene in order to be equipped.

Degrades: These items are unstable, losing their protective qualities as time goes by.

Effect: After a combat in which a character takes one or more Wounds whilst wearing this armour, roll a number of six-sided dice. If a character took only Injured Wounds, roll 1D6, if they took a Mauled Wound, roll 2D6, and if they took a Critical Wound or greater roll 3D6.

For each 1 rolled on these dice, the wearer either reduces the armour's Resilience by 1 or worsens its Pool penalty by 1. When the armour's Resilience reaches 0 or its Pool penalty reaches -4, the armour is destroyed.

Enclosed: Armour of this type covers almost the entirety of the users body and normally double as a form of heavy survival gear, or some form of environment suit.

Effect: These armours do not have their Resilience ignored by Environmental Damage or Fire. In addition, they normally also count as an appropriate type of survival gear.

Flame Resistant: Some armour is built with defences against fire and incendiaries in mind. These suits are normally heavily padded and insulated, and provide a far better defence against such weapons.

Effect: Armour with this Quality is not ignored when dealing with incendiary and flame-based attacks. If the armour also possesses the Enclosed Quality, the user will be immune to any reasonable amount of mundane fire and will halve all other sources of fire damage.

Hardened: These armours were built with modern composite materials to better resist small precise armaments.

Effect: Armour with the Hardened Quality is not affected by weapons with the Ballistic Quality, unless that weapon also has the Armour-Piercing Quality. For more information on how this works, see the Ballistic Quality under Weapon Qualities.

Tiring: These armours wear the user out as they are particularly heavy or awkward to use.

Effect: This Quality has multiple ranks and as a result may stack with itself. After a Scene of wearing the armour, the character suffers a -1 Pool penalty to all actions equal to the rating of this Quality until the armour is removed and they have had a Scene to rest.

Voidglass: Armour with this Quality is constructed primarily of Voidglass and presents some of the best defence available in the world of Sins.

Effect: Voidglass armour may not have its Resilience negated or modified by other weapon Qualities unless that weapon or attack also has the Voidglass keyword. In addition, whilst a character has access to the Voidglass armour Quality, they do not take Baleful Wounds from weapons or attacks with the Voidglass keyword and instead suffer normal Wounds.

Additional Rules

The basic rules we've covered for equipment aren't the only ones available. Below you'll find an overview of the rules for bartering and manufacturing your own items.

Trading Rules

Trade is the life blood of many communities, and eventually characters are going to need to barter for the goods they want or to sell off excess equipment.

Bartering

The most common means of acquiring items in the world of Sins is direct trading. In most cases this means swapping two items of approximately equal value, expressed in system as two items of the same rarity.

This doesn't normally require a roll. However, if an NPC has an unfriendly disposition, characters will generally need to use the social rules to improve their disposition or at least talk them around to the bargain.

Of course, not all trading is so even. Occasionally, characters will want to trick one another and get the best possible deal in their favour.

Doing so can be handled in one of several ways. The quickest is for the character to make a standard Cunning/Panache Social attack. Alternatively, this can be handled as a Contested action with both parties using appropriate Attributes and Skills.

In either case, the character initiating the roll should either gain a bonus or penalty based on the rarity of the items they wish to trade. The two items should be compared and for every rarity step the character's item is lower, he takes a -1 Success penalty. Of course for every point that it's higher, he gains a +1 Success bonus.

Some trades are just unlikely, and no matter how hard the character tries, they just won't get away with them. To help represent this, characters should not be allowed to attempt to trade for items that are more than 2 rarity steps higher than the item offered in trade.

Also, because of the value attached to items with a rarity greater than Rare, there is an additional -1 Success penalty to the seller for each step past Rare the item they wish to acquire is. This penalty is in effect even if they wish to sell an item of the same rarity.

Example: *Thomas has spotted a particularly impressive looking sword that he wants. He doesn't feel like trying to steal*

it, but he isn't exactly a reputable sort either. He decides he's going to try and trick the trader into trading him the item in exchange for a "Rare" wristwatch he happens to possess.

It's established that the wristwatch itself is of uncommon rarity, and the sword itself is Very Rare. This means that the item Tom wants is 2 rarity steps higher, so he gets a total of -3 Successes against the trader on the opposed social roll; that is, -2 successes for the rarity steps, and -1 because the sword is Very Rare. If Tom wins the opposed roll, the trader will part with the item, but if he fails the trader won't trade the goods.

Trading in Cash

Various regions of the world still maintain a monetary economy over a barter one. Because these regions differ so much, no single valuation of coin is given. Instead, the game equates currency to Units. Each region that possesses its own currency will note how many Units that currency is equivalent to.

For instance, because of the relative rarity of surviving paper money, North America still uses Dollars, and their equivalent worth is exactly 1 Unit per dollar, whereas a Dominion Mark is worth approximately one third of a Unit.

Because of the nature of the world, values for individual items are uncertain, and an average value in Units for each rarity is presented below.

- **Common:** 6 items are equivalent to 1 Unit.
- **Uncommon:** 1 item is equivalent to 1 Unit.
- **Rare:** 1 item is equivalent to 6 Units.
- **Very Rare:** 1 item is equivalent to 36 Units.
- **Extremely Rare:** 1 item is equivalent to 220 Units.
- **Impossibly Rare:** 1 item is equivalent to 1300 Units.

In general, trade should take place at these listed values, and it's assumed that the fluctuations in pricing of individual items will even this out in the end. Of course, a character can opt to negotiate the cost of a purchase.

The character and the merchant should engage in an opposed roll relevant to the situation, and each point of Outcome may be used to lower or increase the cost by 10%. Remember that once a character chose to negotiate, they are stuck with the final cost but don't necessarily have to pay up. They can always go elsewhere, but a merchant will generally not change their mind once this roll has been attempted.

These rules hold just as true if characters wish to sell an item. However, because shops need to make a mark up, traders – that is the people who tend to have money to buy things – will generally always treat the item's starting price as 20% less, and negotiations proceed from that point.

Quantity over Quality

These trading rules all assume that a character is trying to trade a single item in exchange for another. At times, it's appropriate to trade a bunch of items for one thing. Generally, a good rule of thumb is that 3 items of one Quality are about equivalent to 1 item of the next Quality step up.

When trying to trade in this way, Outcome on a trading roll can be used to increase or decrease the number of items to be traded on a 1 for 1 basis. This means that a character might need to actually sell more or less items than originally intended, and usually should be able to back out of the deal if it goes against them.

One important thing to bear in mind is that players can group items twice. For example, if a merchant wants 3 uncommon knives, a character can replace 1 of those uncommon knives with 3 common knives.

When trading is done in this way, Outcome to reduce the number of items needing to be traded applies first to the least valuable items, but discounts 3 such items, not 1.

Crafting Rules

By the time of the Sins setting, most useful items are hand-crafted, and the supplies of scavenged items have already begun to dwindle, meaning that most communities have at least one skilled crafter amongst their number.

As noted on page 140, characters with the appropriate Craft Skills can manufacture new items through the process described below.

Step 1 – Foundation

To start with, a character must have a clear idea of the object they wish to craft. They must also have either a working example of that object or have a thorough understanding of what it is they want to make. Normally, working out the functioning of a device is a Reason/Crafts roll with a Difficulty based upon its complexity. As noted on page 140 in the Traits section, this is normally 2 but goes as high as 6 for exceptionally complex items.

If there is any doubt as to whether a character can build a certain item, they should be able to construct an object with a rarity equal to their Crafts or Academics plus Reason in steps. This rating doesn't apply to the quality of the item; just its base rarity.

Normally a character must possess the Crafts skill in order to construct an item, but in some cases players may also use non-Craft Skills to manufacture certain items. For instance, it's possible to use the Archery skill to manufacture new arrows. The GM is the final arbiter on what can or cannot be attempted with a given skill.

Once you've worked out what skill you're using, you need to know what Attribute to use. Usually, this will be a character's Prowess, representing their manual dexterity. As with all skill rolls, this can change depending upon the situation. For instance, building a computer circuit could use Reason and manufacturing a trap might use Cunning.

Step 2 – Materials

The character then needs to acquire the raw materials necessary to manufacture the item. Generally, this will require a purchase of an item with a rarity 1 less than the item to be made.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to scavenge the materials or alternatively the character may already have the materials to hand. In either case, the player and the GM should agree that this step has been fulfilled before moving on.

Step 3 – Crafting Time and Difficulty

Crafting an item is a Sustained Action, with the time for each roll being based on the size and complexity of the item in question. The Threshold of this task is calculated according to the item's base rarity as noted below.

- **Common:** 3
- **Uncommon:** 6
- **Rare:** 9
- **Very Rare:** 12
- **Extremely Rare:** 15

The time required for each roll and the Difficulty are based on the complexity of each item as noted below.

Simple: The item is fairly straightforward to make, probably constructed of cloth or wood, or soft metals. Good examples of items in this category are arrows, small wooden figurines, or bone necklaces. The time required for a crafting check is approximately 1 hour. Difficulty is 0.

Normal: The item is fairly straightforward to make, and no larger than a few feet. Bows, staffs, chairs and the like, fall under this category. The time required for each crafting check is approximately 6 hours. Difficulty is 0.

Complex: The item is not necessarily large, but is fairly complex, such as most weapons, or leather armour or mail. Moderately large examples of handcrafts, such as tables or doors also fall under this category. The time required for each crafting check is approximately 12 hours. Difficulty is 1.

Very Complex: These items are highly intricate examples of crafts, such as complex designs of swords like the Twin Blade swords or the varieties of plate armour. Handcraft examples include intricate puzzle boxes or Faberge eggs. The time required for each crafting check is approximately 24 hours. Difficulty is 2.

Step 4 – Varying Quality

The character also needs to decide of what Quality the finished item will be. By default, this will always be Normal quality, unless the character wishes to try and create something simple or would rather attempt a truly impressive piece of work.

Attempting to change the quality of an item can modify the time, difficulty and cost in various ways as noted below.

Terrible: Generally, this quality is reserved for if a character manages to gain more successes than half the

Threshold, but then fails the crafting attempt. This is an exception to the normal rules on how failing an Extended Action works.

Poor: The interval required per roll is halved, and the total Difficulty is reduced by 1.

Normal: No special considerations.

Fine: To attempt to create a Fine Quality item, the character must have access to materials equal to the base Rarity of the item and not 1 less, and increases the Difficulty by 1.

Masterwork: The character must have access to resources equal to 1 greater than the base rarity of the item, they increase the Difficulty by 2, and the time required per roll is doubled.

Item Lists

Here you will find a basic collection of the type of items available in the world along with any special rules which apply to them. This list is in no means complete and is intended to provide a framework for players and GMs to adjudicate the worth of things they might find in the setting.

Common Goods

These items make up the bulk of things traded on a day to day basis in the world of Sins. They range from animals to survival equipment and ultimately encompass anything non-weapon related you might want to buy.

Trade Goods

As their name suggests, these are the most commonly traded items in the setting. They tend to be things that are either have perceived value such as silver or gold, or innate value such as gasoline or food.

Unless a community or individual is utterly destitute, Trade goods will almost never be refused as payment. This makes them particularly useful for bartering and as a consequence a dice roll is never needed unless the character wishes to attempt to get something of greater worth than the trade good in question.

Common Trade Goods: 10lbs scrap metal, 3lbs unprocessed food such as raw grain or flour, 1lb salt, 1 gallon drum of purified water, 1 litre of gasoline.

Size and Crafting

Step 3 assumes that the character is trying to create a man-portable object. In the case of larger things such as cars or even fortifications, the time should be adjusted accordingly.

Large objects such as a motorcycle or a car should multiply the time required per roll by 3. Particularly massive objects, such as trucks or a house, should multiply the time by 10 instead.

"Where's the Cost?"

You will notice that the items here do not have listed costs in the way you might expect. Instead, they are simply listed by rarity. This is because the world of Sins mostly operates on a barter economy and as such an items value is equivalent to its rarity.

In this context rarity doesn't always mean how difficult the item is to acquire. Where there's a disparity between perceived value, it's noted in the description.

Uncommon Trade Goods: 3lbs of salt, half a dozen loaves of bread, 1kg bag of rice, small collection of gears, screws and bolts and other good quality scrap, wristwatch, car tyres, 3l of gasoline.

Rare Trade Goods: Small bag of uncommon spices, computer parts, hydraulic pistons, gold jewellery, car batteries, medical supplies.

Very Rare Trade Goods: Voidglass fragments, aviation equipment, functional computer equipment, sophisticated hospital-grade medical equipment.

Livestock

Always valued and rarely parted with, livestock can mean life and death for a community. Mechanically, these items are difficult to convince people to part with, increasing the Difficulty of attempts to do so by 1. Where appropriate it should be easy to convince communities to buy livestock, reducing trading Difficulties by 1.

Common Livestock: This tends to represent animals which have minimal value and are hardy enough to survive the rigors of the world, such as cats, small dogs, birds and other entertaining but relatively useless pets.

Uncommon Livestock: These animals tend to be reasonably hardy and breed quickly, and thus are good for slaughter, or produce useful by-products. Examples include goats, sheep, pigs or chickens.

Rare Livestock: These animals tend to be difficult to maintain but extremely useful to a community. Cows, oxen, draft horses and hunting hounds are good examples.

Very Rare Livestock: Apart from prize breeding studs, very few animals would ever fall into this category.

Slaves

Often called "Indentured Servants" rather than slaves, they are an unfortunate side effect of the world's current condition. These availabilities represent a lifelong slave rather than an indentured servant with a limited term and some rights. For such servants the Rarity should be decreased by one step.

Common Slaves: Unless indentured servants, slaves are never commonplace.

Uncommon Slaves: Old worn-out slaves and small children fall under this category. Note that small children are actually relatively rare for sale and for the purposes of finding them they would be considered Rare. However, they are of relatively low value which makes them fall into the Uncommon category.

Rare Slaves: Good examples include healthy, strongly built adults and young women of childbearing age.

Very Rare Slaves: Extremely skilled slaves with a notable profession or in the larger communities, slaves with a particular beauty or exotic physical appearance would fall under this category.

Specialist Purchases

These goods tend to be the things which interest players the most and cover a wide range of items such as vehicles and survival gear.

Common Specialist Purchases: Basic survival gear such as a compass or bedding, clothing, one day's worth of very basic food.

Uncommon Specialist Purchases: Specific survival gear such as tents, long ropes or mountain climbing equipment, a night's stay at a good quality inn, a week living on the minimum to survive.

Rare Specialist Purchases: Medical equipment, flood lights, mining equipment, hang-gliders, GPS relay, long range radio, pre-Fall maps.

Very Rare Specialist Purchases: Radiation equipment, cutting torches, laser security net, digital cameras, working computers.

Vehicles and Transport

Transport related items tend to be a mixed bag and don't fall neatly into the categories like those above.

Horses: Horses generally start at Uncommon and go up to Rare for particularly fine specimens. Their overland speed is reasonable and their upkeep tends to average out at about an Uncommon purchase per week. Compared to vehicles, they are very efficient in the long run but tend to fall foul to the Brood with worrying frequency and can easily succumb to adverse conditions in the world.

One positive side effect of this is that your character is at least wandering around with a ready meal.

Motor Vehicles: Expensive and difficult to maintain they are nevertheless the preferred method of transport in the world. Motorbikes and cars tend to begin at Rare for basic models jury-rigged in the current day and go up in rarity as their quality increases. Military style vehicles built to withstand the Brood are at least Very Rare and their price quickly escalates.

Running such vehicles is expensive, normally requiring an effective purchase of 1 step lower than their base Rarity each day. Particularly high Quality vehicles can actually reduce this cost further, multiplying the number of days that can go by without requiring fuel for each step of Quality.

Another downside to these vehicles is that they require periodic maintenance, itself normally requiring a purchase equal to one step lower than the vehicle's current Rarity.

Aerial Vehicles: All but unused in the current age, aerial vehicles other than gliders are incredibly rare. At a minimum, the rarity of them is Very Rare and most such examples will break the normal rules and will actually fall into the Exceptionally or Impossibly Rare categories.

Fuel for such vehicles is also extremely difficult to acquire, being at a minimum Very Rare and needing replacing after only a few hours of flight in most vehicles.

In all, only the mightiest factions in the world have access to such vehicles and their exorbitant costs will generally put them out of the hands of most individuals, the players included.

WEAPONRY

No community survives in the world of Sins without weaponry and collectively they make up one of the most important keystones in mankind's ability to survive in a hostile world.

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONRY

Ubiquitous and easy to use, close combat weapons have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity since The Fall. By far the most common are those that can be used as Impaling weapons, but every form of melee weapon can be found in the world one way or another.

FIREARMS AND CROSSBOWS

Expensive in terms of the weapon and ammunition but generally very effective, these items form the basis of many arsenals across the world. Most firearms are of modern manufacture and tend to look somewhat ramshackle. This doesn't mean they don't function; just that aesthetics is a virtue easily discarded.

Sophisticated firearms such as heavy automatics tend to be rarer because of their propensity to devour ammunition. As a result, most communities favour single shot heavy rifles and shotguns over their more advanced kin.

A few notable heavier firearms are still in manufacture such as machine guns and anti-tank weaponry. They are normally found only in the hands of larger communities and deployed for dealing with the most dangerous of the Brood.

BOWS

Bows have become fairly commonplace with the changing of the age. The cheap cost of their ammunition and their utility against the Broodspawn combine to make them exceptionally popular weapons.

Most bows are of a simple design which wouldn't look out of place in the middle ages, but more sophisticated designs such as recurve and modern composite bows are still manufactured in the world.

EXPLOSIVES

Explosives are a mixed bag; loved and reviled they are some of the more difficult commodities for players to acquire. Basic blasting equipment such as TNT tends to be Uncommon and specialised explosives such as C4 and Thermite becoming Rare or even more difficult to acquire.

AMMUNITION

Ranged weapons generally require ammunition to function. A few such as throwing weapons have their ammunition noted with a "-" and thus provide their own ammunition but can only be used once per item.

Where most guns are concerned, ammunition is both rare and precious. A full clip of ammunition for a gun, or 12 rounds – whichever is greater – is the same effective rarity as the weapon itself.

One advantage of non-ballistic ranged weaponry such as bows or crossbows is that ammunition is much cheaper and easier to create. 12 arrows constitute an item of Common rarity, as does 6 crossbow Bolts. Another advantage that bows and crossbows have is that their ammunition is normally recoverable. For each arrow or bolt fired, roll 1d6. On a 2 or more, the arrow or bolt is still useable.

Ammunition can also be one of several special types, each of which has their own special effects which apply when the weapon is loaded with that ammunition. In addition, such ammunition can both raise or lower the effective Rarity of a clip for purposes of purchasing or manufacturing the rounds.

Armour Piercing Rounds: These rounds allow the weapon to more effectively penetrate armour at the cost of some stopping power.

Applies To: Pistols, SMGs, rifles.

Rarity: +1 rarity step.

Effect: The weapon gains the Armour Piercing Quality but lowers its Damage by 1. Note that this does not apply when dealing with Armour Points or Structure Points for vehicles.

Arrows with this Quality are not as difficult to remove from the body as normal, and no longer treated differently from removing any other Impaling Object.

"Dum-Dum" Rounds: These crude but brutal rounds are created by deliberately scoring the top of a bullet, weakening its structure and allowing it to break apart in the target.

Applies To: Pistols, SMGs.

Rarity: No modifier, as ordinary bullets can be modified into Dum-Dum rounds by anyone with the Firearms skill at 1 or greater and access to a sharp knife.

Effect: Increase the weapon's Damage by 2 but reduce Pool by 1, and double any Resilience possessed by the target.

TOXIN FOREWARD

Toxins are mechanically treated in the same way as an illness. Both of these fall under the general heading of Conditions, the rules for which can be found on page 92 in the Core Rules chapter.

Flechette Rounds: These weapons function similarly to Dum-Dum rounds but do not possess the unreliability associated with those improvised munitions.

Applies To: Shotguns, Rifles.

Rarity: +1 rarity step.

Effect: When used, the weapon gains +2 Damage, but doubles any Resilience possessed by the target.

HEAP Rounds: These rare and precious munitions are designed to explode inside a target, causing devastating injuries.

Applies To: Pistols, SMGs, Rifles.

Rarity: +2 Rarity steps.

Effect: The weapon gains the Armour Piercing quality and if an attack using this ammunition would inflict a Mauled Wound or greater, then all Wounds inflicted from that attack are Baleful.

Incendiary Rounds: These rounds have been designed specifically to ignite during flight, and burn the target upon impact.

Applies To: All.

Rarity: In the case of ballistic weapons, increase the Rarity of this ammo type by 1. Arrows and crossbow bolts just require access to a can of gasoline and some rags.

Effect: The weapon takes -1 Damage but Wounds inflicted by it will be Baleful unless a target is immune to fire damage – in which case they will take normal Wounds. In addition, arrows and bolts of this type are never recoverable.

Makeshift Rounds: This ammunition is constructed to a poorer standard than normal, using inferior materials such as older black-powder, recycled casings or in the case of arrows or bolts, flimsy shafts or scrap metal arrowheads. As a result, it is substantially cheaper to acquire but also far less efficient than comparable munitions.

Applies To: All.

Rarity: -1 Rarity step.

Effect: The weapon's Damage and Pool are both reduced by 1 when using this ammunition.

Scatter Shot: Designed for shotguns, these rounds are particularly brutal but reduce the weapon's range considerably.

Applies To: Shotguns

Rarity: No modifier.

Effect: The weapon gains +1 Damage and +1 Pool when firing at a target at Close Range. In all other cases, it reduces both Damage and Pool by 1.

Voidglass Shot: Lethal beyond words, these rounds are loaded with fragments of Voidglass carefully placed inside a sabot to prevent the destruction of the weapon.

Applies To: Shotguns.

Rarity: +2 Rarity steps.

Effect: The weapon gains +1 Pool and is considered to have the Voidglass quality with the exception that the weapon will not be damaged when firing.

Drugs and Chemicals

These items represent the various chemical compounds which have a useful, if not always beneficial, applications. In most communities, you will be able to find a wide variety of common herbs and plants with medical applications, not to mention – for the right price – more lethal cocktails intended to kill.

Toxins

These chemicals have existed throughout human history and are either created or found through entirely natural means. In many settlements, lethal toxins such as these are illegal to possess as they have few reasonable purposes other than premeditated murder; something which, no matter how lenient or cold, a community cannot ignore.

Cyanide: One of the most singularly lethal compounds known to mankind is also one of the more ancient. Once used for treating metals and, ironically enough, when mixed with iron as an additive in food, its purpose in Sins is as a tool to quickly and efficiently kill another human being.

Vector: Ingestion or rarely airborne when aerosolised or as a gas.

Virulence: 8 / 4+

Interval: 1 minute

Persistence: 3

Effect: Reduce Body, Cunning, Reason, and Prowess by 1 and inflict a -1 Pool penalty to all Actions.

As Attributes are lost, an affected character will find it progressively harder to maintain consciousness, becoming dizzy, aggravated and struggling to breathe. Sooner or later the character will lapse into a coma, and death will soon follow.

Strychnine: Once primarily intended as a poison to be used on small animals and pests, this complex chemical's long shelf-life has allowed it, at least in pellet form, to endure into the world of Sins. No small irony then that this now finds a most common use as a horrific means of execution for deserters and traitors by scavenging groups such as the Breakers.

Vector: Ingestion as pellets, or contact and airborne in its pure chemical form

Virulence: 4 / 4+

Interval: 10 minutes

Persistence: 2

Effect: Reduce all Attributes by 1 and inflict a -1 Success penalty on all Actions.

As this poison takes hold, a variety of horrific and painful effects will take place, often including vomiting, blood running from orifices, muscle spasms and extreme pain. Victims rarely pass out during this process and their suffering usually ends only within a few moments of death.

Rattlesnake Venom: One of the more dangerous venoms possessed by any snake, it's also notable in that it is one which is fairly easy to extract, store and use as a weapon.

Vector: Injection

Virulence: 6 / 4+

Interval: 2 hours

Persistence: 4

Effect: Inflict 1 Critical Wound and suffer -1 Success to all Actions.

Once injected, it begins to eat away at the tissues of the injection site and clots the blood of the target, with predictably lethal and horrific results.

DRUGS

Items which fall into this category are those which have a variety of generally non-deadly effects on the human body. Most are benign with either medical or recreational uses. A few are more troublesome, being both addictive and causing potentially disruptive behaviour.

Common Drugs: A one pound packet of coffee, a bag of rolled tobacco or cannabis and small pouches of herbal remedies and painkillers.

Uncommon Drugs: A handful of caffeine pills, a small amount of powdered cocaine, a few antibiotic tablets or high strength painkillers.

Rare Drugs: Specialised medical compounds for treating specific diseases or conditions, asthma inhalers, a small amount of anti-venom or adrenaline in a syringe.

Very Rare Drugs: Most drugs of this rarity come in tiny quantities, such as a few pills or a very small packet. They normally represent drugs which require specialised machining or manufacturing methods.

DRUGS AND THE COMMUNITY

Most communities do tolerate the limited use of what modern day people would consider illegal drugs. This doesn't usually represent a moral stance so much as a practical one; after all, most communities have enough to worry about without trying to regulate people's lives.

Where things tend to change is in the more dangerous and highly addictive drugs. Very few communities will risk the consequences of allowing drugs such as heroin or methamphetamines to become commonplace if for no other reason than the massive danger such individuals might present to others.

It's for these reasons that organised drug dealing as we think of it is not common in Sins. Certainly, popular recreational drugs such as cannabis and tobacco are traded widely but there's little market for the more serious drugs. People still desire escapism but the general difficulty in producing these drugs combined with the likelihood of violent responses from communities tends to preclude the development of powerful drug cartels.

Ironically enough, the type of people who might have used resources to produce these more harmful drugs tend instead to focus on the production of specialised medical supplements such as antibiotics and insulin, both of which are in extremely high demand. In this setting, when drug dealers go to war, it's often to protect their medical rackets as opposed to pushing drugs on their clientele.

Name	Damage	Pool	Range	Shots	Availability	Size	Qualities
Derringer	3	-1	S	2	Rare	VS	
Small Revolver	4	–	S	6	Common	S	Recoil, Slow Reload
Revolver	5	–	M	6	Uncommon	S	Recoil, Slow Reload
Large Revolver	6	–	M	5	Rare	M	Recoil, Slow Reload
Light Handgun	4	–	S	12+1	Uncommon	S	Auto-fire 2
Handgun	5	–	M	16+1	Rare	S	Auto-fire 2
Heavy Handgun	6	-1	M	10+1	V. Rare	M	Auto-fire 1, Recoil, Variable
Light SMG	4	–	S	36	–	M	Auto-fire 3, Full Auto, Recoil
SMG	6	–	M	48	–	L	Auto-fire 3, Full Auto, Two-handed
Shotgun	7	–	M	2	Common	L	Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-handed
Pump Action Shotgun	7	–	M	7	Uncommon	L	Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-handed
Combat Shotgun	7	–	M	24	Rare	L	Two-handed
Adv. Combat Shotgun	7	–	M	18	V. Rare	L	Auto-fire 2, Two-handed
Rifle	6	–	VL	9	Uncommon	L	Single Shot, Two-handed
Assault Rifle	6	–	L	32	Rare	L	Auto-fire 3, Full Auto, Two-handed
Heavy Assault Rifle	7	–	L	64	V. Rare	VL	Auto-fire 3, Full Auto, Two-handed
Heavy Rifle	7	–	VL	6	Rare	VL	Recoil, Single Shot, Two-handed
Grenade Launcher	1*	-1	S	6	Uncommon	L	Arcing, Launcher, Single Shot, Two-handed
RPG Launcher	5*	–	L	1	Rare	VL	Launcher, Single Shot, Two-handed
Frag Grenade	8	–	–	–	Uncommon	VS	Blast 15
Incendiary Grenades	6	–	–	–	Rare	VS	Blast 5, Incendiary
Anti-armour Grenades	14	–	–	–	Rare	VS	Armour Piercing, Blast 1
Nailbomb	5	–	–	–	Common	S	Blast 10, Impaling
Molotov Cocktail	6	–	–	–	Common	S	Blast 1, Incendiary
Voidglass Bomb	6	–	–	–	Rare	S	Blast 10, Voidglass

* These weapons combine their Damage with that of the grenade being fired. For more information, see the Launcher weapon quality.

Name	Damage	Pool	Range	Shots	Availability	Size	Qualities
Advanced Assault Rifle	6	+1	VL	32	V. Rare	L	Auto-fire 3, Two-handed
Gauss Railgun	9		VL	24	Ex. Rare	L	Auto-fire 1, Relic, Simple Munitions, Two-handed
Linear Railgun	14	-1	M	1	Ex. Rare	L	Relic, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Slow Reload, Two-handed
Spear Gun (Gas)	5	–	S	1	Common	L	Impaling, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-handed
Spear Gun (Ballistic)	6	–	S	1	Uncommon	L	Impaling, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-handed
Flamethrower	5	–	S	12	Rare	VL	Flamer, Incendiary
Heavy Flamethrower	7	–	S	8	V. Rare	EL	Flamer, Incendiary
Crossbow	5	–	L	1	Uncommon	L	Armour Piercing, Simple Munitions, Slow Reload
Heavy Crossbow	7	–	L	1	Rare	VL	Armour Piercing, Simple Munitions, Slow Reload

Name	Damage	Pool	Range	Shots	Availability	Size	Qualities
Long Bow	3+	–	L	–	Uncommon	VL	Bow*
Compound Bow	4+	–	M	–	Uncommon	L	Bow*
Great Bow	5+	-1	L	–	Rare	VL	Bow*
Compact Recurve Bow	2+	–	M	–	Rare	M	Bow*, Compact
Recurve Bow	2+	+1	M	–	Rare	L	Bow*, Compact
Large Recurve Bow	3+	–	L	–	Rare	VL	Bow*, Compact

* All bows possess the Arcing, Armour Piercing, Simple Munitions, Single Shot and Two-handed weapon qualities.

Name	Damage	Pool	Availability	Size	Qualities
Unarmed	0	–	Common	–	See page 120
Knife	1	–	Uncommon	S	Simple
Throwing Knife	1	–	Common	S	Missile
Long Knife/Machete	2	-1	Common	M	Simple
Chopping Sword	3	-2	Common	L	Impact +1, Simple, Variable
Long Sword	2	+1	Uncommon	L	Impaling, Reach +1, Variable
Great Sword	3	+1	Rare	VL	Reach +2, Two-handed
Giant Sword	4	-2	Rare	VL	Impact +2, Reach +1, Simple, Two-handed
Axe	2	-1	Common	M	Impact +1, Simple
Throwing Axe	2	-1	Uncommon	M	Impact +1, Missile
Fire Axe	4	-2	Uncommon	L	Impact +2, Simple, Two-handed
Battle Axe	4	-1	Uncommon	L	Impact +2, Variable
Great Axe	5	-1	Rare	VL	Impact +3, Reach +1, Two-handed
Spear	1	–	Common	L	Impaling, Reach +1, Variable
Long Spear	1	–	Uncommon	VL	Impaling, Reach +3, Two-handed
Hammer	2	-2	Common	S	Armour Piercing, Impact +2, Simple
Sledgehammer	3	-3	Uncommon	VL	Armour Piercing, Impact +3, Simple, Two-handed
Flail	4	–	Rare	L	Dangerous, Impact +5, Reach +2
Fighting Chain	2	-1	Rare	L	Compact, Dangerous, Entangling, Reach +2, Two-handed
War Pick	3	-1	Rare	S	Armour Piercing, Impact +2, Simple
Pick Axe	5	-4	Uncommon	VL	Armour Piercing, Impact +3, Simple, Two-handed
Staff	0	–	Common	VL	Reach +2, Two-handed
Whip	1	-2	Uncommon	VL	Compact, Dangerous, Entangling, Reach +3
Improvised (Small)	1	–	Common	M	Missile, Simple
Improvised (Medium)	2	-1	Common	L	Simple
Improvised (Large)	3	-1	Common	VL	Impact+1, Simple

Name	Pool	Resilience	Availability	Size	Qualities
Light Ballistic Vest	–	1	Uncommon	M	Hardened
Ballistic Vest	-1	2	Uncommon	L	Hardened
Riot Gear	-1	3	Rare	VL	Complex, Hardened, Tiring
Combined Combat Gear	-1	2	Uncommon	VL	Hardened
Reinforced Fire Suit	-1	2	Rare	VL	Complex, Flame Resistant
Combined Plate	-2	3	V. Rare	VL	Complex, Hardened, Tiring
Leather	–	1	Common	L	–
Chainmail	–	3	Rare	L	Tiring
Layered Plates	-2	3	Uncommon	VL	Complex, Tiring
Fire Suit	-1	0	Uncommon	VL	Complex, Flame Resistant
Light Bone-weave*	–	2	Rare	M	Bone Sculpted, Complex, Hardened
Medium Bone-weave*	–	3	V. Rare	L	Bone Sculpted, Complex, Hardened
Heavy Bone-weave*	-1	4	Ex. Rare	VL	Bone Sculpted, Complex, Hardened
Voidglass Scale*	-1	2	Rare	M	Degrades, Voidglass
Heavy Voidglass Scale*	-2	3	V. Rare	L	Degrades, Voidglass
Combined Voidglass*	-3	4	Ex. Rare	VL	Complex, Voidglass

* This item can only be made through the use of an Arietta and not mundane craft skills.

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Chapter VIII

Nemissaries

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UNIQUE NEMISSARY TRAITS

Nemissaries are the primary protagonists in the world of Sins. As has already been mentioned, the breadth of their abilities is massive. Ultimately they have the potential to radically reshape the world and to defeat almost any foe arrayed against them.

The bulk of these abilities are expressed as Features which are covered in more detail later in this chapter. All these things flow in a sense from two Traits unique to Nemissaries; the power of **Creed** and the deadly sickness of **Spite**.

CREED

Creed is an important and diverse Trait possessed only by Nemissaries. It replaces Fate and serves as a measure of a Nemissary's overall spiritual development and power. Like Fate, it increases slowly over time but can actually reduce, and has a far wider impact on the Nemissary's capabilities.

There are five separate Creeds depending upon the Nemissary's choice. These all function in the same way and a Nemissary can possess only one Creed Trait at a time. Specifically, this has three sub-components; its **Name**, its **Permanent rank**, and its **Temporary rank**.

Name denotes which of the five possible Creeds the Nemissary follows. This is important because if the Nemissary changes Creed, their permanent rank and temporary ranks in that Creed will be lost.

THE FIVE CREEDS

Each Nemissary possesses a single Creed. This has a range of effects and its title should be recorded in the section for Creed Name on your character sheet.

Each Creed modifies a character's Favoured Songs and how they gain temporary points of Creed. The five available Creeds a character can pick from are:

- The Mask, favouring the Song of Brood
- The Mirror, favouring the Song of Will
- The Sword, favouring the Song of Flesh
- The Tower, favouring the Song of Bone
- The Veil, favouring the Song of Blood

PERMANENT CREED

A Nemissary's rank in their Creed is said to be their permanent Creed. This replaces Fate, meaning it is used in place of all references to Fate when generating Dice Pools using abilities and so on.

This means that Creed is commonly used for all the following:

- Add to a Nemissary's dice pools. (Page 76)
- Used to determine the overall level of competence for a character. (page 128)

Creed also has a number of additional effects.

- Help determine the amount of Anima available to a Nemissary. (Page 209)
- Determine how many Anima may be spent per round. (Page 154)
- Determines the maximum rating of Arietta in a given Song that a Nemissary may possess. (Page 171)
- Advancing Creed gives the Nemissary additional ranks of Arietta. (Page 277)

Creed is never rolled on its own and, as we've briefly touched on, it has a number of passive effects meaning it comes into play substantially more often than Fate does. Where this is relevant, it's covered in the sections below.

Creed does not advance like Fate. Instead, the character needs to accumulate a total of seven temporary Creed. As soon as the seventh point is acquired, all temporary Creed is removed, resetting to a total of 0. The character's permanent Creed then advances by 1 rank. In the unlikely event that the character's permanent Creed is 6 when this occurs, the character instead gains the effects of a Milestone.

When permanent Creed advances, a character will need to recalculate their Anima pool but does not gain any Anima, meaning their totals will increase but not their current ratings. When Creed advances, a Nemissary also gains a number of ranks of Arietta equal to their new permanent Creed rating.

Permanent Creed can be reduced. This only occurs if a character's temporary Creed is 0 and that character loses or spends a point of temporary Creed. In that event, the character's permanent Creed is reduced by 1 and their temporary Creed is reset to a number of points equal to the Nemissary's new permanent Creed.

In addition, the Nemissary also loses a number of Ranks worth of Arietta equal to their former permanent Creed. The Arietta lost in this way must be chosen from the highest ranked Arietta a Nemissary possesses and they must always lose Arietta from their Favoured Songs before other Arietta are lost. If a Nemissary's permanent Creed is reduced to 0 in this way, they will suffer the effects of renouncing their Creed as explained further on in this chapter.

TEMPORARY CREED

Temporary Creed measures the fluctuations in a Nemissary's power and their progress towards advancing their Permanent Creed. Temporary Creed may be acquired in one of three ways; **Roleplaying**, **Devouring** or **contact with a Shard**.

- **Roleplaying:** Creed functions as a measure of spiritual enlightenment, in addition to the character's growing experience. In brief, whenever a character works towards understanding their Creed in a significant way, they gain 1 or more Temporary Creed.

  This should ideally be straightforward. Whenever the player has the character act in a way consistent with their Creed during a session, they should get 1 Temporary Creed at the end of that session. In addition to this, if the player does something during a session which is particularly impressive, or shows an interesting insight into their character's actions, they should also be rewarded with a Temporary Creed.

  It is important that players who lack confidence with descriptive roleplaying are not left behind. You'll find a far more detailed overview of this sort of practice in roleplaying later in this book, beginning on page 292.

- **Devouring:** As mentioned later in this section, it is possible for a Nemissary to devour the soul of another of their kind, and doing so to a Nemissary which had higher Creed allows the character to gain all the temporary Creed needed, albeit at a potentially terrible personal cost. For the mechanical information on Devouring, see page 213.

- **The Shards:** It is also possible for a Nemissary to gain insight into themselves, and thus gain Temporary Creed, by visiting a Shard, and entering into communion with it. Usually this sort of experience nets the Nemissary a reduction in Temporary Spite, and a single point of Temporary Creed, but not always. For mechanical information on Shards, see page 279.

  Temporary Creed can also be lost. The main ways in which this can happen is if it is spent to power Arietta or Features, through roleplay and a Nemissary's temporary death.

- **Spending:** Some rare Arietta and Features like the Destroyer Shape may allow or require a Nemissary to pay temporary Creed.

- **Roleplay:** If a character acts in a way which specifically opposes their Creed or deliberately turns aside from their own nature and attempts to live a normal life, the GM may decide that the character loses 1 Temporary Creed. A loss of this kind may occur no more than once per Chapter and usually should not occur once per Story unless a character's actions against their Creed are particularly repugnant.

- **Death:** When a Nemissary dies and faces Judgement, they normally lose 1 Temporary Creed. This isn't always the case and it's actually possible to gain Creed as a result of a Judgement. For more information see page 288 later in this book.

Putting Creed in Perspective

As we've just mentioned, there are three separate things all of which are referred to as Creed. If you're skim-reading this chapter for character generation this could get a little confusing, so just to make things clear, to put this all into context each Nemissary has a Creed, such as the Sword Creed or the Tower Creed.

This then has both a permanent and temporary rating. Thus a Nemissary may have the Sword Creed with a permanent rank of 4 and a temporary rank of 3.

As long as you bear this in mind, things should make sense. Remember, context is what is important here.

Creed vs. Fate

Creed and Fate are not created equal. Nemissaries ultimately are more powerful than normal humans and their Creed Trait is a part of how this is represented.

In general, a Nemissary should always be considered to have a Fate 1 higher than their Creed should indicate when comparing them to a human character. Like everything where Fate is concerned, this is only an approximation. At higher ranks the gulf between mundane humans and Nemissaries widens still further

Whilst this might make players feel that Nemissaries are invincible, the truth is that they are not. They might have access to better powers and more CP in total, but a cunning human protagonist can still bring them low. After all, at least one Reaper was defeated by the actions of a perfectly normal human being; albeit a human being with a plan that you can only use once.

Renouncing Creed

Whether through doubt or desire, a Nemissary can choose to renounce their Creed. Doing this requires a Nemissary to make a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of their own Creed. They may attempt this once per day and a failed roll causes the Nemissary to gain 1 temporary Spite.

If the Nemissary succeeds, their Creed is shattered and removed from their Sheet. For all intents and purposes they have a Fate of 1. This means that they lose access to all powers and defences dependent upon their Creed. In short, they can neither use Songs or use their Creed to generate a defence against the Broodsong.

"WHY WOULD ANYBODY DO THAT!?"

The more of this chapter you read, the more you'll realise how ludicrously dangerous renouncing your Creed is; which raises the question of why would anybody in their right mind do this.

The answer is "It's complicated". Creeds can be difficult to follow and sometimes for roleplaying reasons a character can find themselves locked into a structure of belief that no longer suits their character. Alternatively they might decide they made the wrong choice in the beginning. These things do happen.

In these situations a Nemissary might choose to renounce their Creed with a view of getting a new one. Doing so doesn't actually have to be as dangerous as it sounds. Ideally, such a character should have a clear idea of the new Creed they want to take in mind, then go to a Shard and renounce their Creed there, and then immediately seek Judgement through the Shard. In this way, the character minimises the risks and gives themselves the best chance of success.

In general, this process can be a wonderful roleplaying opportunity, allowing players the chance to resolve Motivations, shake up the game, and if the GM is feeling generous, gain bonus CP. After all, far from being punished for putting their characters through the wringer, we recommend players be rewarded for engaging in that sort of deep roleplaying.

If a Nemissary doesn't act quickly they are doomed. Their only hope is to seek a new Creed from a Shard. Doing this is in many ways like taking the Second Breath again and requires a Nemissary to survive Judgement. The rules for Judgement are presented later in this chapter.

Assuming the Nemissary actually survives, they get to once again replace their Fate with a new Creed of their choosing at rank 1. They can then start to gain Temporary Creed again as normal.

SPITE

The process of rebirth creates in each Nemissary a sickness; a void filled by their own hate, petty desires and bitterness at the world. In this space exists a malign consciousness represented here through the Spite Trait.

Spite is similar to Creed in that it has three separate components; the **Hollow Nature**, which determines how a character's Spite expresses itself, **Permanent Spite** which determines how close the character is to being devoured by their Hollow, and **Temporary Spite** measuring the Hollow's current strength and influence over the character.

GAINING AND LOSING SPITE

Unlike other Traits a character possesses, Spite can fluctuate wildly, and both its temporary and permanent ratings can raise and lower. Over the course of the game, various circumstances can cause this.

In most circumstances, these changes will come in the form of an increase of 1 or more to a character's Temporary Spite. Though this is not immediately dangerous, if a character's temporary Spite would ever reach 7, a character suffers a **Crisis Event** which can potentially remove this Temporary Spite and convert it into a permanent rank.

The most common way in which Spite is increased is through the use of certain Songs which involve **Risking Spite**.

If a character fails an action where Spite is being Risked, they will gain a number of temporary points of Spite equal to the number being Risked.

Example: *John's character activates a power which Risks 2 Spite. If this action is a Success, he gains no Spite. If for some reason he fails the action, then he would gain 2 points of Temporary Spite.*

Certain powers or actions may also have a cost in Temporary or Permanent Spite; in which case, to pay that cost the character gains the relevant number of points.

Certain truly horrific actions of a character's part can also gain them Temporary Spite. If a character engages in an action which they would find truly horrific, the GM may choose to force that character to gain 1 Temporary Spite.

A character can also lose Temporary Spite through truly selfless actions. Normally a character should only lose 1 Temporary Spite per Story in this way and only if they do something significantly selfless. A random act of charity won't be enough, but saving a community would.

In no event may a Nemissary lower their Permanent Spite. Once gained, Permanent Spite cannot be undone through normal means.

HOLLOW NATURE

Hollows are as individual as the Nemissaries themselves and they vary tremendously from person to person. From a mechanical standpoint, however, they fall into one of five broad categories defined as **Hollow Natures**.

Each Hollow Nature has a listing of Attribute modifications which take effect when the Hollow needs to make rolls or is in control of the character. Each also grants the character access to an additional Favoured Song, and specifies the conditions under which the Hollow can attempt to take over the character, known as its **Trigger**.

Name: The Monster

Attributes: +2 Body, +1 Prowess, -2 Reason -2 Cunning, -2 Passion

Favoured Song: Song of Flesh

Triggers: The Monster can attempt to take control when its Host acts in a merciful way towards others, or backs down from a fight which they could win.

Name: The Tyrant

Attributes: +2 Conviction, -1 Passion

Favoured Song: Song of Bone

Triggers: The Tyrant can attempt to take control when the Host's authority is questioned, or when another character betrays or conspires against them.

Name: The Defiler

Attributes: +1 Passion, +1 Cunning, -1 Body

Favoured Song: Song of Blood

Triggers: The Defiler can attempt to take control when the Host has a chance to experience something new but does not wish to, or when the character has a chance to strip away the hopes, dreams or opportunities of another.

Name: The Deceiver

Attributes: +2 Reason, +1 Cunning, +1 Passion, -1 Prowess, -1 Body

Favoured Song: Song of Will

Triggers: The Deceiver can attempt to wrest control when a character would be about to give away a secret, or when that character is about to discover a significant piece of information.

Name: The Traitor

Attributes: +2 Cunning, +1 Prowess, -1 Conviction

Favoured Song: Song of Brood

Triggers: The Traitor can attempt to wrestle for control whenever it has an opportunity to better itself at the expense of others, or when it would be advantageous to the character to abandon his current position and choose a new path.

Wrestling for Control

At certain times in the game, the Hollow may attempt to gain control of a character. The most common situation in which this occurs is if the Hollow's Trigger condition is met. In these cases, the Hollow may attempt to usurp control of the character. Doing so is a risk but often one that Hollows are willing to take.

Ascension

You may have noticed that you still gain Temporary Creed even when your permanent Creed is rank 6. This of course begs the question of what happens if you manage to accumulate 7 points worth. Because of the trait cap, permanent Creed can't advance higher than 6, so what happens?

It's a tricky subject. Creed is ultimately a journey towards enlightenment. Yes you gain great power along the way, but it's really about acceptance and understanding rather than pure might. This brings us neatly to the hypothetical seventh rank of Creed.

To get this, the Nemissary would need to accumulate 7 Temporary Creed and have a permanent Creed of 6. The catch for such a character is if you gain this seventh rank, your character leaves the game. This isn't death by any means, but rather true Ascension. The reason this ends the character is because the final real step is accepting the death of the self, essentially accepting death. In doing so, your character is granted a true and final release – a happy ending so to speak, albeit a happy ending which requires leaving the world to its fate.

No small wonder then, that any Nemissary with sufficient enlightenment to reach this stage is highly unlikely to abandon the world they've interacted with for so long.

The Hollow and Focus

Because a Hollow is the manifestation of a Nemissary's own psyche, it isn't something which can be fought with willpower alone. Consequently, the Nemissary may never spend Focus on any roll which opposes their Hollow.

Additionally, their Hollow may never spend or use Focus without the character's consent, even when it is in control of the Nemissary.

If they choose to attempt to wrestle control, that Hollow's character makes a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of their Permanent Spite. If the character succeeds, one point of Temporary Spite is removed and the Hollow's attempt is defeated and it cannot attempt it again for at least 1 week.

If the character fails, then they gain 1 Temporary Spite and the Hollow gains control of the character's actions for a number of hours equal to their permanent Spite. During this time, the Hollow has access to all of the character's Traits and abilities. It will act according to its nature, often

Paying Spite as a Cost

Normally, when a Nemissary is required to gain Spite as a cost for something, it will be labelled as "Gain 1 Spite". For the sake of not repeating this in every instance, many powers refer to "paying a cost", such as "paying a cost of 3 Anima".

When Spite is listed in this way, "paying a cost" means gaining that amount of Spite, such as "using this ability requires you to pay a cost of 2 temporary Spite". In this instance, you would have to actually gain 2 temporary Spite.

Definition of Evil

An important point raised by the rules for Spite is how various characters perceive right and wrong. What matters is that this definition comes from the character in question and the society in which they are raised – not the personal views of the Game Master.

This is because ultimately the Hollow represents the selfish and amoral centre of a human being. Horrible acts don't really excite it or grant it strength. After all, it's a living embodiment of this sort of thing. What it does feed on, however, is when a character betrays their principles.

In the case of most people, this includes premeditated murder and systematic cruelty. In the case of a serial killer, however, it might represent killing a victim outside of their normal pattern, or refusing to follow their defined ritual. The important thing is for the Hollow to gain strength in this way, the character would have to do something they would honestly regret and find truly abhorrent; not necessarily something they would perceive to be "Evil" or "Wrong".

Players should never be allowed to wave this away by saying their character doesn't find some particular thing horrific. After all they may have conditioned themselves to believe what they are doing is right or even not to care, but as true psychopaths and sociopaths can never actually become Nemissaries, deep down some part of the character will always know what they did is wrong.

proving extremely inconvenient to the character. More information on exactly how Hollows behave when in control is provided in the GM's Toolkit on page 287.

Crisis Event

When a character would acquire their seventh point of Temporary Spite, it triggers a dangerous conflict within them. The Hollow rises to the surface and attempts to solidify the strength the character has given it.

Immediately upon gaining the seventh point of Temporary Spite, the character makes a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 3 or their Permanent Spite, whichever is higher. If they succeed, their Temporary Spite is reduced back to 6 points and nothing more occurs. If they fail the situation becomes truly dire.

The character's Temporary Spite is reduced to a number of points equal to their current Permanent Spite, then the character's Permanent Spite is increased by 1. Finally, the Hollow gains control of the character for a number of hours equal to its new Permanent Spite.

In this instance, the Hollow's rampage is likely to be particularly destructive as it revels in its growing strength and victory over the character. In the best case scenario a character's friends and associates will restrain them but if this is not possible, the character may very well wake to find everything they have worked for and built destroyed, and everyone they know dead or worse.

The Hollow in Command

Whilst ever the Hollow is in control of a character, a number of effects come into play:

- The character gains a temporary modifier to their Attributes equal to the Hollow's Attribute modifiers.
- The character becomes immune to Wound Penalties.
- The character is not considered a Nemissary for the purposes of the Broodsong, rendering them immune to both the Broodsong and certain Arietta.
- The character may ignore costs which require them to pay or risk Spite.
- The character gains a number of Enhancements equal to double their Permanent Spite. Enhancements gained in this way are allocated according to the Hollow's wishes and may be stacked a number of times equal to the character's permanent Spite.
- The Hollow may choose not to create any Enhancements in the character but instead add half its Permanent Spite to all actions it attempts. If this option is used, any Enhancements the character already possess resulting from the Song of Flesh are temporarily suppressed.
- Any Blood Synergy links the character possesses are rendered inert. This has no effect on new Blood Synergy connections established while the Hollow is in control.

Deal with the Devil

Though the Hollow is certainly selfish and malevolent, it doesn't ultimately want the character to die, and under certain circumstances a character can willingly loose their Hollow in an attempt to overcome an opponent.

Doing so is extremely dangerous, not least of which because the Hollow may betray the character. This is not typical however as the Hollow will generally wish to make the character dependent upon its assistance, and is usually intelligent enough to know that betraying the character will make this unlikely.

Allowing the Hollow to take control in this way means the character acquires 1 Temporary Spite and the Hollow remains in control for a number of hours equal to its Permanent Spite.

Unlike situations in which the Hollow forces control, the character can attempt to regain control by succeeding on a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of their Permanent Spite. If they fail this roll, they lose 1 Focus, but if they succeed they regain control and return to normal.

A character can only make an attempt to gain control once per Scene. On the third or subsequent attempt they will gain a point of Temporary Spite in addition to losing a Focus.

Final Victory

If the Nemissary should ever accumulate more Permanent Spite than their Conviction they are in grave danger. At this point any Temporary Spite the character gains is doubled and the Difficulty of any rolls to resist the Hollow are increased by 1.

Once a character's Permanent Spite reaches 6, they are damned. The Hollow emerges victorious and the character's mind becomes simply a part of this new entity. Victory for the Hollow is short lived however, and it will survive as an independent entity for only a few days at most.

Soon enough, the character's Permanent Creed will transform into Permanent Synergy and they will proceed immediately through a number of steps of Broodspawn transformations equal to their new Permanent Synergy rank. This transforms the former Nemissary into a particularly powerful Broodspawn.

Who Controls the Hollow?

Generally, the simple answer is that the GM gets to control a character's Hollow. However, in the case of some experienced players it may be perfectly appropriate to allow them to control their own Hollows as long as the GM feels they are not abusing the privilege.

Another interesting way of dealing with this dilemma is allowing each player to control the Hollow of the player to the right of them. This can provide an extremely interesting addition to gameplay for groups that can handle it. It allows the Hollows to whisper ideas and suggestions to their hosts, and to role-play out the struggle for control.

More information on this concept and GMing the Hollow in general, see page 287.

A Terrifying Possibility

Not all characters are at war with their Hollow. A few manage a strange sort of equilibrium, working towards a synthesis of consciousness and Hollow, theoretically creating a being of terrifying power. As yet, no Nemissary has succeeded in this goal. Some have managed to tease secrets and strength from their dark self but not one has managed the true Apotheosis they hoped for.

Other Nemissaries look at these individuals with abject horror, believing firmly that at least seven Nemissaries have most certainly achieved this state and that all the world's current horrors and crises may be laid squarely at their feet.

Universal Nemissary Features

There are a number of Features common to every Nemissary. These encompass a broad range of abilities from raising Attributes to the nature of a Nemissary's immortal soul, and they are covered in detail below.

Facts of Life

Nemissaries have numerous special abilities and considerations which apply to them; the most basic of which are changes to some of the essential facts of life facing a Nemissary, as noted below.

- Nemissaries are extremely resistant to fatigue and can go roughly three times as long without sleep or rest as a human being.
- Nemissaries need to eat about the same amount as an average adult, but are carnivorous, being unable to draw nutrition from anything but meat.
- Nemissaries are normally light sleepers, and receive little practical rest from their sleep, generally finding the experience somewhat unnerving.
- Nemissaries leave no genetic information, and their skin cells, hair, blood and so on are comprised entirely of Exo-cells, which break down rapidly when detached from the body.

"Ooh, That's Expensive!"

Raising Attributes costs a lot and isn't very efficient – at least until the Nemissary learns certain Arietta from the Song of Flesh which can make this particular capability quite hilariously lethal.

- Nemissaries cannot give blood, nor serve as the basis for an organ transplant. Likewise a Nemissary has no conventional blood-type, and cannot receive transfusions or transplants without the use of Songs.
- Nemissaries do not normally age, though they sometimes do so slowly as their self-image changes.
- Nemissaries are sexually fully functional, but are entirely infertile.
- Nemissaries' bones are far denser than a normal human's, and this effect grows even more noticeable as a Nemissary's Creed increases. They should be considered approximately 10% heavier than a normal person of the same build per point of Permanent Creed they possess.
- Nemissaries don't need to breathe, though they do so because the action is comforting to them, and when deprived of oxygen, Nemissaries usually begin to feel uneasy, suffering effects similar to mild depression.

Immortal Being

The bodies and minds of Nemissaries are ultimately no longer human and are capable of withstanding horrific punishment.

Improved Self

The Nemissary's starting Attributes are superior to those of a normal human. If a normal human becomes a Nemissary during play, each of their Attributes will be increased by 1.

Condition Immunity

Nemissaries are immune to all mundane Conditions. This includes drugs, toxins and diseases. This also means that a Nemissary is immune to the beneficial effects of drugs and medical treatments as well as being unaffected by recreational drugs or alcohol.

Massive quantities of intoxicants or toxins can have an effect on a Nemissary, and **if a Nemissary voluntarily suppresses their Regeneration for some reason, Conditions and drugs will affect them normally**.

Corpse Body

Nemissaries are not truly alive. This means that they don't need to breathe and generally can't freeze to death. They are also extremely resistant to pain and, like Broodspawn, ignore the Wound Penalties associated with Injured Wounds.

Despite this, Nemissaries are not invincible. They still need to eat and will need to breathe if they wish to speak. Also, whilst they might not freeze to death, extreme environments such as the Arctic can damage a Nemissary's body – after all an undead icicle is just as screwed as a living one.

For more information, see the optional rules on page 96 in the Core Rules chapter.

Improved Senses

All Nemissaries have particularly sharp senses, allowing them to feel, taste and see things above the human norm. In effect, this grants them +1 Pool in any situation where their improved senses would be a benefit. It also gives them basic low-light vision, allowing them to see in near total darkness with no penalty.

Raise Attributes

In times of crisis, a Nemissary can temporarily improve their physical capabilities. A Nemissary may improve either their Body or Prowess. For each point of improvement an escalating amount of Anima must be spent.

To raise an Attribute by 1, a Nemissary must spend 1 Anima. To raise that Attribute again, the Nemissary needs to spend an additional point of Anima; so to raise an Attribute by 2 points would require the Nemissary to spend in total 3 Anima.

No Attribute may be raised by more than 3 ranks in this way for a total cost of 6 Anima. These costs are individual per Attribute and the improvement persists for one Scene.

Healing

Nemissaries are resilient creatures and heal quickly from their injuries. As a result they have the Type 1 Regeneration Feature. Unlike Broodspawn, this costs no Anima to activate and is permanently on. In addition, a Nemissary has the unique ability to use Anima to heal large amounts of damage quickly, or deal with Baleful Wounds at a much slower pace.

Fast Healing: A Nemissary may take a Standard Action and spend 1 or more Light Anima to heal an equal number of Wounds. Alternatively, a Nemissary may Invoke a Motivation as an additional cost to heal damage in this way as a reflexive Free Action. In either case, this healing obeys the same general rules as Regeneration; that is, only normal Wounds may be healed and the most severe Wounds are always healed first.

Removing Baleful Wounds: A Nemissary wishing to change Baleful Wounds into Normal Wounds may do so by spending a number of Light Anima equal to the total number of Baleful Wounds they are currently suffering.

They then make a Conviction/Keening roll against a Difficulty of their permanent Spite. Each point of Outcome allows a Nemissary to convert 1 Baleful Damage into normal Damage.

This Action takes longer than usual, taking a minimum of 10 minutes. Alternatively, the Nemissary may spend 1 Focus to have this effect resolved as a Standard Action.

The Destroyer Shape

Also called the **Angela Noctis**, this represents one of the most fearsome powers available to a Nemissary. It enables them to transform into a massive engine of destruction, usually standing well over 9 feet tall and clad in multiple layers of serrated Voidglass carapace. This form is unique and distinctive to each Nemissary and is one of the most devastating weapons in their arsenals. For most, using this power is an uncomfortable experience, not only because of the horrible pain wrought from the changes, but also because it was with similar forms that the Reapers decimated the world as we knew it.

Using this shape requires a Nemissary to take a Standard Action and then pay a cost of 1 Focus, 3 Anima and either pay 1 temporary Creed or gain 1 temporary Spite. They then gain the following effects:

- Increase Body by 3 and Prowess by 2.
- The character gains +1 Resilience and their natural Resilience has the "Voidglass" Armour Quality.
- The Nemissary's natural regeneration changes to Type 2.
- Unarmed attacks gain +1 Damage and the "Voidglass" Weapon Quality.
- Size increases by 1 step.

These changes have a significant impact on a character's combat capabilities, changing not only their Resilience and damage output but also their Reach, and causes them to no longer take Baleful Wounds from Voidglass weaponry.

When the Nemissary transforms, the Angela Noctis will expand and absorb any useful equipment they are carrying, twisting and absorbing them to accommodate the Nemissary's altered state. This means that weapons, equipment and armour will all still be accessible to the Nemissary but mundane items such as pack bags and accessories, will simply fall away from the character as any bindings holding them in place are shredded by the emerging Voidglass armour.

Depending upon whether the form was activated through paying Creed or gaining Spite, it will have certain additional qualities. If the form was assumed using Spite, the Nemissary gains the following additional effects;

- If the Nemissary does not already possess it, they gain the Iron Soul Feature whilst the Destroyer Shape is active.
- If they already possess the Iron Soul Feature, the cost to maintain the Angela Noctis is paid every two rounds, starting on the second round the form is active.

If the Nemissary activated the Angela Noctis using Creed instead, apply the following effects;

An Unusual Side-Effect

One interesting effect of the Angela Noctis comes into play when a character attempts to lift things. Normally, a character's lifting strength is limited by the fact that after a certain point their hands become like daggers, cutting into any material they attempt to lift.

The Angela Noctis circumvents this limitation of physics, applying its strength evenly across any object the character attempts to lift. This means that massive objects such as trucks or planes can be lifted stably by the Angela Noctis so long as the character has the requisite Attributes.

- The Nemissary may pay 1 Anima per item in their possession to give those items the "Voidglass" Quality. For the purposes of ammunition, a single clip costs 1 Anima.
- The Nemissary may absorb one or more items that have not been converted into Voidglass into their form, preventing their destruction when the Destroyer Shape ends, at a cost of 1 Anima per item.
- Broodspawn fear the Nemissary, taking -1 Pool penalty to all Actions directed against the Nemissary.
- The Nemissary reduces the Anima cost of Arietta by 1. This may reduce of either Light or Dark Anima, and may reduce the cost to 0.

To maintain this shape, the Nemissary must spend 1 Dark Anima at the start of each Round. This shape also ends at the end of the Scene or if the Nemissary is unable to pay the cost in Anima; at which point the Nemissary **must** use a Standard Action to return to their normal shape. Any clothing, armour or weapons that were on the character's person when they changed into the Angela Noctis and were not originally made of Voidglass will be destroyed.

The appearance of this form, as mentioned, is unique to each Nemissary and never changes save for the fact that its appearance will be different depending upon whether it is activated through Spite or through Creed.

When activated using Spite, the Destroyer Shape appears like true Voidglass, being difficult to look at and taking on the same midnight black hue of the Shards. If the power was activated through Creed on the other hand, this appearance changes slightly.

First, its lines will be more organised. Whilst still somewhat chaotic, it will be less jagged and assume shapes visually identifiable with conventional armour. It will still be terrifying and impressive but more magnificent than disturbing. Its colour will also be different. Whilst still jet black, it has a distinct tint which varies from individual to individual, and is most prominent on the dividing lines and edges of the armour. Most commonly this colour is reminiscent of that Nemissary's Creed.

- **Tower:** Slate grey, silver, gold, terracotta and brown.
- **Veil:** Crimson, pink, azure, light blue, white.
- **Mirror:** Translucent white, iridescent blue, smoky grey, platinum.
- **Mask:** Purple, other colours shot with dark veins, rainbow hued, iridescent green
- **Sword:** Iron, blood red, copper, brass, rust.

Normally, these colours or metallic appearances will always be subtly luminescent and transparent to some degree. In many cases, the Nemissary will appear like faded and cracked crystal or like glass with smoke blown through it. Deep within, the Nemissary's flesh and bone will be visible, like great knotted cords, and the overall effect should always be visually distinctive and unique.

Ambient Synergy Vulnerability

One of the primary reasons Nemissaries must be cautious in their dealings with the Brood is the power inherent to Ambient Synergy.

Aside from the physical threat of powerful Broodspawn within an area of Ambient Synergy, Nemissaries fear it because it has the power to enslave their minds and force them – albeit temporary – into the service of the Brood.

This only becomes a direct threat when the local Ambient Synergy exceeds the greater of the Nemissary's Creed or Spite. At the beginning of a scene in which the Nemissary is confronted with this situation, they make a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty equal to 2 + the number of points by which the Ambient Synergy exceeds their own Creed or Spite.

If the Nemissary succeeds, they are safe for 1 hour, with each point of Outcome increasing this immunity by 1 day. This remains consistent so long as any new Ambient Synergy is equal to or less than the one previously resisted.

If the Nemissary fails the roll however, they must either gain 1 temporary Spite or become temporarily controlled by the Brood, and by extension the GM.

A character controlled in this way loses access to their skills and is temporarily considered to possess Synergy equal to their Creed for the purposes of skills in the same manner as Broodspawn. In addition, just like Broodspawn they can draw on a number of Anima per round equal to their effective Synergy rating. This state persists until the Ambient Synergy in the area changes or 24 hours pass; at which point the character can make a Conviction/Resolve check against a Difficulty of half the Ambient Synergy to attempt to break free. Alternatively, they can pay a cost of 1 temporary Spite to do so automatically.

If they break free, they are immune in the same manner as described above. If they fail, they can test again after another 24 hours but each time this is attempted after the first, they may not acquire temporary Spite to pass automatically, and gain 1 permanent Spite if the test is failed.

If a Hollow achieves Final Victory in this way, there is no period of transition and the Nemissary is immediately transformed into a Broodspawn as described above.

Nemissaries and Anima

All Nemissaries possess large Anima Pools and have the capacity to wield Anima directly to accomplish various supernatural feats.

Anima Pool

Nemissaries calculate their maximum Anima Pool differently to other humans. First of all, they don't recover Anima naturally as living creatures do and need to use more direct methods of attaining it as noted below. Secondly, their available Anima Pools are much larger than normal.

- **Neutral Anima:** A Nemissary has a maximum pool of 4 Neutral Anima.
- **Light and Dark Anima:** Both a Nemissary's maximum Light and Dark Anima pools are equal to 3 × Permanent Creed.
- **Bonus Anima:** A Nemissary gains a number of additional points which may be allocated to increase their maximum Light or Dark Anima pools equal to the Nemissary's Passion.

Example: *Catherine has a Creed of 2 and a Passion of 4. Her basic Anima pool is 4 Neutral and 6 each in Light and Dark Anima.*

She can also modify her Light and Dark Anima Pools by a total of 4 points, and she chooses to give 3 bonus Anima to Dark Anima, and 1 bonus point to her Light Anima pool. This means her total maximum Anima pools are 4 Neutral, 9 Dark, and 7 Light.

This total, once set, may only be recalculated if one of the Traits governing it is permanently altered. If a temporary effect would cause one of these traits to alter, Anima pools are not recalculated.

Recovering Anima

Anima can be acquired in a number of ways, ranging from the relatively benign, to outright murder, or the consumption of a soul. The various methods through which a Nemissary can regain Anima are noted below. Unless otherwise noted a Nemissary cannot be the target of any of the following methods of generating Anima.

Respiration: Nemissaries with a low permanent Spite, or high permanent Creed are potentially capable of regenerating Anima in a manner similar to mortals. To work out how quickly a Nemissary may regain Anima in this way, take the Nemissary's permanent Creed and reduce it by their permanent Spite. For each point of permanent Creed remaining, the Nemissary regains 1 Neutral Anima per night of rest.

Example: *A starting Nemissary with a Creed of 2 and a Spite of 1 regains 1 Neutral Anima per night. A more powerful Nemissary with a Creed of 4 but a dangerously high Spite of 5 would be unable to regenerate Anima in this way.*

Ambient Feeding: Nemissaries can feed on strong sources of emotion, particularly those which align with their Motivations. Once per Scene, when a Nemissary is in the presence of a powerful emotion they may make a Passion/Keening check against a Difficulty based on the strength of the emotion being displayed.

- **Difficulty 0:** Intense to the limits of human endurance, such as a mother grieving for a child murdered before her eyes, or an artist gazing at the masterpiece of a lifetime.
- **Difficulty 1:** Powerful and enduring, such as hate following a terrible betrayal, or a gentle kiss as an affirmation of feeling between two lovers on an anniversary.
- **Difficulty 2:** Strong but brief, such as the surge of adulation in victory at a sporting competition, the aftermath of an impassioned speech or the anger felt when seeing a hated rival.
- **Difficulty 3:** Noticeable and transient, such as laughter shared amongst friends, sadness when reminded of a lost love, or the joy of being lost in music.

This Difficulty can be further modified by several factors, and these modifiers are cumulative for working out the total Difficulty:

- **Difficulty +1:** The emotion is felt only by a single individual.
- **Difficulty +1:** The emotion is displayed in the presence of more than one Nemissary.
- **Difficulty -1:** The emotion is shared by a large group of people, anywhere from between 7 to as high as 30 people.
- **Difficulty -2:** The emotion is displayed by a huge crowd. 31 or more people would qualify.

The Nemissary then makes their roll with each point of Outcome allowing the Nemissary to gain either 1 Light or Dark Anima depending upon the emotion being displayed. For most emotions this should be straightforward. If there is any doubt, remember that positive, vibrant and creative emotions are Light, and destructive, static and repressive emotions are Dark.

It's important to note that intent has no bearing on Ambient Feeding. Joy at the death of an opponent is still Light and a murderer's deep remorse still generates Dark Anima. What matters is the emotion itself and not why someone is feeling it.

Rapture: Although very difficult, it's possible for a Nemissary to create a temporary renewable source of Anima by inspiring a person and drawing out their skills and talents into some tangible focus. Nemissaries call this the Rapture, and there are a great many who dedicate significant time to this means of feeding simply for the great pleasure and sense of satisfaction it brings.

To begin, a Nemissary must find an individual with a creative spark. Doing so is difficult and shouldn't be resolved in a single dice roll. It potentially could take months to find a suitable individual, and the Nemissary should be prepared for the long haul.

Once a Nemissary finds such an individual, they need to earn their trust and then set about investing Anima in that person. A Nemissary invests a varying amount of Anima of either Light or Dark, but not both, at a rate of 1 per week. Doing this, requires the Nemissary to be in contact with the individual, but doesn't necessitate any rolls. A Nemissary also cannot invest more Anima in this way than their own Conviction.

Once the Nemissary has invested the required Anima, they need to convince the individual to make a work of art, or attempt some other meaningful achievement like a play or performance piece – something that will be remembered. Exactly what that individual will do is based heavily on their own personality. However, depending upon whether the individual was invested with positive or negative Anima, the results may vary.

Each person generally has a disposition towards positive or negative Anima based on their Motivations. As the individual is invested with Anima, they will have begun to feel this nature grow further. If they embrace it, no roll is required. However, some individuals will likely be disturbed by this, and may make a Conviction/Resolve roll with a Difficulty equal to the Nemissary's Creed to turn aside from the investment.

A Nemissary can attempt to influence this by taking a standard Social Action to convince the human in question to accept the gift.

If the person accepted their gift, everything proceeds. If however the person refuses, the entire process is ruined and any Anima invested is lost. The Nemissary must begin again from scratch.

If the person was invested with Light Anima, they will attempt to create a work of supreme beauty. On the other hand a person invested with Dark Anima is likely to lose their mind. Whilst they'll certainly do something powerful and memorable, the results may be horrific. They're just as likely to begin a particularly notable spree of serial killings as they are to produce a haunting but masterful piece of art.

Assuming the target creates a work of art, they make an appropriate roll at the discretion of the GM to determine how impressive their work is. They gain a number of bonus Outcome to this roll equal to the Anima invested. In the case of a target doing good deeds or going on a killing spree, they should make a Conviction/Resolve roll with the effects influencing a number of people equal to the Successes times by themselves.

Of course, it's possible that these particular events might be interrupted, and if this is the case the whole process can be ruined, but the person undertaking the task gains a number of bonus dice to all their actions equal to the Anima invested, making them a formidable person to deal with.

In either case, once the work is completed, whatever that might be, the Rapturing is complete. The Nemissary can draw upon a number of Anima of the relevant type per week equal to the amount invested for a number of months equal to the Successes the target rolled for their work.

The side effects of this process vary dependent upon the type of Anima used. People under the effects of Serenity through the use of positive Anima usually become major NPCs, thus gaining Fate, if they did not already possess it.

Characters invested with negative Anima however, are likely to fall into a self-destructive spiral, and will almost certainly kill themselves or otherwise bring about their destruction within days of the effect of the Rapture running its course. Also, the Nemissary may very well gain temporary Spite if they inflict the Rapture on an undeserving individual or otherwise allow its effects to spiral out of control. For this purpose, causing someone who is an already unhinged individual to commit a murder doesn't really count, but taking a sane and healthy person and transforming them into the same monster would generate Spite.

It's important to note that once the Rapture is complete and the Nemissary has access to the source of energy, killing the original target of this power will not stop that, though to draw upon the Anima the Nemissary must return to the site of the Rapture itself. This can be interrupted as normal, and a character sufficiently dedicated to stopping this process can go to the site and spend a number of Anima points of the opposite type equal to the original amount invested to bring the process of the Rapture to an abrupt end.

Consumption: By consuming the flesh of a human being, a Nemissary gains access to that human's full Anima pool. This is normally 4 points of Neutral Anima, but the act of Consumption transmutes all of that Anima to Dark Anima. Consuming a full human body normally takes a Nemissary some time, unless they have some way of devouring the entire body at once.

Consumption can also be used to feed from the corpses of Broodspawn, though there is little to be gained and much risked in doing so. A Broodspawn contains a number of Anima equal to its permanent Synergy plus any Anima remaining in its Anima pool if it has one. Just like feeding from a human, this Anima will be transmuted into Dark Anima.

The danger is that for each point of Anima gained from feeding in this way, any Ambient Synergy encountered is increased by 1 for the purposes of overcoming the Nemissary's consciousness. The maximum increase to Ambient Synergy due to this effect is +3. This penalty decreases at a rate of 1 per day that the Nemissary goes without consuming further Broodspawn flesh.

Serenity: A direct, but not very harmful, means of absorbing Anima, Serenity involves bringing a mortal to a spiritual high and then feeding off the release of emotions. By far the easiest way of accomplishing this is to seduce a target, and bring them to orgasm.

Sex and Serenity

Just to be clear, we don't mean to imply that one of the most effective means of absorbing the Anima necessary to use your supernatural powers is simply to have sex. Sins is not that kind of game, and at higher tiers of Song-use players would find themselves living in excess just to function adequately in tough battles.

Given the mature tone of the game's themes however, sex can simply be read as the most straight-forward interpretation of taking another human to a heightened release of feeling beyond religious, moral, or ethical influence.

That isn't to say that those alternatives aren't possible however, they could just be a little more difficult to explore, they could just be a little more difficult to explore in the short spaces of time afforded by most campaigns. Game Masters could use those in lieu of sexual highs though, and appropriately reward players with greater amounts of Anima for undertaking tasks requiring such character development, roleplay and forethought.

Ultimately, the sexual interpretation of Serenity should only be used in stories where both Game Masters /and/ players feel comfortable introducing scenes of a sexual nature and we would always recommend 'fading to black', as it were, when it comes to sexual scenes.

An additional note is that Serenity never works if either party is at any point unwilling.

Serenity isn't always about sex however, and some other situations such as a moment of almost perfect happiness, can provide the necessary power anyway. Regardless, to achieve Serenity, a Nemissary must have physical contact with the target and can drain a number of points of Anima equal to their Passion in this way.

No rolls are required to do this, meaning it's a safe and efficient way of feeding. That said, the Nemissary should still probably have to make rolls to seduce a target or otherwise set up the events that allow this type of feeding to occur.

Defiling: Instead of taking Anima gently, the Nemissary can rip it directly from a target's soul. If done with restraint, this act is harmful to the target but not overwhelmingly so. If pushed to its furthest extremes however, it is one of the most terrible acts a Nemissary can undertake. **Before considering using it in game, read the sidebar "We Warned You, and Will Again" overleaf.**

Defiling first requires the Nemissary to make physical contact with the victim which, assuming that the target

We Warned You, and Will Again

The world of Sins is not a nice place, but ultimately it's a fantasy. Please, don't mistake us for endorsing systematic torture. The point of including rules like this one is to provide for the full scope of a Nemissary's capabilities – some of which are benevolent and benign, and others horrifying and abhorrent.

Some of the powers Nemissaries possess were never particularly intended for player characters to use. Certainly, Defiling is an "efficient" means of feeding, and its cost is relatively minor, but remember the rules do not tell the whole story. A group of characters are very likely to turn on a Defiler in their midst, regardless of the explanations they offer. Ultimately, though, Sins is a game about telling stories, and the fact remains that just like real life, terrible things can happen in stories, seemingly good people can do villainous things, and not everybody has a happy ending.

Just remember, don't throw things like this in the face of players who find them uncomfortable. This is why it's important to have a means of establishing boundaries within a game and we recommend again that you implement some formal method of doing so, as outlined on page 7.

resists, is handled as per the combat rules for restraining a target. Each round the Nemissary maintains the grapple, they inflict 1 Baleful Injured Wound and gain a number of points of the target's Anima equal to the Nemissary's permanent Spite. Any Anima absorbed in this way is always transmuted into Dark Anima.

Once the target runs out of Anima, the Nemissary can break their hold and end the act of Defiling. This will leave the target wounded but with no lasting harm beyond the loss of Vitality and Anima. However, one side effect of this process is that the target will gain a subtle and permanent negative bias towards any interactions with the Nemissary. The subject will always feel uncomfortable in that Nemissary's presence and an astute individual may learn to harness this to their advantage. Mechanically, that character gains a number of automatic Successes in any opposed rolls with that Nemissary equal to the Nemissary's permanent spite.

This side effect is not dependent upon whether the subject was willing, so in the unlikely event that a human ally agreed to be the target, they will still end up suffering the side effect in relation to their ally. The side effect can abate over time if the individual makes a consistent effort to resist their feelings.

Alternatively, when all the target's Anima is exhausted, a Nemissary can push further still, albeit with terrible consequences. When a Nemissary continues the defilement in this way, the target's body begins to twist, their heart slowly withering and forming into a twisted approximation of an Aenthir. The subject quickly loses consciousness and is mercifully spared the transformation. The Nemissary must then watch in horror though as the subject's body begins to crumble until only a dark, coal-like remnant remains.

The Nemissary then makes a Conviction/Keening check using Spite in place of their Creed to calculate the Dice Pool. The Nemissary gains a number of Dark Anima equal to 1 + Double the Outcome on the roll. They also - at the GM's discretion – then gain some knowledge of the subject's recent memory. Regardless, exacting a defilement to this extent causes the Nemissary to gain one Temporary point of Spite, and if the action was taken in anything other than desperation, they should gain a number of additional Temporary Spite equal to their current Permanent Spite.

True Death

Killing a Nemissary is frankly quite hard. Cutting off their limbs, piercing them with spears, and mutilating their bodies will not necessarily result in their end. In fact, even immolating a Nemissary is not a guarantee.

Of course, death in the conventional sense is not without cost for a Nemissary. Their human nature means that their souls cannot go unmolested by the experience of near death.

Each time a Nemissary suffers an Overkill Wound or is effectively killed in some other manner, they gain a temporary point of Spite and a **Deathmark**. Each Deathmark is a permanent reminder of how the Nemissary was brought near their end, and should closely resemble the wound that brought them low. These marks, though subtle, are permanent and irreversible; even the Song of Flesh cannot remove them permanently and they are always considered a part of the Nemissary's true shape.

Assuming the Nemissary's body is left alone, they will return to the Dying Wound state over a number of days or hours, as dramatically appropriate, with no ill effects other than the incurred cost in Spite. To cause irreversible harm to a Nemissary requires an enemy to do a lot more.

Waking the Hollow

When brought to the threshold of death by receiving either a Deadly or Overkill Wound, a Nemissary has the option to attempt to cheat death by unleashing their Hollow. Doing so is a Free Action and a Response, in which the Nemissary rolls their permanent Spite + Conviction/Keening against a Difficulty of 0, or 3 if the Nemissary is suffering 1 or more Baleful Deadly or Overkill Wounds.

If the Nemissary succeeds, they remove 1 Wound for each point of Outcome, starting with Overkill and working backwards. They also gain a number of temporary Spite equal to their permanent Spite rank. Any remaining Wounds which are Impaling are converted to normal Wounds and all foreign objects are expelled from the Nemissary.

Next, a number of Neutral Anima equal to the number of Wounds removed is added to the character's Pool. If their Neutral Anima is filled, any excess Anima is transformed into Dark Anima.

With all this done, the Hollow now takes control of the character and may as a Response transform into the Destroyer Shape, paying all costs as normal but this transformation takes place as a Free Action.

When in control in this way, the Hollow is truly berserk. It will attack and preferably torture to death the entity which inflicted such lethal harm to its host, and will then turn its attention to each remaining opponent in turn until nothing living remains. It will even attack friends and loved ones, and is particularly cruel even by the Hollow's normal standards.

The Hollow's dominance in this case lasts for one Scene, at which point the character will return to normal. This effect may happen only once per Scene, meaning that if the Hollow is then defeated, the character is then likely out of options.

Physical Destruction

There are two ways to bring a Nemissary to the point of True Death. The first is to kill a Nemissary with Baleful damage such as immolating them completely or using a Voidglass weapon to strike the final blow. The second is through a Nemissary's **Aenthir**.

In place of their heart, each Nemissary possesses a tiny shard of a substance similar to Voidglass called an Aenthir and this represents the seat of their existence. Only through its complete destruction will a Nemissary face a very real and final death.

To do this, the Aenthir must be recovered from the Nemissary's corpse and must then be destroyed using a piece of Voidglass, or a process destructive enough to damage even this substance such as a nuclear explosion. In the event that the Aenthir is truly destroyed, the Nemissary is in dire straits indeed. In almost all cases, they cease to live and what remains of their soul is dragged down into the darkness at the end of all things.

In either event, the Nemissary's body rots and decays setting their soul loose. This causes the Nemissary to gain a permanent point of Spite and leaves their temporary Spite score unchanged. In the case of Nemissaries without a Cabal, their Hollow immediately checks for dominance.

"Did You Just Imply...?"

Yes, we did just imply that Nemissaries ultimately are all facing a fate worse than death. This begs the question of whether there is any hope at all for a Nemissary's soul. The truth is complicated. There are ways that a Nemissary can escape this implied nightmarish fate.

None of them are easy and remember that most Nemissaries are not even aware of the full implications of their immortal nature. Frankly, the only known way out is Ascension. That doesn't of course mean there aren't other solutions that will present themselves as the setting evolves.

If it is successful, the character is dragged forever into the darkness to whatever horrible fate awaits a truly immortal soul.

For those Nemissaries who are part of a Cabal, the odds are good that they will recover, albeit at a serious cost. The friendship with, or even hatred of, their companions gives them a beacon with which to hold on to the world, preventing their Hollow's roll for dominance. If the Nemissary is part of a Cabal or their Hollow fails to claim them, the Nemissary's soul is dragged before a Shard to face Judgement.

The rules for Judgement are presented on page 288 and if the Nemissary survives this ordeal, their body will regenerate itself over the course of 7 days in the shadow of the Shard which called them to their Judgement. If they fail, a fate worse than death awaits.

Devouring

All precautions and all methods of rebirth can be rendered moot by a Nemissary wishing to devour the soul of another. Doing this is never something which should be taken lightly, and if pushed too far it can lead to the Nemissary's own destruction. In essence, the Nemissary must merge their soul with that of a defeated opponent, and then consume it from the inside out. Either this is accomplished by physically eating the opponent's Aenthir, or by exposing their own and touching them together. This process proceeds through a number of steps as shown below.

Also, unlike normal, **if Spite gained from this process would cause a Nemissary to suffer a Crisis Event, the Hollow gains a number of Automatic Successes to overcome the Nemissary equal to the victim's permanent Spite** for any rolls made whilst the process is attempted. This includes attempts by the Hollow to wrestle control.

Step 1 – Removing the Aenthir: First, a Nemissary must remove the Aenthir of another Nemissary. This needs to be done either whilst the Nemissary is alive or within seven minutes after that Nemissary's death.

Step 2 – Consuming the Aenthir: Next, the Aenthir must be consumed. The Nemissary can do this in one of two ways; either they may directly eat the Aenthir whole, or expose their own Aenthir and touch both together.

Eating an opponent's Aenthir is a daunting prospect. It requires a Nemissary to make a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 4. If the Nemissary is successful, swallowing the Aenthir will inflict a number of Baleful Injured Wounds to the character equal to the victim's permanent Spite.

Touching a victim's Aenthir to one's own requires the Nemissary to first expose their own Aenthir, which requires either a Song of Flesh Arietta to gain an Enhancement solely for this purpose, or the Nemissary needs to physically cut open their own chest using Prowess/Medicine (2). Success simply inflicts a single Critical Wound, whereas a failure inflicts 3 Critical Wounds. Alternatively, the Nemissary can rip open their own chest, inflicting a Deadly Wound.

Note that when a Critical Wound is inflicted, characters also take an Injured and a Mauled Wound. Furthermore, a Deadly Wound will also inflict one of each of the previous Wounds on the character. Finally, remember that a Nemissary will need to either heal themselves out of the Deadly state or will need to spend at least 1 Focus to act in order to touch the two Aenthirs together.

Step 3 – Battle of Wills: With all this complete and the Aenthir absorbed, the first ramifications of the act hit the character, gaining them 1 temporary Spite. Next, a battle of wills takes place. The victim rolls their Conviction/Resolve ignoring any Wound penalties and the Nemissary attempting the process rolls Conviction/Keening. If the victim succeeds, their Aenthir dissolves, and that Nemissary dies and faces either True Death or Judgement at a Shard as normal.

Fate and the Spark

Aside from the notes we've presented here, it should be noted that any character with a Fate of 2 or higher automatically possesses a Spark. Such characters are far easier to identify as their auras are brighter than those of others, standing out as beacons to Nemissaries who can read such things.

This should also serve as a warning; characters with higher Fate find it harder to survive the transition into becoming a Nemissary – after all their Destiny is already partially decided and lashes out against those who would cheat it.

If the Nemissary attempting to Devour is victorious, the target's soul is subdued. The Nemissary may now either destroy their victim's soul which grants them any and all Anima the target still possesses and ending the process here at this step. Alternatively they may push further, Devouring the target's soul completely.

Step 4 – Completing the Act: A Nemissary who pushes the process to this level faces a critical internal dilemma. No matter how obtuse the character, they gain a clear understanding of the act they are about to commit, knowing in no uncertain terms that they are condemning their opponent to an eternity trapped within the soul of another.

The Nemissary has one final chance to stop. If they do so, the Hollow may immediately attempt to wrestle control. If it succeeds, it will likely continue the process against the Nemissary's wishes. Assuming the Nemissary still wishes to continue, there is no roll; their opponent's soul is already vulnerable and the final act of Devouring is easy enough, and once complete the Nemissary gains all of the following benefits:

- Gain temporary Spite equal to the target's permanent Spite.
- Gain temporary Creed equal to the target's permanent Creed.
- Gain a number of effective Milestones for the purposes of character advancement equal to the target's permanent Creed. Only Skills, Qualities or Specialities known by the target may be acquired in this way.
- Gain a number of ranks of Arietta equal to the target's permanent Creed × 3. Only Arietta that the target knew may be acquired in this way.
- The Nemissary gains the "Empty Soul" Feature.

Any Nemissary who has their soul absorbed in this way is trapped within the Aenthir of the victor. This means that their death will be permanent unless their murderer's Aenthir is destroyed for some reason. In this event, there is a slim chance that the victim of the Devouring may be restored. Follow the rules for True Death above, and if that character was part of a Cabal ignore it and give the Hollow a chance to destroy them. Otherwise make the same roll but give the Hollow 1 Automatic Success for every year or part thereof that the character has been trapped in the Aenthir of another.

The Gift

Though difficult and limited to experienced Nemissaries, it is possible for them to deliberately create more of their kind. Any Nemissary with a Creed of 2 or higher can attempt this process.

First of all, the Nemissary needs to choose a subject. This can be a difficult decision; the human in question must possess what Nemissaries refer to as a "Spark". To an outside observer, this can be very difficult to determine. In a basic sense, it means that the person has a touch of destiny about them and is probably the type of individual that either doesn't fit in or finds themselves a community leader.

Mechanically, to possess a "Spark", the prospective character must be an actual fully fledged character in the story, possessing the full range of Traits and abilities. This doesn't mean that the person has to be particularly powerful or even important, but it does mean that they should be a lot more than just a background NPC.

How exactly a Nemissary identifies such individuals should flow naturally over the course of a story. It's not the type of thing that can be rushed but at the same time it should be fairly obvious when a Nemissary has found such an individual.

The Ritual

To actually begin the process of creating one of the Chosen, the Nemissary selects an individual with the Spark as described above and then kills that individual. It's advisable, though not necessary, for a Nemissary to explain what's about to happen and to coach the individual for several weeks prior on the realities of the process. Doing these things significantly increases the odds of success but there's nothing to actually stop a Nemissary just killing someone, willing or otherwise.

Once the target is dead, the Nemissary makes an incision in the subject's chest, exposing their heart. He then repeats the process on himself to expose his Aenthir. At this point, he must use a piece of Voidglass to cut away a small section of his Aenthir, inserting it into the target's heart thus completing the ritual component.

Mechanically, this proceeds in a series of steps:

- **Kill the target:** This can be achieved in any way the Nemissary desires, so long as the target's body remains primarily intact and possesses a head and a heart.
- **Expose the target's heart:** To do this properly requires surgical tools and a Prowess/Medicine roll of difficulty 1, or access to an appropriate Song of Flesh Arietta. The Nemissary can simply rip a hole but doing so leaves a permanent scar on the target assuming they actually take the Second Breath.
- **Expose the Aenthir:** This is the nasty bit. The Nemissary must either use a Song of Flesh Arietta to gain an Enhancement solely for this purpose, or the Nemissary needs to physically cut open their own chest using Prowess/Medicine (2). Success simply inflicts a single Critical Wound, whereas a failure inflicts 3 Critical Wounds. Alternatively, the Nemissary can rip open their own chest, inflicting a Deadly Wound.
- **Split the Aenthir:** To split the Nemissary's Aenthir, they must make a Conviction/Resolve roll, against a Difficulty of their permanent Spite. If they succeed the roll they move on to the next step, but if they fail the Nemissary loses a point of Focus and the ritual is wasted. There is no second chance.
- **Pay the Price:** The Nemissary must pay a cost of 1 Focus, 1 temporary Spite and 1 temporary Creed. Also, going this far in the ritual means that the Nemissary may not gain temporary Creed for any reason until a number of months have passed equal to their permanent Creed and Spite added together.

With the ritual complete, things fall onto the target. The subject needs to make a Sustained Conviction/Resolve Action with a Difficulty equal to their own Fate with the appropriate modifiers listed below;

- **+1:** Target was not a willing participant of the Ritual.
- **-1:** The target was tutored extensively for what was about to happen.
- **-1:** The target is an adolescent or young adult.
- **+1:** The target is middle-aged.
- **+2:** The target is a small child.
- **-1:** The Ritual took place in the presence of a Shard.

These modifiers are cumulative, and the Threshold of the task is equal to 10 minus the target's Passion. If the target succeeds, they will take their Second Breath and emerge as one of The Chosen. They will remain unconscious for a number of days equal to their Fate, then awaken and are subject to all the rules for a new born Nemissary, including the need to face Judgement before a Shard.

If they give up on the rolls or repeated failures force them to do so, their soul is shattered under the weight of the transformation – the target remains dead and will not rise as one of the Brood.

Specific Nemissary Features

There are a number of supernatural Features that whilst common to many Nemissaries are not universal. A Nemissary only possesses any of the following Features if it is specified by the rules. This will generally be one of the three Shaping related Features, or the Iron Soul Feature if the Nemissary's Favoured Songs align.

Iron Soul

When a Nemissary's Creed and Hollow Nature align they become more resistant to the malign energies of Spite. Nemissaries with this Feature calculate costs based on Spite differently.

Once per Scene, when paying an Arietta's cost, the Nemissary may either reduce the temporary Spite cost of

"WHY SHOULD I CARE?"

Okay, losing the temporary Creed is kind of harsh but you can get that back by Devouring, plus who cares about the hypothetical Creed of 7 anyway?

That's all true, but bear something in mind; being unable to reach enlightenment means that your character is essentially condemned. One way or another, they may very well have consigned themselves to a fate far worse than death. We're not saying this has to be the case; after all there's a small chance of redemption for anyone.

that power by 1 or alternatively remove 1 point of Risked Spite from that power's cost.

This power is only effective when paying for Arietta, and is of no help when dealing with normal Spite acquisition or activating the Destroyer Shape.

MAIDEN'S GIFT

Nemissaries with this Feature possess a number of advantages and disadvantages when compared with other Nemissaries:

- These Nemissaries master Arietta with great ease. When given an opportunity to purchase or acquire Arietta, they reduce the rank of Arietta from their Favoured Songs by 1 to a minimum of 1 for this purpose.
- These Nemissaries are more distant from the Brood and gain +1 Automatic Success when rolling to resist the Broodsong.
- Enlightenment comes harder to these Nemissaries. At the end of every Story, if their temporary Creed is greater than their Conviction, they reduce it by 1.
- The Hollows of these Nemissaries are seductive creatures, and their will is more difficult to resist. They increase the Difficulty of rolls to resist their Hollows by 1.

MOTHER'S GIFT

These Nemissaries were born of twisted attempts to create Harbingers. Those few who escaped possess the following benefits and drawbacks:

- Born of horror and despair, these Nemissaries' minds are hardened to the world. They gain +1 Automatic Success on all Conviction-related pools.
- These Nemissaries retain a tenuous link to the power of the Brood. Once per Chapter, they may pay 1 Focus to regenerate Anima as if they were a Broodspawn for a number of rounds equal to their Conviction. **This does not change the limit on how much Anima may be spent per Round**.
- These Nemissaries must choose a single positive Enhancement, which is considered Innate.
- These Nemissaries must choose a single negative Enhancement, which is considered Innate.
- These Nemissaries gain Spite easily. The first time in a Chapter a Nemissary gains a temporary point of Spite, they gain an additional point of temporary Spite.

EMPTY SOUL

A Nemissary with this Feature has managed to fundamentally damage their own soul, granting them several benefits but also a terrible flaw.

- When Devouring or feeding, the Nemissary ignores the first point of Spite gained in a Scene.
- If Anima is stolen from a Nemissary with this Feature, the thief will take 1 Injured Wound per Anima taken.
- If an opponent attempts to use Devouring on a Nemissary with this Feature, and the Nemissary wins the Battle of Wills at step 3, the attempt is reversed and the Nemissary may Devour his attacker, as per step 4.
- The Nemissary lowers their temporary Creed and Spite by 1 at the start of each Chapter.
- The Nemissary is barred from achieving enlightenment, meaning they may never achieve the hypothetical Creed 7.

BECOMING A NEMISSARY

It's possible in the course of the game for a human character to become a Nemissary. Alternatively, the GM might wish to run a scenario where players begin as humans and then complete the transformation into Nemissaries. Keep in mind that not everyone can become a Nemissary and for humans there is a very real chance of failure along the way.

WHO QUALIFIES

Not just anybody can survive the Rebirth. For that matter, some individuals could not even begin the journey. In game, this is at its simplest expressed in that only characters with a Fate rating have a chance of becoming a Nemissary. In practice, things are a little more complicated.

First of all, only people with a strong will and a very distinct personality are eligible. Another factor to consider is that every potential Nemissary requires a powerful sense of purpose. Without a drive strong enough to defy death, the whole process is pointless.

In some instances, prospective Nemissaries won't start off this way. They might only realise their driving goals and find themselves after their deaths. This can happen because in the world of Sins, strong willed souls sometimes persist

even after they become Broodspawn. Such people usually remember very little of this time and exist in some respects like a free floating intelligence inside the Broodsong. Their thoughts move slowly and time for them is distorted but they can think and grow. A few of these people will manage to find enough self to begin the transformation into a Nemissary, but others will be lost forever.

Finally, nearly all Nemissaries possess an intangible quality often called a Spark. This is defined as a certain amount of creativity and it isn't always an obvious thing, but these people whether important or not possess some distinction which keeps them forever apart from normal people. It's this very isolation and difference that protects their souls amongst the mass of the dead long enough to begin the transformation.

The Process

The process of a Nemissary's Rebirth doesn't take place overnight, and the template provided in the Character section assumes that the Nemissary has already gone through the Second Breath and has been active for at least a year or so. For most games this should be fine. Doubtless though, the question of what happens during a player group's transformation into Nemissaries will arise.

First of all, handling the transformation in steps is more complicated than just building a Nemissary from scratch, and the GM needs to be prepared for it and thoroughly understand the character creation mechanics, so should carefully read that section of the book before attempting it.

Step 1 – Awakening

This is the moment that the Nemissary first gains consciousness. This can occur differently depending upon their Shaping, but essentially is the moment of their actual creation. In the case of the Reborn, this likely means emerging somewhere and going through a very painful process of returning to their human form.

Things are a little easier for the Chosen who are likely well prepared for this moment, and don't usually spend more than a few minutes being technically dead.

As for the Defiled, the Awakening is an incredibly traumatic experience which will usually necessitate their immediate rescue or their own flight from the area they find themselves in.

The Nemissary is on a time limit, and a tight one at that. They generally have only their Conviction in days to reach a Shard and undergo the Second Breath. If this time elapses, they can try to struggle on but will have to succeed on a Conviction/Resolve check each morning which will increase in Difficulty by 1 each day. If the character ever fails this check they revert into a Broodspawn; end of story.

One advantage this state has is that the character is temporarily immune to the power of Ambient Synergy and the Broodsong, though they certainly still hear it, and temporarily at least are incredibly difficult to put down due to still possessing the Broodspawn's regenerative properties. In addition to this, the Nemissary feels a strong tug in the direction of the nearest Shard. There are no need to roll where this is considered. The Nemissary just knows, and all of them feel a deep sense of urgency in reaching it.

Practically speaking, Nemissaries cannot go through the Awakening if they are more than about 100 miles from the nearest Shard. This can mean that a Nemissary potentially has a hell of a journey ahead of them, but given their ability to regenerate and given their incredibly resilient nature, it can usually be accomplished during the time limit.

Also, although a small issue, something helping them in this journey is that while they still possess this link to the Broodsong, they do not need to eat or sleep. Incidentally however, they will still feel hungry. No amount of food or rest will actually sate the Nemissary until they reach the Shard and go through their Second Breath. You can use this to help motivate the players and to drive them quicker towards the Shards if they seem to be stumbling in their journey.

Mechanics: First, you need to build a human character completely from start to finish who would be eligible to become a Nemissary as described above.

When the character Awakens, they now have a Shaping and an Awakened Anima pool as per the Quality *Awakened* described on page 152 in the Traits Expanded chapter. The Nemissary can spend Anima in exactly the same way as a Broodspawn as if they had a Synergy of 1.

In addition, all Nemissaries at this stage can use the Type 2 Regeneration for 1 Anima per Round in the same manner as Broodspawn, but they cannot utilise their Anima pool for the purposes of Songs. They do however possess all the normal Traits for Nemissaries as discussed on page 200 meaning that they are capable of using Anima to raise their Attributes and heal themselves.

Step 2 – The Second Breath

Eventually, each Nemissary arrives at a Shard. There they touch it and are plunged into their own personal hell, constructed of all those insecurities and failings the Nemissary has never quite dared face. Assuming they

Synergy and Ambient Synergy

The rules for Harbingers make references to the Traits of Synergy and Ambient Synergy. These Traits are concerned primarily with the Brood and their mechanics are explained in detail in the Brood chapter, starting page 263.

survive this trial, they become a true Nemissary, forever setting them apart from Broodspawn and humankind, and granting them true immortality, albeit at a cost.

Mechanics: The character is now a Nemissary in every sense of the word. They gain their chosen Creed and pick, with the GM's assistance, an appropriate Hollow Nature. The character's replaces Fate with Creed at rank 1, they gain a Permanent Spite of 1, and increase all their Attributes by 1. They also gain temporary Creed and Spite appropriate to their Hollow Nature and Shaping. One downside is that they now lose their direct connection to the Broodsong, meaning they now regenerate and gain Anima as per the rules for Nemissaries.

They do not get any bonus CP to spend on Songs or CP to spend on their character. Also, if appropriate, the GM might allow the Nemissary to reallocate their Qualities to represent any shifts in their core natures. If necessary a player can be allowed to owe the GM CP in this process.

Step 3 – Hard Lessons

Now comes the time for growth and learning. It's during this period that the assumed year of character growth normally takes place. It's fine to just start the adventure from this point though if GM's like, but there are a few considerations for doing this.

During this time, the Nemissary likely joins up with others of their kind to form a Cabal and probably joins a faction. None of this is strictly handled mechanically however, and should be something that occurs naturally during gameplay, or not at all.

Mechanics: The Nemissary is now complete in all but their knowledge of Arietta. They should gain one rank's worth of Arietta per week until seven weeks have passed, at which point their transformation is complete and the normal rules for character advancement resume or take over as appropriate.

Harbingers

Harbingers are those Nemissaries that choose to surrender themselves to the Brood. Normally, a Nemissary's Hollow and Creed serve to protect them from the Broodsong's embrace, and losing oneself to it means the destruction of the Nemissary's mind.

The Harbingers are different. By putting aside their Creed and replacing it with the Brood's song, they are able to retain their independence and intelligence.

Mechanics

Harbingers function in most respects exactly like other Nemissaries but there are differences, most of which stem from the Nemissary's ability to interact directly with Synergy.

Becoming a Harbinger

To become a Harbinger, a Nemissary needs to enter into an area of Ambient Synergy at least equal to their Creed and then voluntarily shatter that Creed. Instead of holding out, the Nemissary deliberately attempts to draw the power of the Broodsong back into their soul.

To do this, they make a Conviction/Keening roll against a Difficulty of their permanent Spite. If the Nemissary fails, they are consumed in the normal manner and becomes just another Broodspawn. If they succeed, the Nemissary begins the transformation into a true Harbinger.

This takes on average a number of days equal to the Harbinger's former permanent Creed. When this time has elapsed, they gain Synergy equal to their former permanent Creed. They are now a Broodspawn, albeit a sentient one. As a result they may no longer be player characters and their view of the world is irreversibly changed.

Creating a Harbinger

The other method through which Harbingers emerge is the deliberate creation of a highly intelligent Broodspawn such as a Brood Mother, or an existing Harbinger.

To do this, a mortal with the Spark must be brought alive into the centre of a zone of Ambient Synergy of 3 or greater. They must then be taken physically into the body of their would-be creator.

How this is accomplished differs from instance to instance but most commonly the creator will use the Song of Flesh to flow around the target, imprisoning them and readying them for the next step.

Once contained, the target's will must be broken. This is accomplished through slow, systematic torture. The creator and target engage in a Contested Action, pitting the creator's Conviction/Keening against the target's Conviction/Resolve. Once begun, this process can't be stopped; the creator and target are locked together until the bitter end.

If the creator wins the first Contested Action against the target, they begins to break down the mind of the victim, reducing the effective Conviction of the victim by 1. The creator can then continue to make these rolls once per week against the victim until their Conviction is reduced to 0.

If the victim wins, the process may be continued but they don't lose any Conviction. If at any point during the process, the victim has won the opposed rolls a number of times equal to the creator's Synergy, the process fails and they have a chance of becoming one of the Defiled.

They make a Conviction/Resolve roll against a Difficulty of 3, and if successful any lost Conviction will return and they will emerge from their creator as one of the Defiled. If they fail, they will meet their final end and move on to whatever awaits them.

If the Creator is victorious, the target will emerge as a Harbinger and their lost Conviction will return to them at a rate of 1 per day. In either case, the creator is left weakened and dazed by the experience, entering a dormant sleep-like state for 7 minus their Synergy in days.

Changes

Harbingers function in most ways like Nemissaries; the major difference is that like Broodspawn they possess Synergy. For all intents and purposes they can use this Synergy as if it were Creed, even possessing temporary points of Synergy.

The mechanics for raising Synergy function in the same way as Creed but temporary Synergy is gained in different ways to temporary Creed. Specifically, they gain 1 temporary Synergy for each month they spend in the presence of a zone of Ambient Synergy with a strength equal to or greater than their own Synergy.

They also gain temporary Synergy each time they are able to create a Horde and through it create an area of Ambient Synergy equal to their own Synergy rating.

As a result of these changes, the Harbinger will always be viewed as one of their own by the Broodspawn. This means that they can use their Synergy to form packs or Hordes, and can also serve as part of a larger hierarchy in an existing Horde, all without the need for the Song of the Brood.

With this in mind, when a Nemissary first becomes a Harbinger, they may exchange any Song of Brood Arietta that is no longer necessary for other Arietta of an equal rank which they may legally possess.

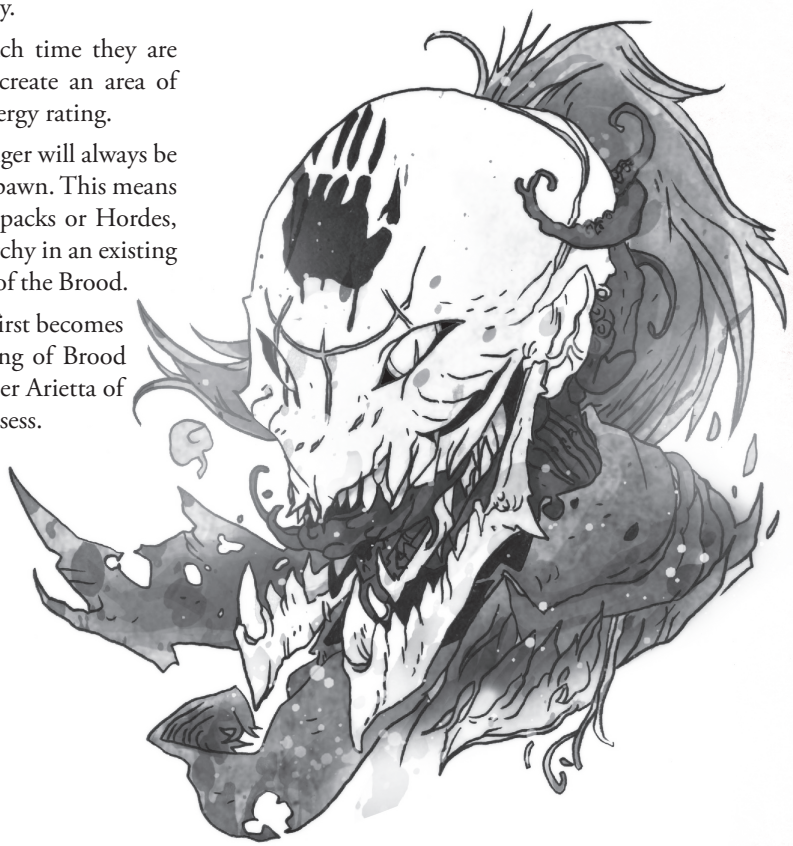
Redeeming a Harbinger

It's possible, albeit extremely difficult, to redeem a Harbinger. Once they've made the choice, they are a very real part of the Broodsong, aligning themselves with its desires and goals. A return to the pain of a life without that comforting embrace is often too much for them to consider.

In the extremely unlikely event that a Harbinger is separated from the Brood and convinced to attempt the restoration of their Creed, they must be brought before a Shard where they renounce their Synergy using the same mechanics for renouncing a Creed.

At this moment they lose any special Features from being a Harbinger and need to face Judgement just as a Nemissary with no Creed would. Worse still, because of their confused nature, the Difficulties involved in their Judgement are all increased by 1.

If they succeed, they will be a Nemissary again, albeit one likely never fully trusted by their peers.



Chapter IX

Songs

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Songs and Arietta

The root of a Nemissary's might, Songs and Arietta form the meat and bones of what the Nemissaries can do. Their effects range from the subtle to the downright terrifying.

The Songs themselves represent broad categories of power available to a Nemissary. They are divided over multiple ranks in a similar manner to Traits but are not themselves purchased. Rather, they provide a framework for the Arietta linked to them.

Each Arietta has a particular rank and falls under one of the five Songs available to Nemissaries, and it's these Arietta which are the specific abilities from a Song that the Nemissary possesses.

Favoured Songs

A Nemissary's proficiency in a Song and thus the maximum rank of the Arietta they can learn is determined by their Creed. For most Songs, this will mean that the Nemissary may not possess Arietta of a rank greater than their Creed, but Nemissaries also favour certain Songs.

These are determined in various ways but all share the same effect; this is that the Nemissary may learn Arietta up to their Creed +1.

Normally, a Nemissary will have either 1 or 2 Favoured Songs at the start of the game but it is possible to possess 3 or even none in extreme casess. It's also possible for a Nemissary to be unable to use a particular Song entirely; in this case, they are simply incapable of accessing that Song's Arietta.

Reading an Arietta

Arietta are quite different from other Traits a character possesses. First of all they have a lot more descriptors attached to them. These are all there to help you understand how the Arietta functions in gameplay.

Every Arietta is listed under its appropriate Song and Rank and given a name. They also have a brief text describing what the Arietta does and, if appropriate, what it looks like in use.

Beyond this, Arietta vary quite a bit. They all have a series of what are known as **Effect Blocks**. These are the things that the Arietta is mechanically capable of doing to help your character. **Think of them like Qualities you gain access to when you purchase the Arietta, and just like Qualities, they are unique benefits which unless stated otherwise never stack with any other Effect Block from that Arietta or any others.**

These fall into two broad types; **Active** and **Passive** effects. Both display a grey bar like the one shown across which indicates whether the effect is an Action, an effect which enhances an Action, or simply a permanent modification to either your character or another Arietta.

Active Effect Blocks

These Effect Blocks can be any of the actions in the game. Most commonly they use the Actions from the Combat rules, and specifically these will be the Aggressive, Defensive or Standard Actions. Some will also take the form of Minor Actions, which will normally be Miscellaneous Minor Actions. Finally, although unusual, some Arietta may also be Sustained Actions; in which case they will list the time required for each roll next to their action type.

In addition to these basic types of Action, Effect Blocks can also be a special type of action called an **Enhance Action**. These are unique in that they are not used on their own and are instead used to improve some other type of action in one way or another.

They then have **Keywords** which are described below and unless noted otherwise, the following descriptors:

- **Cost:** This is the cost which must be paid for the Arietta to be used. This cost may be modified by other effects, but never be reduced below 0. This is in all respects the same as paying a cost to activate a power, as per the rules on page 202.
- **Use:** This defines under what circumstances the Arietta can be used or who it may target.
- **Pool:** This describes the roll necessary to activate the power, and is laid out as Attribute/Skill (Action Difficulty). This is not used for Enhance Actions, and is grouped under Attack Traits for combat actions.

  Note: Like with skill rolls, the Attribute / Skill combination for an Arietta is not absolute, and a player may suggest alternatives to the Storyteller where such a combination would be appropriate
- **Attack Traits:** This lists what Weapon Traits the Arietta uses and any qualities which would affect the attack. These are only used for Aggressive Actions.
- **Threshold:** This is the Threshold required to activate the power. This only appears for Sustained Actions.
- **Effect:** This describes what happens when the Arietta is used and the consequences of success or failure, if appropriate.
- **Outcome:** This denotes what effects, if any, may be achieved through points of Outcome.

Passive Effect Blocks

Passive Effects are often much more straightforward than Active ones and always represent permanent modifications to your character in some way. They take one of two forms; the first being a **Permanent Effect,** which as its name indicates functions almost identically to a Feature. This means that once your character has this Arietta it is a permanent modification to the character that can never be changed or removed.

The other type is a **Song Enhancement**. These are similar, but rather than improving your character directly, they alter the effects of an existing Arietta your character possesses.

Passive Effects have fewer notations that Active ones. Those that they do have are listed below:

- **Requirements:** To purchase the Arietta, a character must meet any of the requirements listed in this section.
- **Effect:** This tells you exactly what the Arietta does. Normally this will be fairly straightforward but it is possible for the Effect Block to have far reaching consequences, and can for instance allow the attached Arietta to count as having a Keyword.

Keywords

Underneath the Effect bar there will normally be a series of **Keywords**. These are abridged references to a series of rules presented below. Most are very simple and are used so that Arietta can interact with one another , or with other features. For instance, there are Arietta which can stop or disrupt things with the **Brood** keyword.

- **Bond:** These powers create a link between the Nemissary and Broodspawn.
- **Brood:** These powers specifically deal with the Brood as a whole.
- **Echo:** Powers with this keyword create a noticeable echo in the Aether which can be detected by some other powers.
- **Epic:** These are amongst the strongest powers available to Nemissaries.
- **Spite:** Powers with this keyword interact with the character's Hollow.
- **Shaping:** These powers allow permanent modification to the shape of objects.
- **Void:** These horrifying powers draw on the power of the Well of Souls.
- **Voidglass:** These powers interact with and manipulate Voidglass.

There are also keywords which affect the rules more directly and potentially change the way the rules work in minor but important ways.

Skimming Through

People can't honestly be expected to remember every single Arietta in this section; after all, there are about a hundred of them. What we do suggest is that the GMs and players skim over the descriptions of each power at the lower ranks to get an idea of what Nemissaries are capable of.

Using Multiple Arietta

Using multiple Arietta in a round follows all the normal rules for Multiple Actions, and you must bear in mind the rules for how much Anima you can spend in a turn. In other words, you can use multiple Arietta that are Minor Actions or even multiple Arietta that are full Core Actions, so long as you follow the rules for taking multiple Actions and incur the penalties accordingly.

- **Close Combat:** These abilities may only be used in a close combat situation, or require physical contact with the target. These powers function as a close combat attack and are subject to all the normal rules as such.
- **Innate:** These powers, once acquired, become abilities inherent to the character, and are not stopped by effects that would prevent the use of Songs. In addition, any other keywords associated with this power are always in effect whilst the Arietta is available; not just when the gained ability is used.
- **Non-Combat:** These powers may not be used under the stressful conditions of combat, and always requires a minimum of 1 minute to take effect.
- **Overt:** These powers require some obvious sign of their activation, such as putting a drop of blood onto the target, or making a marking in one's own skin. This can be hidden from onlookers by making a Stealth check (See page 203.) with a Difficulty equal to the Arietta's rank.
- **Ranged:** These powers function as a ranged combat attack and are subject to all the normal rules as such.
- **Response:** These powers may always be used out of sequence so long as you meet the requirements of their use and any additional considerations under their Effect.
- **Visceral:** These abilities are immediately obvious to onlookers, distorting flesh and bone in a particularly disturbing manner.

Just to Clear Something Up...

Any Effects of a power **only ever apply** whilst the conditions of its Effect Block are fulfilled and any benefits end as soon as the power does. If for example an Outcome option says "Remove the cost of a power", that applies only for that one use.

Another important thing to remember is that unless explicitly stated otherwise, the effects of Arietta never stack. This includes stacking effects from two separate Effect Blocks in the same Arietta. That is, if two active Arietta or even two Effect Blocks in the same Arietta give you a boost to Damage, you use the higher of the two and you do not add the two boosts together.

Both these rules should stand whatever the situation. No amount of clever reasoning should override these basic assumptions; after all, there's a point where "creative interpretation of the rules" becomes downright cheating, and no amount of wording on our part can prevent that from happening.

Arietta as a Response

Certain Arietta have the **Response** keyword. This means that they can be used out of the normal sequence of events in a combat. A power with the Response keyword may be used at any point where its Use would be appropriate. For instance, if a Arietta had a Use of "When attacked by an opponent", this Arietta could be activated as a Response to that event.

This is not the same as being given an opportunity to act. When the condition comes up, you get an opportunity to use that Arietta, and nothing else. The actual Action required for the Arietta has to be accounted for on your next opportunity to act.

All the normal penalties that you would acquire for doing this stand, so players should be very careful about using multiple Response Arietta as it can significantly eat into their Actions the next time they have an opportunity to act.

Some Arietta have very broad terms of use. In the rare event that these are also a Response, it means that they can be activated at any point the player wishes. Timing can be critical in this instance, particularly where Damage is concerned.

Outside of a combat, timing is less critical, but the same basic principles that you have to live with a roll once the dice have fallen apply. You can Respond to an event about to happen, but if you don't act then it's too late to change the result.

Example: *An extremely powerful Nemissary is involved in a combat with multiple opponents. Amongst their arsenal they possess the sixth rank Blood Arietta* Assimilation. *This power is a Response and has a Use of "Any target with which the user shares Blood Synergy".*

The power itself allows a Nemissary to break down their body and emerge out of the target, thus bypassing an attack. Because this power's use is so broad, the Nemissary could activate it at almost any conceivable point in their turn. They could do so when they lose an attack roll with an opponent, or even just on their turn as a means of moving rapidly. Out of combat they could even use it as a means of long distance teleportation. What's important is that at the moment the Nemissary chooses to use it, they claim their Response and the power is resolved.

In this instance, the Arietta is a Minor Action, which means that if the Nemissary activates this outside of a normal opportunity to act, they will have to effectively take the Minor Action in question on their next opportunity to act.

In practice it would work like this: let's say that the Nemissary is attacked by one of the opponents. The Nemissary comes off worse in the engagement and their opponent manages to strike. The Nemissary can't withstand the damage the attack would inflict so they use the *Assimilation* Arietta to ignore the attack. The effects are then resolved and the Nemissary survives.

Later in the Round, another opponent attacks the Nemissary. They now gain a normal opportunity to act. Because the power was a Minor Action, the Nemissary has to take one now for no particular benefit. Since this uses up their normal Minor Action for the turn, they would have to follow the rules for Multiple Actions in order to get more.

It's important to note that you can't bypass the total limit on Actions that you can attempt through the use of Responses. If you've used all the Actions you are allowed to, you are out of luck. For more information, see page 204 in the Combat Rules.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that combat actions can be Responses but these have no special rules and function just like any other Action you might take in a combat.

Arietta as Attacks

When using Combat Arietta, they function just like a combat action of the same type. This means that a Close Combat Action or a Ranged Combat Action follow all the rules laid out in the Combat section for attacks of that type, with the exception that rather than inflicting damage, a successful attack will instead cause the effect listed for the Arietta. All normal Outcome Options are available as appropriate in addition to those unique options listed for each Arietta.

Gaining Arietta

As the game goes on, a Nemissary's supernatural might will increase. A part of this is obviously the acquisition of acquiring additional Arietta, and there are several ways a Nemissary can go about this.

The first and slowest is **training** with another Nemissary. The primary way is through **Communing** with a Shard, whether in a temporary sense or as part of a more lasting commitment. **Raising a character's permanent Creed also grants additional Arietta**. Finally, it's possible though at great cost to **Devour** another Nemissary and in doing so take a measure of their power into yourself.

Training Arietta

Though time consuming, it's often advantageous for groups of Nemissaries to teach Arietta they know to one another. To do this, one Nemissary must act as the tutor and a number of students equal to the lower of that Nemissary's Conviction or Reason may benefit from the tuition.

The time it takes for the tutor to pass on knowledge of the Arietta is that Arietta's rank in weeks. Remember that the student needs to be capable of learning the Arietta in the first place and the effort is wasted if the student is so incapable.

Communion and Pacts

Shards represent a source of exotic lore and learning. They are sometimes reticent to pass on information and often difficult to understand when they do, but the learning they impart is primal and all Nemissaries are capable of benefitting from it.

Simply communing with a Shard is easy enough; a Nemissary approaches the Shard and touches it. This act establishes a link allowing the Nemissary to gain the higher of that Shard's rank or the Nemissary's Spite in ranks of Arietta. This method of gaining Arietta can be used only once by each Nemissary on any given Shard.

The alternative is for a Nemissary to attempt to establish a Pact with a Shard. The details of this are covered more fully in the GM's Toolkit, on page 205. Essentially the Nemissary acts as a guardian of the Shard's territory and instead of the normal effects of Communion, the Nemissary gains the Shard's rank in Arietta every six months that they carry out the Shard's agenda. In some instances the Nemissary can also gain additional Arietta when particularly important events occur or when the Shard is threatened directly. Again, for more information on this type of situation, see the page reference above.

Devouring

Devouring is a vile and distasteful act in which a Nemissary consumes the soul of another of their kind.

It's All About the Blood

Many powers in the Song of Blood require Blood Synergy with a target. The simplest way of achieving this is by successfully striking a target whilst fighting unarmed and inflicting 1 or more Mauled Wounds. Certain other powers, such as Blood Lash, can also establish Blood Synergy as can certain supernatural effects or non-combat actions such as seducing the target.

When a Nemissary is successful in Devouring the soul of an adversary, they gain a number of ranks of Arietta equal to that Nemissary's permanent Spite and permanent Creed. This is by far the fastest means of gaining Arietta but it also comes with a steep cost in terms of accelerating a Nemissary's Spite advancement. For more information on Devouring, see page 205 in the Nemissary chapter.

Song of Blood

Easily capable of causing harm or curing ills, the Song of Blood represents one of the more subtle capabilities open to Nemissaries. It can control the nature of plagues and infection and ultimately alter the Anima inside a Nemissary's body.

Blood Rank 1

Cleanse

One of the most basic powers inherent to the Song of Blood is the ability to heal. Cleanse is the simplest expression of that gift and through a single drop of blood administered to the patient, it enables a Nemissary to greatly improve a mortal's odds of overcoming an illness. If that mortal survives they will be forever immune to the ravages of that disease; a gift which may then be inherited by their children.

An Interesting Note

An interesting note is that the Purify Anima power, whether used on oneself, or gifted to a group, causes the consumption of human flesh to no longer count as cannibalism for occult purposes. Most Nemissaries are unaware of this fact however, and only characters which have personal experience or a Keening of 3 or more should pick up on this.

Standard Action

Shaping, Overt

Cost: 1 Light Anima.

Use: One living being suffering from one or more conditions that the Nemissary shares Blood Synergy with.

Pool: Conviction/Medicine (0).

Effect: The target of this effect gains a number of automatic Successes equal to the Nemissary's Outcome on rolls to recover from any Condition they are currently suffering. In addition, if the target recovers from a Condition, they are rendered immune to it from that point forward.

The target of this power also gains the bonus above to resist gaining new Conditions for a number of days equal to the Nemissary's Creed.

Purify Anima

The flesh of the Broodspawn is a dangerous thing; consuming it normally causes Nemissaries to grow closer to the Broodsong, risking their very soul. With this basic Arietta the Nemissary may simply touch a corpse rendering it safe for consumption and allowing Nemissaries to draw latent Anima from the body.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary may consume the flesh of Broodspawn without any of the normal associated risks, gaining Anima normally in the process. For more information, see page 206.

Standard Action

Overt, Shaping

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: A number of targets equal to the Nemissary's Creed + Conviction with whom they possess Blood Synergy.

Pool: None.

Effect: Targets of this power may freely feed from Broodspawn corpses as per the permanent trait noted above. This effect persists for 1 hour. For more information, see page 206.

Outcome: None.

Exsanguinate

Just as the power of Blood can heal, it can also harm. By utilising Blood Synergy, the Nemissary can force a wounded opponent to start haemorrhaging blood, crippling their vital organs and nudging them ever closer to death.

Minor Action

Spite, Visceral

Cost: 1 Dark Anima, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: 1 living or undead target that the user possesses Blood Synergy with.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve or Medicine (Target's Body -2 or Difficulty 3 if Medicine is used).

Effect: Each time the target of this power suffers 1 or more Wounds, they take one additional Injured Wound. This effect persists for 1 hour.

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be spent to add 1 hour to the duration of this power.

Gift of Sensation

The Song of Blood is often a subtle thing. Through this Arietta, the Nemissary may alter the sensations of their targets, pushing them with a simple touch to heights of pain or pleasure.

A horrendous tool in combat, this power is also a true gift to a subtle seducer, enabling the Nemissary to cripple their opponents or outperform any mortal lover.

Enhance Action

Close Combat, Echo

Cost: 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Enhance any one Unarmed Close Combat Action against a target capable of feeling sensation. This includes Nemissaries and Broodspawn but not machines, and interestingly it specifically does not affect Hivespawn.

Pool: None.

Effect: This power allows the Nemissary to inflict either great pain or pleasure to distract a target during combat. If used to inflict pain, this power doubles any Wound Penalties the target is suffering. If used to create pleasure, it replaces any Wound Penalties the target is suffering with a -1 Pool penalty. In either case, the effects persist for 6 - the target's Conviction in rounds, to a minimum of 1 round.

Outcome: None.

Enhance Action

Echo, Non-Combat

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: Enhance any 1 Social Action against a target capable of feeling sensation that the character can touch.

Pool: None. (If the target of this power is resisting being touched but not to the extent of initiating combat, the action enhanced by this power suffers a -1 Pool penalty).

Effect: This power allows the Nemissary to alter the sensations of a target to generate pleasure or pain as appropriate. This lowers the Difficulty of appropriate Social Actions against the target by 2.

Outcome: None.

Blood Rank II

Plague Dog

Nemissaries are normally immune to the ravages of disease and incapable of spreading them in a conventional sense. With this disturbing Arietta that limit is removed, enabling a Nemissary to make themselves a carrier for any disease which they have come into contact with.

Minor Action

Echo, Spite

Cost: 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary becomes a carrier for any one disease they have been infected with, come into contact with through Blood Synergy, or created. They remain a carrier of this particular disease for 1 day per point of Permanent Spite, or until they use this power again.

Outcome: None.

Hoard Anima

As the Nemissary's mastery increases, his fine control of his Anima does likewise. Through this Arietta, he can greatly increase the amount of Neutral Anima stored within his body, giving him extra staying power compared with other Nemissaries.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary may store an additional 4 Neutral Anima.

Blood Puppet

Though not the mightiest power in the Song of Blood, this is certainly one of the most disturbing. With it, the Nemissary can cause targets with whom they have Blood Synergy to become literal puppets to their will. Even those who manage to fight the effects suffer terrible wounds as they fight their own body for control.

Standard Action

Echo, Spite, Visceral

Cost: 1 Dark Anima, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Any 1 target the character has established Blood Synergy with.

Pool: Conviction/Medicine (1 against humans, opponent's Creed or Synergy when used against Nemissaries or Broodspawn).

Effect: A character targeted by this power must act physically in any way directed by the user or suffer crippling pain. These commands may be anything the user desires, even ordering the target to attack allies or commit suicide.

Characters under the effects of Blood Puppet that refuse to obey the commands suffer a penalty to all Actions equal to half their own Body. Targets capable of spending Anima may instead choose to pay an amount of Anima equal to their own Body to negate the effects of this Arietta.

Nemissaries, or other supernatural entities remain under the effects of this power for 1 Scene. Other targets, such as humans or animals, remain under its effects for 1 day.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent in various ways;

- 1 or more points: Each point spent increases the duration by 1 hour for supernatural entities, or 1 day in the case of animals and humans.
- 1 point: The visual elements of this power are eliminated, thus removing the **Visceral** keyword.

Blood Lash

With this Arietta the Nemissary can summon a weapon of blood from their own body. Extending as a disturbing whip of congealed particles of blood, this lash is a dangerous implement in combat. Its true gift is that its attacks establish Blood Synergy with its victims, enabling the Nemissary to better unleash the horrors inherent to the Song of Blood.

Aggressive Action

Ranged, Visceral

Cost: 1 Dark Anima per target.

Use: Ranged Combat Action.

Attack Traits: None.

Damage: Nemissary's Body +1

Range: Short

Pool: Prowess/Athletics (Combat action), No penalties are generated for making a Multiple Attack with this Arietta, and its use counts as only a single Standard Action for working out the total number of Actions taken in a Turn.

Weapon Qualities: Armour Piercing.

Effect: Blood Synergy is established with any target who suffers 1 or more Wounds as a result of this power.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent as per normal for a ranged combat weapon.

Blood Rank III

Plague Shaping

At this level of mastery, the Nemissary can move beyond the diseases of nature and engineer specialised creations of their own devising. These needn't necessarily harm and although most choose to create deadly creations, it's not outside the Nemissary's capability to design "diseases" which actually help their hosts to heal or resist the effects of infection.

Whilst this power is in use, the Nemissary's body bloats; pustules and sacs form as they become the vessel in which the new plague is nurtured and grown. Once the process is finished, this excess skin sloughs from the Nemissary's body, dissolving into a puddle of rancid gore.

Sustained Action, 1 hour

Echo, Shaping, Visceral

Cost: Variable; 1 Anima per 3 Threshold. In addition, this power may have an additional cost of 1 Spite (See below).

Use: Self whilst the Nemissary is a carrier for one or more diseases.

Pool: Reason/Medicine (The points cost of the highest rated effect chosen from below).

Threshold: The Threshold of this power is based on the changes the Nemissary wishes to impart upon a disease for which they are currently a carrier. The total Threshold is equal to the desired number of points worth of modifications chosen from the list below x3. Each effect may be applied more than once.

The total number of points worth of modifications the Nemissary may make on any given disease may not exceed their Medicine + Creed.

- **1 point:** Increase a disease's Virulence by +1 / –
- **2 points:** Increase a disease's Virulence by – / -1
- **2 points:** Increase disease's Persistence by 1.
- **3 points:** Halve the duration of the disease's Interval. Taken multiple times, this will modify the disease's Interval by one fraction greater, so if taken twice it will divide the disease's Interval by 3 or divide it by 4 if this modification was taken three times.
- **3 points:** Change the disease's Vector. This may be taken only with GM's consent.
- **3 points:** Change the Effect of a disease to any other Effect, or one of your own design with the GM's consent.
- **3 points:** Cause the disease to establish Blood Synergy with all victims and the Nemissary that used this power.
- **4 points:** Add an additional Vector to the disease. This may be taken only with GM's consent.

Effect: The desired changes take place. If the player uses this ability to make a disease more dangerous, then this power gains the **Spite** keyword and an additional cost of 1 Spite.

Options: None.

Vital Anima

Those with sufficient mastery of the Song of Blood have learned to distil greater benefit from Anima they consume.

Minor Action

Innate

Cost: 1 Focus, 1 Light Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: For the remainder of the Scene the Nemissary regains 1 Neutral Anima at the end of any Round in which they did not use a power with the Spite keyword.

Note: *Outside of Combat, this allows the Nemissary to possess within reason a limitless quantity of Neutral Anima. In either case, these benefits persist for 1 Scene.*

Outcome: None

Gift of Life

An unusual power in the Nemissary's arsenal, this Arietta allows a Nemissary to gift humans with whom they have Blood Synergy the ability to recover from harm in the same manner as themselves.

Standard Action

Echo

Cost: Commit 1 Light Anima.

Use: Any 1 human with which the Nemissary has Blood Synergy.

Pool: None.

Effect: The target of this power begins to regenerate health and age like a Nemissary, gaining Type 1 Regeneration and the ability to spend Anima to heal Wounds. The target gains access to their natural Anima pool and may spend it in any of the ways normally allowed.

These benefits persist until the Nemissary chooses to cease committing Anima to this power. At that point, the human reverts to normal losing any benefits gained from this power and begins to age naturally again from when this power was ended. Once this power has been removed from a human, the Nemissary may never again use this power on that human, though another Nemissary is free to do so.

Outcome: None

Ravage

Of all the powers of the Song of Blood, this is one of the most feared. It enables a Nemissary to inflict diseases for which they are carriers upon their own kind, overriding and supressing a Nemissary's normal immunity to such conditions.

Used against mortal targets, the effects are even more horrific, causing even harmless illnesses to consume the target in a spectacularly horrific display.

Standard Action

Overt, Spite

Cost: 1 Dark Anima per target, 1 Spite.

Use: 1 or more targets with whom the user shares Blood Synergy.

Pool: None.

Effect: The targets become infected with any one disease for which the user is a carrier. If they are mortals, they die screaming in agony within a number of rounds equal to their Body and may take no actions during this period. This spectacle is so horrific that onlookers must make a Difficulty 3 Fear check.

If the disease is transmitted through this power to a Nemissary or Broodspawn, their normal immunity is suppressed in regards to this one Condition, and they may not use Regeneration or Arietta to heal damage inflicted by the disease.

Outcome: None.

Abuse of Power

The *Plague Shaping* Arietta may potentially be open to abuse, and the storyteller should be careful not to allow players to abuse this power. Changing a common cold to be a fatal disease is fine, so is changing the same disease to give Attribute increases to affected targets. However, asking for an Effect which gives the target supreme power is certainly out.

The point here is that while it's fine to be creative – in fact, it's definitely encouraged – with powers such as this one, it is impossible to account for every possible use. Just remember the golden rule; make sure everybody's having fun, and if a player persists in trying to bend the rules, feel free to inflict amusing, unforeseen consequences upon them.

Blood Rank IV

Catalyst

The Nemissary's knowledge has advanced to the point where they can shape their own body like an alchemical furnace, transmuting Light and Dark Anima back into their purest form.

Furthermore, the Nemissary gains the ability to share Anima with whom they share Blood Synergy, adding another potent tool to their arsenal.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary may choose as a Minor Action to transmute one point of Light or Dark Anima into Neutral Anima. This may not take the Nemissary above their maximum Neutral Anima pool.

Furthermore the Nemissary may as a Minor Action transfer 1 point of Anima of any type that they possess to a willing participant with whom they share Blood Synergy.

Horror

With this ability the Nemissary surpasses natural limits where diseases are concerned. He can cause them to gain impossibly specific vectors or supernaturally-enhanced effects, potentially creating diseases of nightmarish lethality or powerful boons for all those who encounter them.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: Plague Shaping.

Effect: The Nemissary enhances the *Plague Shaping* Arietta so that the specific effects of diseases they create no longer need to be entirely natural, adding an additional series of options as shown below.

- **3 or more points:** Cause a disease to duplicate the effects of an Arietta that they possess of a rank less than their Creed. A disease modified in this way adds the normal cost of that Arietta to the cost of using *Plague Shaping*. GMs should be aware that certain unusual circumstances can emerge which will have to be adjudicated on a point by point basis. Obviously, certain powers are not appropriate for use with *Horror*. The points cost of this effect is equal to 2 plus the rank of the Arietta to be duplicated.
- **3 points:** Make the disease unreasonably deadly, allowing it to kill a mortal within 7 - the Nemissary's Creed in minutes.
- **5 points:** Make a disease revert or halt aging in a mortal target, though this does not change their maximum lifespan.
- **6 points:** Cause a disease to double the normal lifespan of a human.
- **7 points:** Alter an effect so that it is unnaturally specific, such as "affect only people with blue eyes", "affect only people over the age of 23" or even "affect only a single family line".

Dire Sensation

Calling upon the Hollow's hate and anger, the Nemissary lashes out at a target with whom they share Blood Synergy, inflicting crippling agony upon them.

Standard Action

Spite

Cost: Target's Body in Anima, 1 Spite.

Use: One individual with whom the Nemissary shares Blood Synergy.

Pool: Conviction/Medicine or Keening (Opposed by Conviction/Resolve).

Effect: The target suffers a Pool penalty to all actions equal to the user's Creed for the duration of the Scene. This effect explicitly stacks with other Arietta which would inflict penalties on a target. No target may be under the effects of more than one instance of Dire Sensation. If they would be affected again, the existing penalties are replaced with those from the new instance.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the penalty inflicted by this power by 1.

Blood Rank V

The Greatest Gift

Awe-inspiring even by the capabilities of Nemissaries, this power grants an ability that common wisdom ascribes only to a god—the power to raise the dead. To use it, the Nemissary must place a single drop of blood on the lips of a corpse. If successful, they convulse and open their eyes, returning to the world of the living.

Standard Action

Echo, Overt, Spite, Void

Cost: 7 Light Anima, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Any 1 dead body which is still primarily intact and has not succumbed to advanced decay or had this power used on them before, whether successful or not.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (Variable by target's age, see below).

- **Small child or baby, 3 & under:** Difficulty 7
- **Child, aged 3 to 13:** Difficulty 5
- **Adolescent, 13+ or young adult:** Difficulty 3
- **Adult, 26+:** Difficulty 4
- **Mature adult, 31+:** Difficulty 5
- **Senior, 51+:** Difficulty 6
- **Elder, 71+:** Difficulty 7

These difficulties are not cumulative and the Difficulty is lowered by 1 for each of the factors noted below that the target qualifies for, which may lower the Difficulty to a minimum of 1:

- The user knows the target's true name
- The target died as a direct result of a supernatural being such as a Nemissary or Broodspawn
- The target had a Fate greater than 1

Effect: The target is returned to life, and cured of any diseases or physical afflictions which were not innate parts of their nature. For instance, a target that died from blood-loss due to the loss of a limb would have that limb restored by this power, but one who was blind long before their death would not have their sight restored.

Outcome: For each point of Outcome, the target may have their effective age increased or decreased by 7 years.

Undo the Mother's Touch

With this Arietta, the Nemissary can defy the ever present influence of the plague. Not only can they force a corpse to return to its unaltered state, they can burn away the infection of the Brood present in living humans, rendering them forever immune to the transition into Broodspawn.

More spectacular still, this power can annihilate the Brood, forcing even living Broodspawn to revert to normal corpses. Used carefully, it can blunt even the most terrible of the Broodspawns assaults. In either case, its effects manifest as a subtle rippling in the Nemissary's flesh and the shifting of the air as the pulse reverberates out from its central location.

Standard Action

Brood, Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Temporary Creed, 1 Anima + an additional number of points of Anima equal to the Ambient Synergy.

Use: Any.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (1 + Ambient Synergy).

Effect: Every human being within a number of miles equal to the Nemissary's permanent Creed is cleansed of the Brood's subtle taint and thus may no longer become Broodspawn upon death.

Broodspawn not severed from Ambient Synergy in the area of effect are killed instantly unless their permanent Synergy is equal to or greater than the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome may be spent to increase the radius of this power by 1 additional mile per point.

Standard Action

Brood, Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Light Anima.

Use: Any 1 Broodspawn corpse.

Pool: None.

Effect: The target corpse reverts to its original species over a number of hours equal to 1 + its permanent Synergy in hours. It is then considered freshly dead for the purposes of other powers such as *The Greatest Gift*.

Outcome: None.

Maelstrom

Abandoning all pretence of subtlety, the Nemissary's body erupts and begins to break down and fall apart, before reconstituting itself in a measure both horrific and rapid. Upon activating this Arietta, the Nemissary's body devolves into its rarest components, becoming a mass of strands made up of blood, gore and musculature. In this state, the Nemissary is a living engine of destruction, regenerating at an insane rate and finding themselves highly resistant to most supernatural powers.

Minor Action

Echo, Spite, Visceral

Cost: 1 Spite, 3 Dark Anima +1 Dark Anima each round this power is maintained.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: Whilst under the effects of this power, the Nemissary gains several advantages;

- All combat actions get +3 Pool.
- Unarmed attacks gain +2 Damage.
- Unarmed attacks gain the Reach 2 quality.
- Gain Type 2 Regeneration.
- Creed is 1 higher for the purposes of Arietta targeting the Nemissary (this does not affect a Nemissary's dice pools in any way).

Whilst in this state, the Nemissary may not activate the Angela Noctis, is considered to have a Reason of 1, and may take no action which their Hollow would consider non-violent. Furthermore, their berserk state precludes the use of weaponry or complex devices but doesn't stop the Nemissary using other Arietta to make themselves particularly formidable in close combat.

This power ends when the Nemissary or their Hollow no longer wishes to spend Dark Anima to maintain it, or at the end of a scene, whichever comes first.

Note: *This means in this unique situation that the Hollow can force the Nemissary to continue spending Dark Anima, and clever GMs will note that given the player's low Reason, their Hollow is likely far more intelligent than the player in this state and will likely be their only source of sound tactical advice.*

Outcome: None.

Blood Rank VI

Contagion

Perhaps the most devastating ability available to a Nemissary, this Arietta causes the blood inside every living creature in a massive range to lash out at their own bodies, severing limbs and leaving death in its wake.

As if this wasn't enough, the Spite which fuels this power causes every target that somehow survives its initial effects to become infected with horrific diseases, all but guaranteeing the death of every living thing in the vicinity.

Standard Action

Echo, Epic, Spite, Visceral, Voidglass

Cost: 21 Anima, 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: Conviction/Medicine (0).

Effect: Every living thing within 1 mile of the user suffers 14 Damage as if hit by a ranged attack which ignores scale, and is considered to have the **Epic** and **Voidglass** keywords. Any mortal target which takes any Wounds from this effect will be automatically infected with the most virulent disease that this power's user has themselves come into contact with.

Note: *The diseases imparted by this power do not automatically affect Nemissaries but are still compatible with an effect which would make a Nemissary vulnerable.*

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be used in various ways;

- **3 points:** Cause all targets within 1 mile to suffer the damaging effects of this power again on their next action, with the exception that the damage is reduced from 14 to 7.
- **1+ points:** For each point of Outcome used in this way, the damage inflicted by this power whether as part of its main effect or one purchased through Outcome, is increased by 1.
- **1+ points:** For each point spent in this way the user may nominate 1 target who will be unaffected by the use of this power.
- **1+ points:** For each point of Outcome spent in this way, the radius of this power is increased by 1 mile.

Assimilation

Whilst other powers may be more visually impressive or destructive, Assimilation is perhaps the most disturbing and possibly potent of all powers inherent to Nemissaries. With it, the Nemissary defies their own death; not by returning to a Shard, but by absorbing the very nature and substance of one with which they have Blood Synergy.

Minor Action

Echo, Response, Visceral

Cost: 1 Critical Wound, 3 Anima.

Use: One target with whom the Nemissary possesses Blood Synergy.

Pool: Body/Athletics (0).

Effect: The Nemissary's Body collapses into a pile of gore. This immediately converts any Impaling Wounds the Nemissary has taken into normal Wounds of the same type. Next, the target of this attack takes a Damage 3 hit which ignores all forms of Resilience not originating from a power with the **Epic** keyword. The Nemissary then recovers a number of Wounds of the same number and type dealt to the target.

If the target of this power takes a Dying Wound or greater, they are immediately killed and may not be saved by any effect that does not possess the **Epic** keyword. Whether or not the target is killed, the Nemissary then emerges out of the body of the target and may then continue acting as normal.

Note: *This power does NOT have the Epic keyword for the purposes of determining damage. This is an exception to the normal way in which keywords work and should not be used to judge other powers.*

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the Damage of this attack by 3.

Song of Bone

Of all the powers Nemissaries possess, the Song of Bone is perhaps the most visceral. It possesses perhaps the most raw killing potential of any Song, not to mention providing several powerful defensive capabilities. It also allows a Nemissary access to potent and useful tools, and eventually the ability to manufacture the rare and precious substance known as Voidglass.

Bone Rank 1

Shape Bone

Simple and effective, this Arietta allows a Nemissary to shape bone without the use of tools. To do so, they reach out and mould the material in their fingers like clay, shaping it into almost any configuration they can imagine.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary no longer needs tools to work with bone and may shape it using nothing more than their bare hands. This allows a Nemissary to always count as having appropriate tools for any given task which involves physically shaping bone.

The Nemissary may sculpt bone into more complex shapes than is naturally possible, though it is not any more durable than normal bone and is unsuitable for making hard edges or bladed weapons.

In any case, this ability only functions properly with the use of Crafting skills; after all anyone can shape bone into a club or basic maiming instrument, but it still requires specialist knowledge to manufacture a bow or a properly balanced sword.

An additional positive side effect of this ability is that the Nemissary can easily set broken bones, giving that Nemissary a number of automatic Successes equal to their permanent Creed on rolls to set bones or provide first aid.

Enhance Action

Overt

Cost: Anima equal to the Difficulty of the enhanced task.

Use: Enhance one Sustained Crafting Action involving bone or Voidglass.

Effect: The time required for each roll on this Sustained Action is reduced to the next smallest variable; thus days become hours, hours become minutes and so on. The time for each roll may be reduced to a minimum of 10 seconds or 1 combat round, whichever is appropriate.

Note: *This power can be used multiple times providing there is Anima to be expended and can turn a lengthy Crafting roll into an extremely quick process, potentially changing days into hours.*

Bone Growth

With this Arietta, a Nemissary learns to expel bone from their own form, either slowly so as to create material that they can then work into other objects, or violently and terribly, ripping apart their own flesh in an explosion of gore and sending shards of bone in every direction.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary is capable of calmly expelling bone from their body, allowing them to create a volume of bone roughly equal to a human-sized skeleton for 1 anima.

A Nemissary may only spend 1 Anima per scene in this way but can over the course of a day quickly create huge quantities of raw materials.

Standard Action

Shaping, Visceral

Cost: Anima equal to the user's Creed, see below.

Use: Self.

Pool: Body/Athletics (0).

Effect: This power affects an area expanding out from the Nemissary in the same way as an explosive with a Blast equal to the Nemissary's Creed x5. This blast is always resolved as a missed throwing attack centred on the user who is ignored for the purposes of taking damage, but all other targets are affected normally.

In addition, the area affected by the Blast is considered to be both Light Cover and difficult terrain. It also inflicts a -1 Pool penalty to all Actions made by a character that does not possess the *Shape Bone* Arietta. This includes the user of this power, if applicable.

Bone created through this power degrades rapidly, breaking down into dust at the end of the scene, making it unsuitable for crafting.

Outcome: Outcome can enhance this power in various ways;

- **1+ points:** Each point of Outcome spent in this way increases the Blast by 2.
- **2+ points:** For every 2 points of Outcome used in this way, the Pool penalty imposed by this power is increased by 1.
- **1+ points:** Each point of Outcome used in this way allows the Nemissary to exclude a single target from the effects of the initial Blast.
- **Special:** If this power achieves a total Outcome of 3 or more, the power is automatically considered to provide Heavy Cover instead of Light Cover.

Harden

The Nemissary learns to alter themselves to provide a defence. Through this Arietta, they can create fragments of bone at a moment's notice in their own flesh, blunting the force of oncoming attacks in a nightmarish mess of tangled and blood-soaked bone.

Minor Action

Response, Shaping, Visceral

Cost: 1 or more Anima, to a maximum of the Nemissary's Creed; see below.

Use: Self, when the Nemissary is about to take damage.

Pool: None.

Effect: For each point of Anima spent, the Nemissary increases their natural Resilience by 2, but takes a cumulative -1 Pool penalty to Prowess. These effects persist until the end of the Nemissary's next Action.

Outcome: None.

Maiming Touch

Brutal and direct, *Maiming Touch* allows the Nemissary to strike not just at the flesh of their opponents, but to twist the composition of their bodies. The Nemissary's unarmed attacks therefore pull the bones from their opponent's body, inflicting some of the most horrific injuries imaginable.

Enhance Action
Shaping, Visceral

Cost: 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Enhance one unarmed Close Combat attack.

Effect: The attack receives +1 Damage and ignores any Resilience gained through Arietta that do not possess the **Voidglass** or **Epic** keywords.

Minor Action
Close Combat, Shaping, Spite, Visceral

Cost: 3 Dark Anima, 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary's unarmed attacks gain +3 Damage and ignore Resilience originating from Enhancements, Qualities or Arietta that do not possess the **Voidglass** or **Epic** keywords. This effect persists for 1 Scene.

Outcome: None.

Bone Rank II

Enduring Bone

As his mastery increases, the Nemissary learns not just to shape bone or to make it, but how to change its very nature, allowing it to take on the properties of other materials, such as high tensile steel, rubber or wood.

Not simply useful for crafting, this Arietta makes many of the Nemissary's other powers far more deadly, creating a deadly surprise when what should be fragments of bone are more akin to shrapnel from a grenade.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: Shape Bone.

Effect: When using the *Shape Bone* Arietta, the Nemissary may pay 1 Anima per Crafting roll to grant their creations the same resilience and durability as high grade steel. Alternatively, the Nemissary can give bone other qualities, such as those possessed by rubber, leather or wood. This additional crafting proficiency now also allows a Nemissary to manufacture items with the *Bone Sculpted* Quality.

Finally, this power permanently increases the damage of the following Song of Bone Arietta by 1:

- Bone Growth
- Bone Wind
- Aegis of Pain
- Lance of Hate
- Annihilation

Bone Wind

Rather than expelling bone quietly or even quickly, the Nemissary expels vast quantities violently from their body, changing the character into something akin to a living grenade capable of stripping the flesh from everything in a large area.

Aggressive Action
Ranged, Shaping

Cost: 3 Dark Anima.

Use: Ranged standard attack.

Pool: Prowess+1/Athletics (Combat Action).

Attack Traits: Blast equal to the Character's Creed.

Effect: Target suffers a Damage 6 hit.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the damage by 1.

Strike Within

Upon making an unarmed attack, the Nemissary learns to call an opponent's body to them, not just shifting bone but tearing it from his opponent's form. These injuries are not just terrible to look at but also agonising, often reducing the strongest opponents to a quivering mess.

Minor Action
Close Combat, Response, Shaping, Spite

Cost: 2 Dark Anima, 1 Spite.

Use: The Nemissary succeeds at an Unarmed Close Combat attack.

Pool: None.

Effect: Any Wound Penalties suffered by the target are tripled until the end of the Scene. Alternatively if that target

would be immune to Wound Penalties from a source which does not possess the **Epic** keyword, they instead suffer their normal Wound Penalties as a result of this power.

Note: *Further uses of this power have no additional effect, and a target which is immune to Wound Penalties which is affected by this power cannot then be affected by it again to triple their Wound Penalties. Making someone who normally would ignore Wound Penalties suffer them is quite nasty enough.*

Outcome: None.

Living Bone

With this Arietta, the Nemissary changes their own nature. Rather than shifting or expelling their bone, they transmute their form into it. They become like a perfect statue, pale and beautiful. Though this form means they no longer pass for human, it allows them to resist the Song of Flesh and the new composition of their form provides for a much greater resilience to damage.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary transmutes their skin and the very substance of their body into a bone-like material. This grants the Nemissary a natural Resilience of 1, and prevents Impaling damage from stopping their ability to regenerate.

As a consequence of these changes, the Nemissary can no longer pass for human, making some social interactions difficult at best. This power also means the Difficulty of affecting the Nemissary with a power which would grant them Enhancements is increased by 1, and the Nemissary may reflexively spend 1 Anima to ignore gaining any Enhancements in a round.

Furthermore, the Nemissary may no longer voluntarily use the Song of Flesh on themselves to create Enhancements, though they do not necessarily have to resist another character's use of it and may still make use of other powers from the Song of Flesh.

This power can be suppressed if the Nemissary spends 1 Focus and takes a Standard Action to do so. It will then reactivate automatically at the end of the Scene unless the Nemissary pays a further cost of 1 Anima to prevent this for each scene which passes.

Note: *Whilst this power is suppressed, the Nemissary can use the Song of Flesh on themselves normally.*

Bone Rank III

Aegis of Pain

The first taste of the might to come, the Aegis of Pain allows a Nemissary to expel not bone but Voidglass from their form. The display is monstrous to behold, their flesh twisting and erupting as sickly black strands emerge and cover the environment like a garden of deadly crystal.

Standard Action

Spite, Visceral, Void, Voidglass

Cost: 3 or more Dark Anima, Risk 1 Spite, 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: Body/Athletics (4 - Permanent Spite).

Effect: All targets within 10 metres of the Nemissary take damage equal to 4 + double the user's permanent Spite. The Damage inflicted by this power is considered to be from Voidglass, and is also considered to be an explosive effect, meaning that targets affected may choose to Take Cover, and doing so will lower the Damage as normal.

After this initial effect, the area affected becomes extremely dangerous. Moving safely through this area requires a character to take a Reflexive Minor Action, to make a Prowess/Athletics roll with a Difficulty based on the speed at which they wish to move:

- **Moving slowly:** This represents creeping or crawling and requires a Standard Action, with a Difficulty of 1.
- **Standard movement:** This represents a normal Minor Action's worth of movement, and requires a Difficulty 2 check.
- **Fast movement:** This is a normal Standard Action run, which gives a Difficulty of 3.
- **Full speed:** This is a character's flat out Run as described under the "Sprinting" special rules, and is Difficulty 4.

A character which does not take a Minor Action as a precaution, or fails one of these rolls takes Damage equal to their own Body + double the user's Permanent Spite.

The Voidglass created through this power is purely a manifestation of the Hollow, and degrades into fine ash after a number of Rounds equal to the Nemissary's permanent Spite.

Note: *Summing up, to move through this area the character has to take a Minor Action in addition to what other action they are required to use for movement, and then roll against the above Difficulty. If they fail the roll, or choose not to take the minor action, they suffer Damage based on their own Body and double the user of this power's permanent Spite.*

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the range of the effect by 5 metres.

CALL BONE

Like some of the lesser powers, this Arietta enables a Nemissary to draw bone from an opponent, but unlike those other abilities it requires no contact whatsoever; a simple look is all that is needed to reduce an enemy to a pile of mangled flesh stretched around the contorted ruins of its own skeleton.

Standard Action

Ranged, Shaping, Visceral

Cost: Pay Dark Anima equal to target's Body.

Use: 1 target with a bone structure.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (Opponent's Body - 2).

Effect: Target takes Damage equal to 3+ their own Body. This effect also ignores damage reduction that does not originate from a source with the **Epic** or **Voidglass** keywords.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the damage dealt by this power by 1.

SYMPHONY

The Angela Noctis, though one of the mightiest abilities Nemissaries possess, is also the most costly. The masters of Bone have perfected an alternative to that mighty shape.

The Arietta *Symphony* allows the Nemissary to assume a similar war form made of white organic bone rather than Voidglass. It presents the Nemissary with many of the gifts of the Angela Noctis but at a fraction of the cost to both body and soul.

Standard Action

Shaping, Visceral

Cost: 3 Anima, +1 Anima for each round this power is maintained.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The character assumes a War Form which provides the following benefits:

- +2 Body, +1 Prowess
- +1 Unarmed Damage
- +1 Resilience

Using *Symphony* causes the character to suppress the effects of any Enhancements they possess in the same manner as the Angela Noctis. This power persists until the Nemissary is unwilling or unable to spend Anima to maintain it, or until the Nemissary assumes the Angela Noctis.

Outcome: None

VOID TAINTING

Through this power, the Nemissary gains the ability to transmute bone to Voidglass. Although it has great cost, this Arietta is rapid in its activation, allowing a Nemissary to enhance other abilities they possess or to quickly transmute existing bone objects into that deadly substance. The transformation is rapid and impressive, with objects affected twisting and cracking into a jagged mess of crystalline spirals. The downside when used in this way is that this Voidglass is not usually permanent, returning to dust within a few hours of its creation.

Enhance Action

Echo, Overt, Spite, Void, Voidglass

Cost: 1 Spite, 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Enhance one Song of Bone Arietta with the **Shaping** keyword.

Effect: The Nemissary may add the **Voidglass** keyword or Voidglass Weapon Trait to the enhanced power. Alternatively, the enhanced power gains +1 Outcome.

Standard Action

Echo, Overt, Spite, Void, Voidglass

Cost: 1 Spite, Risk 1 Spite, 1 or more Dark Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (2).

Effect: The Nemissary may transform a number of bone objects equal to the amount of Dark Anima spent into Voidglass. The maximum size any given item may be is approximately that of one adult human being. In the case of items larger than this they must be treated as if they were separate items making up approximately the same mass.

Items enhanced in this way are considered Voidglass in all respects but may not be used to fulfil the requirements of Protocols and degenerate into ash at the end of the scene in which this power was used.

Outcome: 1 item per point of Outcome is permanently transformed into Voidglass and does not degenerate at the end of the scene. However, due to the jagged and awkward nature of these items' construction, their quality is downgraded by 1 step, though this does not make them any more fragile.

Bone Rank IV

Void Weaving

Building upon his ability to craft and the lessons he has learned coming this far, the Nemissary gains the ability to shape not just bone but Voidglass. Unlike the lesser powers he has likely mastered to reach this point, this change though expensive is permanent.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Shape Bone*.

Effect: When using the *Shape Bone* power to craft an item, the Nemissary may opt to pay an additional initial cost of 1 Focus and then pay 3 Anima per Crafting roll to transmute the item from bone into true Voidglass.

Items created in this way are permanent and are considered minor Artefacts, possessing all the normal properties of Voidglass items. Furthermore, the Nemissary may pay an additional one-off cost of 1 Spite, 1 Focus and 7 Anima to cause this new item to be considered a Rank 1 Shard in all respects. The new Shard created should be Dormant, but will begin to grow and learn, and its ultimate development is in the hands of the GM.

Wing of the Firstborn

Perfection is not just the province of Flesh. With this Arietta, the Nemissary combines a fragment of their Creed, Soul and their bone to extend a single wing from their body.

Though seemingly innocuous and existing in both the Nemissary's normal form and Angela Noctis, this wing grants the Nemissary either incredible control of their anima, impressive defence, or a lethal form of attack.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary gains the ability to extend a single wing from their body which can also be made to appear in any shape the Nemissary wishes to assume, such as the Angela Noctis or the War Form provided by *Symphony*.

Revealing or retracting the wing takes 1 Standard Action and once revealed, it may be used each round to provide one of the following benefits;

- Grant the Nemissary 3 Resilience, which is considered to possess the **Epic** keyword.
- Grant the Nemissary 2 bonus Pool to attack.
- The Nemissary gains 3 Neutral Anima to spend each Round. These points may not refresh a Nemissary's Anima Pool and are lost if not spent.

These benefits are unique in that they are considered natural modifications to the Nemissary and not an Arietta use, meaning they may be freely stacked with the benefits provided by any other Arietta.

Lance of Hate

An awesome offensive ability, the Nemissary reaches out and generates a spear of Voidglass in the air. He then can hurl this projectile with deadly speed and agility, shattering all but the most impressive defences and leaving its targets impaled and helpless.

Aggressive Action

(Close Combat or Ranged), Shaping, Spite, Voidglass

Cost: 1 Spite, 1 Dark Anima.

Use: 1 target, Standard Close Combat or Ranged Attack.

Pool: Prowess/Athletics or Melee if Close Combat (Combat Action).

Attack Traits: Maiming, Armour Piercing, +1 Pool, Impaling, (Long Range or Aggressive).

Effect: Target takes 4 + the user's Conviction in Damage which ignores Resilience that does not have the **Voidglass** or **Epic** keywords.

Outcome: Damage is increased by 1 for each point of Outcome.

Bone Rank V

Annihilation

Simple, deadly and terrible, this power enables the Nemissary to expand their bone over a massive area, potentially killing every living thing within reach.

Aggressive Action

Echo, Ranged, Shaping, Visceral

Cost: 5 Dark Anima.

Use: All targets within Creed × 10 metres, Standard Ranged Attack.

Pool: Body/Athletics (Combat Action).

Attack Traits: Maiming, Armour Piercing, -1 Pool, Special*.

*: This attack allows the user to Tag every target within Creed × 10 metres as a Ranged Attack which ignores cover and imposes only a -1 Pool penalty for attacking multiple opponents instead of the normal penalties for doing so.

Effect: Targets take Damage equal to 3 + the user's Body.

Outcome: Damage is increased by 1 for each point of Outcome.

Return to Grace

Continuing the mastery of form and spirit, the Nemissary reaches a new plateau and enhances the *Wing of the Firstborn*, granting the Nemissary a true pair of wings, adding true flight to their already impressive capabilities.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: *Wing of the Firstborn*.

Effect: The Arietta "Wing of the Firstborn" is enhanced so that the character now possesses two distinct wings and may reveal these wings as a Reaction as opposed to a Standard Action. The Nemissary may choose any two of the effects listed under "Wing of the Firstborn" instead of just one. They may also take the following additional benefit:

- Allows the Nemissary to fly. Alternatively, if the Nemissary was already capable of flight, the speed multiple at which they can fly is increased by 1 (If a power grants a Nemissary a flight speed of double their normal running rate, using this power would make it triple, not quadruple).

Subsume the Lower Form

Like the lesser crafting abilities which came before it, this power enables the Nemissary to create, albeit with far more impressive results. Through it, he is no longer bound to the simple shapes one would expect of bone or Voidglass. Instead, he can recreate entire machines, transmuting their substance into lesser artefacts of Voidglass

Standard Action

Spite, Voidglass

Cost: Risk 1 Spite, 4 Anima + Size Modifier;

- **Small or Tiny:** +0 Anima
- **Medium:** +1 Anima
- **Large:** +2 Anima
- **Very Large:** +3 Anima

In addition, further costs are imposed if the object is composed of more than one material or has more complex construction;

- **Single component material:** +0 Anima
- **Multiple components:** +1 Anima
- **Moving parts:** +1 Anima, +1 Focus
- **Electronics:** +3 Anima

Note: *The costs for sizes are not cumulative. However, the costs based on complexity are, and so a Medium object which has multiple components, moving parts and electronics adds a total of +6 to the Anima cost and add a cost of +1 Focus; +1 Anima for size, +2 Anima and +1 Focus for moving parts and +3 Anima for the electronics.*

Use: One object the Nemissary could feasibly build.

Pool: Conviction/Craft skill most appropriate to the object or Keening, whichever is lower (1 + Variable, see below).

- **Single component material:** No change
- **Multiple components:** +1 Difficulty
- **Moving parts:** +1 Difficulty
- **Electronics:** +2 Difficulty

Note: *These modifications to Difficulty are cumulative just like as described above.*

Effect: In the case of simple objects, they are produced immediately as a Voidglass equivalent, gaining any relevant traits as they do so. More complex devices are produced as Voidglass equivalents that replicate the original function of the recreated device.

These objects require Anima instead of any fuel or material components they would have originally needed. This needs to be adjudicated by the GM but in general 1 Anima should be sufficient to supply the requirements of an object for its normal period of use. For instance, 1 Anima would refresh the clip of a subsumed handgun, or power a generator for 6 hours or so.

Objects transformed in this way are permanent and any device which has its function replicated in Voidglass is considered to be a lesser artefact for all intents and purposes.

Note: *Characters don't necessarily have to create an object as a perfect copy. They could at their discretion use this power to screw up a mechanical device by turning a vital part or mechanism into a useless voidglass replica.*

Outcome: Each point of Outcome allows the Nemissary to effectively lower the cost of this power by 1 Anima to a minimum of 0.

Bone Rank VI

Lance of The Firstborn

Those who have travelled so far in their mastery have reached the pinnacle of destructive capability. With this power, the Nemissary may bring low almost any foe. Through it, they create a jet black lance, a rent in reality and a manifestation of the darkness in their own soul. The Nemissary hurls it and when it strikes the Earth trembles.

Without comparable defences, the target is likely destroyed, both body and soul. Not only this, but its power is so great that the surrounding environment in a vast line behind the target is reduced in an instant to vapour, molten rock and rubble.

Aggressive Action

Echo, Epic, Overt, Ranged

Cost: 9 Dark Anima, 3 Mauled Wounds.

Use: Any 1 target or area.

Pool: Prowess/Athletics or Keening (Combat Action).

Attack Traits: Impaling, Special*.

*: Responses may only be taken against the *Lance of the Firstborn* if they originate from or are Enhanced with the **Epic** keyword. In addition, no physical defence, cover or barrier of any kind may impede this weapon and all negative modifiers to attack rolls not originating from a source with the **Epic** keyword are ignored.

Effect: The target takes 21 Damage and any Blood Synergy or Ambient Synergy is automatically severed from the target.

Any ongoing powers or effects without the **Epic** keyword cease to take effect immediately, and the target may use no supernatural ability, either Innate, such as a Nemissary's Regeneration, or Active, such as an Arietta or the Angela Noctis, until the *Lance of the Firstborn* is removed from their body or 1 Scene passes.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome adds +3 to the damage of the attack and all Outcome scored creates an area of vast devastation in a line proceeding outwards from the initial target. This area has a width of 10 × the user's Creed in metres, and a length of 100 × the user's Creed in metres, per point of Outcome.

Every target in this area, friend or foe, has the option to attempt a Take Cover response as if targeted by a grenade, and this devastation inflicts 14 Damage on any target unlucky enough to remain in the blast or is unable to take cover.

The Nature of Flesh and Blood

The nature of a Nemissary's body to inherently heal itself makes the Song of Bone a peculiar subject. For the sake of application and -- above all else -- the rule of cool, it can be assumed that within a scene, flesh does not regenerate over protrusions of bone. In the course of a story however, it is not unlikely that a player may wish to maintain basic protrusions of bone. There are a couple of ways to deal with this.

Firstly, because powers only become vulnerable to removal after one Scene, a Nemissary can simply reactivate individual powers each Scene, though this is costly and even dangerous in the case of certain powers.

Alternatively, a Nemissary can force their regeneration to cease by spending a Focus point. Once done, the Nemissary no longer regenerates damage naturally until they take a Standard Action to resume their regeneration. If this option is chosen, it can be assumed that protrusions of bone persist until deactivated, and count as Positive Enhancements (page XX). Additional affects, such as those provided by Arietta such as Wing of the Firstborn, resolve for their normal duration, and the maintenance of such bone protrusions are considered to be purely aesthetic.

Note: *All Damage caused by Lance of the Firstborn is considered to possess both the* ***Voidglass*** *and* ***Epic*** *keywords.*

Oubliette

This strange and unique power enables the Nemissary to wrap themselves in a cocoon of their own Hollow. Through it, they can temporarily pull themselves outside of space and time, rendering themselves momentarily immune to any external influence.

This power is costly but becomes far more accessible to those who already possess the greater mastery of self which is accomplished through *Wing of the Firstborn*.

Minor Action

Echo, Epic, Response, Spite

Cost: 1 Spite, 5 Anima*.

*: This cost is reduced by 1 Anima if you possess *Wing of the Firstborn* and a further 1 if you possess *Return to Grace*.

Use: Any.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary, and any objects in the Engaged range step with them, are moved outside reality until 1 turn has passed from the point that this power is activated. This means that the Nemissary and any targets inside that area are rendered absolutely immune to any effect, physical or otherwise, originating from outside the sphere. This also stops attempt to communicate or establish Synergy or otherwise indirectly affect the Nemissary and anything brought with them.

Time continues inside the sphere normally and the Nemissary could even conceivably continue combat with a target brought with them inside, but all participants in this tiny space will suffer a -3 Pool penalty to use any weapon with a size greater than small, and using weapons of large or greater size is simply impossible.

Outcome: None

Song of the Brood

The Songs of the Brood are sometimes considered to be the most powerful and most dangerous of all abilities open to the Nemissaries.

Brood Rank 1

Whispers of the Brood

All living creatures can train themselves to hear and perceive the Broodsong to some extent. Nemissaries with this Arietta take this one step further, changing vague intuition into definite knowledge.

By concentrating for a few moments, the Nemissary reaches out with their mind, targeting an area of Ambient Synergy and probing it for information.

Minor Action

Brood, Echo, Innate

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: One pack or horde within 100m for each point of the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

Pool: Cunning/Keening (0).

Effect: The Nemissary may choose any one effect from the list below:

- Reveal the number of Broodspawn that make up the targeted pack or horde.
- Reveal any commands the pack or horde is operating under.
- Reveal the exact location of any Broodspawn linked to the pack or horde within 100 metres of the character.

The specific effect chosen persists for the remainder of the Scene and the Nemissary remains updated on any changes that occur during that time.

Outcome: Outcome on this power may be spent in various ways;

- **1 to 2 points:** Each point of Outcome used in this way allows a Nemissary to choose an additional effect from the list above which persists until the end of the scene.
- **1 point:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **1 point:** (To choose this option, the Nemissary must be aware of any orders affecting the targeted pack or horde.) The Nemissary becomes aware of the general location and identity of any character that uses a power with the **Echo** and **Brood** keyword that would affect orders given to the targeted Ambient Synergy.

If an order was given that does not have the **Echo** keyword, or had its **Echo** keyword removed, then this specific effect will fail and although the Nemissary will be aware that the order changed, they will have no idea who or what caused the change.

Voice of the Brood

The temptation to turn the weapons of the enemy against them is a powerful one. This Arietta is the first of many long steps down that dark road. Through it, the Nemissary learns to bind the minds of the Brood.

Faced with a pack of Broodspawn, he roars, pitting his mind against the power of the Broodsong, distorting their commands and imposing his will upon them.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo, Innate, Overt

Cost: 3 Dark Anima.

Use: One Broodspawn, or pack of Broodspawn, that are connected to Ambient Synergy.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (Ambient Synergy).

Effect: The character may issue a single command to all Broodspawn targeted. This command will persist for 1 hour and must be fairly basic in nature; "Kill a specific person" or "Leave this area" would be appropriate, but "Spare all the Artificers in that town" would be too complex. The command may not order the Broodspawn to destroy themselves or each other, neither may it order the Broodspawn not to defend themselves.

The Nemissary could, of course, order the Broodspawn to charge into a trap or an ambush, but he couldn't simply command them to kill one another.

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be used to modify this power in any of the following ways:

- **1 or more points:** Increase the duration of this power by 1 hour per point.
- **2 points:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **1 point:** Allow the order given to be of a more complex nature. Remember, though you can get the Broodspawn to do fairly complex things, their intelligence is still limited, and although they could pick out uniforms or colour they certainly can't read or make intuitive leaps of logic. They could, for instance, now be directed to spare all Artificers, as this would no longer be too complex a command if this option is chosen.
- **1 point:** The character may use this power silently, thus removing the **Overt** keyword.

Brood Mind

This power balances the Nemissary's very soul on a knife's edge. It brings them closer to the source of their existence than most dare go, allowing the Nemissary to reintegrate themselves with the Broodsong.

Isolating themselves from the voices, they concentrate their efforts on drawing out power from the Ambient Synergy gaining, if only for a brief time, vast quantities of Anima and a frightening degree of clarity.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Spite

Cost: 1 Spite, 1 Focus.

Use: Self (the Nemissary must be within a zone of Ambient Synergy).

Pool: None.

Effect: Whilst under the effects of this power, the Nemissary's gains a number of advantages depending upon the rating of the local Ambient Synergy:

- The Nemissary counts their Creed as equal to the Ambient Synergy for the purposes of working out the effects of Arietta. This does not affect the Nemissary's dice pools in any way.
- The Nemissary gains a number of free Neutral Anima each Round equal to the local Ambient Synergy. This Anima cannot be saved by the Nemissary and is lost if not spent before the end of the Round.
- The Nemissary gains the same Ambient Synergy bonus to dice pools as Broodspawn. An Ambient Synergy of 2 to 3 grants +1 Pool, 4 to 5 grants +2 Pool, and an Ambient Synergy of 6 grants +3 Pool. This benefit functions as it does for Broodspawn and may explicitly stack with other Arietta.
- Broodspawn will regard the Nemissary as one of their own and will not naturally attack them. If the Nemissary forces a confrontation, Broodspawn will still react as appropriate.

This power comes with a down-side; whilst under its effects, the Nemissary may not gain or spend temporary Creed. Also, their Creed is considered to be 0 for working out whether the Nemissary is overwhelmed by the Ambient Synergy.

The effects of this power persist for one Scene and may not be counteracted by another Arietta that does not possess the **Epic** keyword.

Outcome: None.

Subdue the Mind

Of the Song of Brood's powers, this is the most subtle. With it, a Nemissary cloaks themselves in the energies of the Broodsong. Wearing it like a mask over their conscious mind, they appear to the senses of the Brood as one of their own, allowing the Nemissary to pass unhindered into the mass of the Swarm.

Minor Action

Brood, Innate, Response

Cost: None, or 1 Anima if used as a Response.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary registers as a Broodspawn for the purposes of supernatural detection, which allows them to masquerade as such to other Broodspawn. This effect persists until the Nemissary uses a Miscellaneous Minor Action to end it.

Brood Rank II

Direct the Pack

No longer content with simply commanding, the Nemissary reaches out with his will and dominates a group of Broodspawn, binding them to his service so that he might send them forth as a master commands his hounds.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: *Voice of the Brood.*

Effect: The Nemissary gains the ability to give a special order with the *Voice of the Brood* Arietta. To use this order, the Nemissary must pay an additional cost of 1 temporary Creed. It then allows them to take command of a number of Broodspawn whose total permanent Synergies do not exceed the Nemissary's Conviction + Creed or Spite, whichever is higher.

Broodspawn commanded in this way are severed totally from Ambient Synergy. Though they retain their Synergy ranks for the purposes of dice pools, they may no longer access any of the effects inherent to Ambient Synergy. Also, these Broodspawn no longer regenerate Anima naturally, meaning that to gain Anima at all they would have to feed on corpses, and only the more advanced Broodspawn which possess an Anima Pool will be able to utilise the Anima consumed in this way.

Once these Broodspawn are under the Nemissary's command, they may be given any order appropriate to the Voice of the Brood as a Minor Action on the Nemissary's part which has no cost. These Broodspawn will never harm the Nemissary but they are still Broodspawn and will happily kill and eat any non Nemissary they come across. Also, because these Broodspawn have been severed from Ambient Synergy, they need to eat several pounds of human flesh per week or they will begin to starve, taking 1 Mauled Wound per week that they go without a significant source of food.

If a Nemissary with control of a group of Broodspawn wishes to add or subtract Broodspawn to the group, they can do so without needing to pay 1 Temporary Creed again. They simply activate Voice of the Brood and assuming it is successful, they can adjust the number of Broodspawn under their command, though they are still limited to the total ranks of Synergy they may command.

In the event that a Nemissary wishes to sever Broodspawn from their control, they may do so for a Minor Action per Broodspawn. Broodspawn which are released die, twisting and writhing in agony for a few seconds before meeting a permanent end.

Resist the Call

By expanding their mastery, the Nemissary is able to further protect themselves from the Brood's power. Though not without cost, they can render themselves forever immune to the seductive lure of the Broodsong.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary is immune to the effects of Ambient Synergy, and thus no longer risks being subsumed by the Brood Mind. However as a consequence, the Nemissary must pay a cost of 1 Focus each time they wish to use a power with the **Bond** keyword. This applies to any use of the power but not to Song Enhancements which function normally and are unaffected.

A Nemissary may deactivate this Arietta for one Scene by Invoking a Motivation.

Shatter the Horde

Gathered in an unstoppable legion, the Brood is almost impossible to defeat. To win, one must divide and conquer, and Nemissaries with this Arietta are experts at that strategy.

With a terrible roar, they create a disturbance in the Broodsong, shattering its harmony and breaking a vast horde down into many smaller component parts.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Light Anima per Ambient Synergy rank.

Use: The Nemissary targets one zone of Ambient Synergy within 100 metres.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (Ambient Synergy -1).

Effect: Success shatters the targeted Ambient Synergy and causes it to split into 3 new distinct Ambient Synergy groups of the next smallest size. Furthermore, all the Broodspawn affected ignore any orders they have currently been given and to enter a passive state where they will not initiate conflict or attack other living creatures.

The effects on the Ambient Synergy are permanent, but the tranquil state imposed by this power persists for 1 hour, or until the Broodspawn are given new orders originating from an entity with higher individual Synergy or Creed than the Nemissary.

This power can be disrupted on individual Broodspawn, as if they are attacked or threatened their natural instincts will reassert themselves. Other Broodspawn in the vicinity will also react to defend Broodspawn which come under attack and likewise will snap out of the enforced passive state.

Note: *Although difficult and dangerous, this power can be used to devastating effect to shatter a large horde of*

Broodspawn. It's a deliberate design decision that the horde can be disrupted through the use of this power, and then smaller groups of Broodspawn picked off from the whole.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent in various ways:

- **1 or more points:** Increase the duration of the passive state arising from this power by 1 hour per Outcome spent.
- **1 point:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **1 point:** Remove the **Overt** keyword from this power.

Disrupt

With discipline and practice, the Nemissary has learned to alter and disrupt the communications between the Broodspawn. By exerting their will, the Nemissary can flood the minds of the Broodspawn in his vicinity with a strange form of static, severing them from the Broodsong, thus obliterating their ability to coordinate their actions and regenerate Anima.

Minor Action

Brood, Echo, Innate

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: Any.

Pool: None.

Effect: Broodspawn within the Nemissary's permanent Creed × 10 metres of the character which possess a Synergy lower than the character's permanent Creed lose access to the benefits of Ambient Synergy, such as bonus dice and Anima regeneration.

The effects of this power last for 6 Rounds minus 1 Round for each rank of permanent Spite the character possesses. If this would reduce the duration of this effect to 0 Rounds, this power takes effect only for that character's Turn.

Example: *A character is facing off against 9 Broodspawn. The battle is part of a larger conflict and the Ambient Synergy is currently 3. The Nemissary then uses this power meaning that the Broodspawn targeted lose access to the Ambient Synergy; specifically the bonus dice and Anima regeneration normally provided by it. If these Broodspawn were to move out of the area, they would immediately regain the bonus dice and begin replenishing Anima.*

Outcome: None.

Minor Action

Brood, Echo, Innate, Response

Cost: 3 Anima.

Use: In response to 1 target attempting to use a Arietta with the **Brood** keyword that does not also possess the "Innate" keyword.

Pool: None.

Effect: The target must pay an additional cost of 1 Focus or the specific Arietta's effect will not take place.

Outcome: None.

Brood Rank III

Summon the Horde

With this power the Nemissary is capable of summoning not just a handful of Broodspawn but an entire army. With a piercing shriek and the twisting of his skin and flesh, the Nemissary temporarily aligns himself with the power of the Broodsong, acting like a beacon and calling to every Broodspawn within several miles of his location.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo, Visceral

Cost: 3 Dark Anima.

Use: Any.

Pool: Passion/Keening (6 - highest Ambient Synergy within 1 mile per the user's permanent Creed).

Effect: All Broodspawn under the effects of Ambient Synergy and within 1 mile per the user's permanent Creed begin to converge on the location where this power was used. This effect counts as an order, which will override any orders these Broodspawn are currently under.

Note: *Brood summoned by this power will move as fast as they are able to and, if capable, will change shape or otherwise Enhance themselves to reach the origin point of this power as fast as possible.*

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be spent to achieve any of the following:

- **1 or more points:** Each point spent increases the range for the purposes of Pool and effect by 1 mile.
- **1 point:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **2 points:** The Nemissary does not assume a terrifying visage when using this power and neither do they need to call out, thus removing the **Visceral** keyword.
- **3 points:** Multiply the total range for the purposes of both effect and Pool of this power by 10.

Brood Renewal

This power, though dangerous, has immense utility. By combining allowing their nature to sink deeper towards their Hollow and opening their mind fully to the Broodsong, the Nemissary is able to draw on the immense well of power inherent to the Brood.

Through it, they gain knowledge they didn't possess, heal their wounds or replenish their will as the Nemissary sinks without consequence back into the blissful embrace of the Mother's Song; all for the seemingly tiny price of feeding their Hollow's strength.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Spite.

Cost: 1 Dark Anima, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Self; the Nemissary must target Ambient Synergy within 1 mile per point of the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (6 - targeted Ambient Synergy).

Effect: Success allows the Nemissary to use one of the options presented below:

- Gain 1 Focus.
- Remove a number of total Wounds equal to the targeted Ambient Synergy. Injured Wounds are restored first, then Mauled, then Critical, and then Deadly.
- Increase a Skill by 1 rank. This may not raise a skill above 4.
- Gain a Skill not possessed by the character at rank 1.

Note: *Skills gained from this power are temporary and last until the end of the scene.*

Outcome: Each point of Outcome may be spent to generate 1 additional effect, chosen from the options above.

Note: *A character can gain multiple boosts in different skills with this power, or gain a new skill and increase its rank by 1. Because bonuses granted by the use of Songs multiple times do not stack, you cannot gain more than 1 bonus point of Skill through the use of this power.*

Scourge

As the Nemissary's mastery of the Broodsong increases, they learn that there are effects well beyond the obvious. By filtering the Brood's latent power through their own wounded flesh and the strength of their Hollow, they are able to create a kind of spiritual poison.

This dark aetheric mist spreads over the immediate area, latching onto everything it can. Though disturbing to creatures capable of detecting it, this effect's real power only reveals itself when other creatures try to draw on the power of the Hollow or the Broodsong. As soon as this happens, the mist lashes out like razorblades, converting the energy into violent harm upon those affected.

Standard Action

Brood, Echo, Spite

Cost: 1 Mauled Wound, 1 Spite, 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: This power persists for one Scene and whilst active, any character within 10 metres per point of the user's permanent Creed that activates an Arietta which has the **Spite** or **Brood** keywords but not the **Innate** keyword, takes 1 Mauled Wound. This damage is not affected by damage reduction in any way and may occur multiple times during a round if the afflicted characters attempt to use further qualifying powers.

Outcome: None

Pack Bond

Building upon their existing abilities, the Nemissary further refines their control over their hounds. At this point of mastery, the Nemissary comes close to being able to duplicate the effects of the Broodsong itself, allowing them to use a trickle of Anima to replenish the supplies of the Broodspawn under their command.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Direct the Pack*.

Effect: This Arietta improves *Direct the Pack* in numerous ways. First of all, the total number of Synergy Ranks of Brood which may be affected by that power is improved to the Nemissary's Conviction × Creed or Spite, whichever is higher.

Secondly, the Nemissary may spend 1 or more Anima as a Minor Action. Each point spent in this way allows them to distribute a number of points of Anima equal to that Nemissary's Passion amongst their Broodspawn pack.

Example: *The Nemissary has 5 Broodspawn under their control, and they have a Passion of 4. Without this power, the Nemissary would have to transfer Anima directly on a 1 for 1 basis to these Broodspawn. With this power active, however, they can instead spend 1 Anima and thus cause 4 of the Broodspawn to each gain 1 Anima.*

Note: *Like all Anima the Broodspawn possess, this is temporary and disappears at the end of their turn, and cannot in any way be extracted, used, shared, or otherwise taken advantage of by Nemissaries. Simply put, these are phantom points of Anima which must either be spent on the Broodspawn's next action or lost.*

Brood Rank IV

Command the Horde

With a supreme act of will and a baleful roar, the Nemissary sends out a commandment, tearing into a horde's Ambient Synergy and twisting the desires of the horde to his will alone. Through it he can command not just small groups or packs but an entire legion of Broodspawn; a blunt instrument for sure but one which properly used can break through almost any defence.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo, Innate, Overt

Cost: 1 Focus, +1 Dark Anima per rank of the target horde's Ambient Synergy.

Use: A horde of Broodspawn.

Pool: Conviction/Keening (Targeted Ambient Synergy -1).

Effect: The character may issue a single command to the targeted Ambient Synergy. This command will persist for 1 hour and must be fairly basic in nature; "kill a specific person" or "Leave this area" would be appropriate, but "Spare all the Artificers in that town" would be too complex. The command may not order the Broodspawn to destroy themselves or each other; neither may it order the Broodspawn not to defend themselves.

The Nemissary could of course order the Broodspawn to charge into a trap or an ambush, but he couldn't simply command them to kill one another.

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be used to modify this power in any of the following ways:

- **1 or more points:** Increase the duration of this power by 1 hour per point.
- **2 points:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **1 point:** Allow the order given to be of a more complex nature. Remember, though you can get the Broodspawn to do fairly complex things, their intelligence is still limited, and although they could pick out uniforms or colour they certainly can't read or make intuitive leaps of logic. They could for instance be directed to spare all Artifacers, as this would no longer be too complex a command if this option is chosen.
- **1 point:** The character may use this power silently, thus removing the **Overt** keyword.

Dark Laughter

Through relentless practice and growing mastery, the Nemissary learns to play a cruel trick upon the Broodsong. He regains the ability to regenerate Anima in the same manner as the Brood, finally restoring him to at least a level playing-field with his adversaries. More likely this will grant him the ability to sustain truly terrifying onslaughts of supernatural might.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary regenerates Anima in the same way as Broodspawn whilst within an area of Ambient Synergy. For this ability to function the Nemissary must not be immune to the effects of Ambient Synergy, so a character that possesses the Arietta *Resist the Call* must spend a Focus to suppress it to make use of this ability.

The Black Wind Voice

Not all the effects granted by a Nemissary's increasing mastery are overt; some, like this one, are more subtle, granting a permanent enhancement to their capabilities.

Through *The Black Wind Voice*, the Nemissary learns to funnel their Dark Anima into their powers, massively extending the range of their existing abilities.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: None.

Effect: The Nemissary may spend up to their Permanent Creed in Dark Anima to increase the range of any Song of Brood power. The range is multiplied by 10 for each point of Anima spent in this way. This modification is applied all at once, and so spending 3 Anima would multiply the range of a power by 30; not by 10, then 10 again, and then 10 again.

Brood Rank V

Gift of Peace

Some mortals can create Wards to hold the Broodspawn at bay but not one of them, for all their abilities, is equal to a Nemissary with this Arietta. Through it, they create a still zone in the world; a curious respite from the horror where the Brood dare not tread.

The Nemissary cuts themselves, letting blood drop to the ground. This small trickle expands into a burning red line, marking the area to be affected before dissipating. As it does so, it sends a ripple through any nearby Synergy, making the Broodspawn recoil in horror. Even in the unlikely event that they recover or another mind forces them to the attack, entering this area inflicts horrific injuries upon the Broodspawn, in moments reducing them to the dead things they truly are.

Standard Action

Brood, Echo, Overt

Cost: User's permanent Creed in Light Anima.

Use: 1 area with a radius of 1 mile per point of the user's Permanent Creed.

Pool: Conviction/Authority (0).

Effect: Any existing Ward or other active use of this power that was either created by the user or is within the targeted area is immediately ended. Once this power comes into effect, any Broodspawn entering the affected area are immediately considered to have been given a command to leave the affected area.

If an additional command is then used to force the Broodspawn to enter, they suffer Baleful Damage equal to 3 times the original user's permanent Creed. Once an individual Broodspawn has passed into the affected area, this power no longer has any effect on that Broodspawn. The effects detailed above persist for one month, unless it is ended due to a second use of this Arietta.

Outcome: Outcome may be used to enhance this power in various ways:

- **1 or more points:** Increase the base duration by 1 month per point spent. In addition, the Nemissary may pay an additional cost of 1 Focus to change this power's duration from months to years instead.
- **1 or more points:** Increase the radius of this effect by 1 mile.
- **3 points:** The orders given by this power are considered to have originated from a source with the **Epic** and **Innate** keywords.
- **7 points:** The effects of this power become permanent and are only ended by an effect with the **Epic** keyword. If this option is used, the Nemissary may no longer end its effects voluntarily and it is no longer considered to be an Arietta they have used; rather it becomes a natural effect of the world.

Mantle of the Mother

One of the most impressive and powerful effects the Song of the Brood offers, the Nemissary is able to alter their own nature, transforming them in the eyes of the Brood into a true Brood Mother.

Not just a disguise, this power also allows the Nemissary to command the ebb and flow of Synergy in precisely the same manner as the Brood's leaders and draw forth similar amounts of strength. With it, the Nemissary can command a legion that is almost impossible to disrupt, disperse, or defeat.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo

Cost: 7 Anima, and if the Nemissary is immune to Ambient Synergy, they must pay an additional cost of 1 Focus.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary is considered from the perspective of Broodspawn to be a Brood Mother and radiates an Ambient Synergy equal to their permanent Creed. This allows the Nemissary to command a horde directly, counting as a leader in its command structure. For more information on how hordes are formed and structured, see page 225 in the Brood chapter.

The effects of this power persist for 1 hour, and may be maintained almost indefinitely if the Nemissary spends 1 Anima at the beginning of each hour they wish to maintain the power.

Whilst this power is active, the Nemissary may regenerate Anima in the same manner as a Broodspawn, but may never add Anima gained in this way to their normal pool, and just like with Broodspawn, it is lost if not spent immediately.

Other Song of Brood powers the Nemissary uses whilst this Arietta is in effect are incredibly difficult to counteract, and any attempt to do so requires the character to spend a Focus in addition to the normal costs of any attempt to override such an ability.

Note: *This means that the Nemissary enters into the hierarchy of the Brood and may issue commands exactly as if they were a Brood Mother or a Harbinger.*

Outcome: None

Pack Unity

This ability brings true mastery to the Nemissary's control of their pack. To them, he is a living font for the energies of Synergy. His hounds now find themselves with all the capabilities of true Broodspawn; both perfectly loyal to and drawing strength from the Nemissary, these creatures are a terrifying prospect to face.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: *Direct the Pack.*

Effect: This Arietta enhances the power *Direct the Pack* so that Broodspawn under the Nemissary's control may count the Nemissary's permanent Creed as if it was Ambient Synergy for the purposes of establishing their Dice Pool.

If the Nemissary also possesses the Arietta *Pack Bond*, then the Brood that they control also regenerate Anima as if they were under the effects of Ambient Synergy.

Brood Rank VI

Dance of Loki

Of all the powers inherent to the Song of the Brood, this is perhaps the most terrifying. With it, the Nemissary becomes almost impossible to slay. Even death and the destruction of their body will not bring them to their end. Instead, the Nemissary can shift their form through the great sea of the Broodspawn's consciousness.

Gathering strength and then replacing another Broodspawn potentially miles away, the Nemissary gains flesh again. Combined with a pack of Brood, the Nemissary is even more terrifying, every fallen body simply discarded as one of their own creatures transforms and the Nemissary emerges unharmed once again.

Permanent Effect

Effect: At any point the Nemissary would be forced to return to a Shard for a Harrowing, they may instead choose to pay a number of points of Anima equal to their Permanent Creed to be reborn immediately and with no Harrowing in the body of the closest Broodspawn with a Permanent Synergy less than his own Creed. The character has full control over which Broodspawn they transfer to, and the Broodspawn in question need not have humanoid form.

The Nemissary becomes capable of acting again on the next Turn if they transfer to a Broodspawn under his or her direct control, or after a number of hours have elapsed equal to the Permanent Synergy of the target, if they transfer to a Broodspawn which is not under their direct control. In either case, this effect is considered to have the **Epic** keyword for the purposes of resisting other powers.

This transformation is total and irreversible, and the Broodspawn becomes in every way a copy of the Nemissary's original body. In a very real sense, the Nemissary simply snaps back into existence in this new body.

Devouring the Nemissary also becomes much harder and any attempt to Consume or destroy their soul either has its Difficulty increased by 2, or grants the Nemissary 2 automatic Successes on rolls to resist as appropriate.

Dealing with the Pack

Concerning Arietta such as Direct the Pack or Pack Unity, it is worth mentioning what we consider the scales of Brood sociology to be in regards to mechanics. At their most basic, Brood groups can be classified as individuals, packs or hordes. An individual should be obvious, a pack is usually about a dozen Brood strong, and a horde is made up of three or more smaller packs of Broodspawn.

In regards to targeting, if an Arietta targets a particular pack, they don't all have to be within range; just one Broodspawn will do. As for hordes, you need to have at least half the members of one constituent pack within range of the Arietta. So long as that's true, you can affect the whole horde.

Note: *This power renders the Nemissary virtually immortal in any conventional sense but cannot prevent their soul being Devoured and then either Consumed or destroyed by another Nemissary; though it certainly makes this process harder.*

Avatar of the Mother

Final and absolute, this Arietta grants the Nemissary uncontested mastery over the Broodsong. Through it, they become a living avatar of The Mother, a personification of the Brood's malign might.

The Nemissary regenerates their flesh and Anima at an incredible rate and through their unique perspective executes every action with terrifying skill and grace. Not only this but the Nemissary's blows are final and lethal, shattering aside virtually every defence raised against them.

Standard Action

Bond, Brood, Echo, Epic, Spite

Cost: 1 Spite, 7 Anima+

Use: Self

Pool: None

Effect: The Nemissary radiates a zone of Ambient Synergy with a rank equal to their Permanent Creed. All Broodspawn within this area are under the control of the Nemissary. This shatters any existing pack or horde bonds and allows a Nemissary to command them as one vast intelligence without the constraints of the horde rules.

No other power can interfere with this command in any way unless it possesses the **Epic** keyword. This means that each and every Broodspawn in the horde is totally under the command of the Nemissary. They exist as extensions of the Nemissary's will, demonstrating incredible efficiency.

This grants them +1 bonus Pool on all actions and allows them to follow very specific and complex instructions. The Brood under the effects of this power could even use theoretically use ranged weaponry, though their primal nature is such that they would do so unskilled. The Nemissary themselves gains +1 Pool and Close Combat Damage per Broodspawn within 7 metres of them up to a maximum of +7 Pool or Damage.

All these effects persist for 1 hour, at which point the Nemissary may spend a further 3 Anima to continue the effect. Each subsequent hour the cost must be paid again. If at any point the Nemissary chooses not to or cannot pay this cost, the effect will come to an end. Once this happens all the Brood under the Nemissary's command will reassemble themselves into new packs and/or hordes as appropriate.

The Limits of Flesh

There's a limit to how much the flesh can be distorted before the results are detrimental. Normal, naturally-living creatures can sustain 3 Enhancements without complications. After this point, any modifications no matter how careful become painfully obvious, mutating the unfortunate creature in extremely unpleasant ways.

This continues until the creature receives more than 6 Enhancements; at which point their body collapses under the strain and they die in agony within a few minutes unless the Enhancements are removed.

Unlike normal living creatures, the Broodspawn and Nemissaries can sustain more modifications to their form without ill effect. They can safely possess up to their Creed or Synergy +2 in Enhancements before they begin to show obvious signs of mutation. Furthermore, they are only in danger if they possess more than 5+ their Creed or Synergy in Enhancements.

When a Nemissary or Broodspawn passes this upper limit, they are wracked with agony and are considered to be under the effects of a Critical Wound for the purposes of Wound Penalties until their own natural Regeneration removes the offending Enhancements, bringing the total back below the danger threshold. Due to the nature of this penalty, effects which would cause a character to ignore Wound Penalties do not negate this effect regardless of the wording of the power or effect.

Song of Flesh

The Song of Flesh grants a Nemissary the most fine control over their own form, giving them the option to change their body in subtle or horrific ways; not to mention the ability to refine the flesh of others and eventually even birth new monstrosities from their own flesh.

Flesh Rank I

Creeping Flesh

The first of many steps in true transformation, the Nemissary learns to alter their own form in ways both subtle and overt. Through it, the Nemissary can potentially duplicate the appearance of others or even give them the outward appearance of one of the Broodspawn, and in extreme cases distort their body to slip through even the tightest restraints and confinements. Either way, this is a small but potent tool in the Nemissary's arsenal.

Standard Action

Overt, Non-Combat

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: Any.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (0).

Effect: The character alters their form in various subtle ways, allowing them to change hair and eye colour and basic facial structure, or alternatively allows them to escape almost all conventional restraints, and to squeeze through any space no smaller than the Nemissary's head.

These basic changes don't allow the character to perfectly duplicate another human being but they certainly make disguise and subterfuge much easier, decreasing or increasing the Difficulty of such attempts where appropriate by 1.

Example: *A character is attempting to move without being detected through a busy crowd. In this instance, since the character is opposed by their pursuers, the GM increases the Difficulty of the character's pursuer's attempts to find him by 1.*

In another example, a Nemissary is attempting to put a bereaved widow at ease and decides to make themselves appear more friendly and less intimidating, thus reducing the Difficulty to console her by 1.

Outcome: Points of Outcome may be spent on this power to generate more convincing or extreme results.

- **1 point:** Allows the character to change their age by approximately 10 years, or 1 year for ages below 18.
- **2 points:** Allows the character to change their gender, though this is a visual change only and does not make the character sexually functional as their new gender.
- **3 Points:** Allows the character to change into a physically perfect copy of someone they are currently studying intensely or have Blood Synergy with. This disguise does copy scent and voice to an extent, but the character must still convincingly impersonate the target's mannerisms and patterns of speech for this disguise to function properly. Mechanically, it makes the Difficulty to detect the character increase by 3. This does not stack with the basic benefit provided with the power.
- **1 Point:** Allows the character to physically appear as a Broodspawn. This does not fool other Broodspawn but will fool most humans and Nemissaries that are not relying on the Song of the Brood.

Restore Flesh

All Nemissaries heal at an accelerated rate, but with this power the character can heal blindingly quickly, recovering from wounds that would kill mortals in minutes or, in extreme cases, before the would-be assailant can even reload their gun.

Sustained or Minor Action

Shaping, Visceral.

Cost: 1 Light Anima.

Use: Self

Pool: Body/Resolve (0 when Standard Action or 2 when Minor Action)

Effect: Success allows the character to immediately recover from 1 Injured Wound. Unlike normal regeneration or a Nemissary's natural healing, this power may be used to regenerate Impaling Wounds but still has no effect on Baleful Wounds.

Outcome: Points of Outcome may enhance this power in the following ways;

- **1 or more points:** Each point of Outcome spent in this way allows the Nemissary to recover from one additional Injured Wound.
- **1 or 3 points:** Spending a point of Outcome in this way means that the Wounds recovered due to the use of this power may be of the Injured or Mauled type. For a further 2 points of Outcome the Nemissary may recover from Injured, Mauled or Critical Wounds using this power.
- **1 point:** Healing generated by this power is ignored for the purposes of removing Enhancements.

Enhance the Coil

All Nemissaries can enhance their physical capabilities to some extent but the process is inefficient. With this Arietta, the Nemissary's reverses this trend, making the process more efficient and further improving the extent to which their attributes may be improved.

Permanent Effect

Effect: When spending Anima to boost Body or Prowess, the total cost of Anima used in this way over one Round is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1 Anima in total. Additionally, the maximum to which these traits may be raised is 1 greater.

Example: *A character with a Body of 3 would normally pay a total of 3 Anima to increase that trait by 2 ranks to a total of 5 ranks for one Scene. With this power, he would only have to pay 2 Anima to do so. Alternatively if he chose to increase both Body and Prowess by 2, the total cost would be 5 Anima, as opposed to 6.*

Note: *This power and its greater versions are most efficient when used slowly over multiple rounds as the cost for the Nemissary raising their stats to their maximum potential can be offset greatly in this way.*

Rend Flesh

The power to change is also the power to destroy. Rather than concentrating on subtle manipulation, the Nemissary simply seeks to rend and tear. By practicing these techniques, the Nemissary enhances their unarmed capabilities so that their unarmed strikes inflict terrible injuries upon their opponents, twisting their flesh into a horrific visage and greatly slowing the regeneration of their enemies.

Enhance Action

Close Combat, Spite, Visceral

Cost: 1 Dark Anima, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Enhance 1 unarmed Close Combat attack.

Effect: Damage is increased by 1 and if any wounds are caused by the attack, the Nemissary may choose to forgo inflicting them to apply a number of special Enhancements onto the target based on the highest Wound they would have inflicted.

Replacing an Injured Wound creates 1 Enhancement, a Mauled Wound creates 2 Enhancements, and a Critical Wound creates 3 Enhancements. These points are cumulative for each Wound that would otherwise have been caused by the attack.

These Enhancements provide no positive effect but instead impose a cumulative -1 Pool penalty on Social Actions the victim attempts, and to attempts at medical aid directed at the victim, due to the horrific warping of their flesh.

The maximum number of effective Enhancements that can be inflicted on a character through the use of this power is equal to the user's permanent Creed. It's important to remember that despite being purely negative in effect these Enhancements still cause complications regarding Nemissaries and the regeneration of Health, just like any other Enhancement.

Also, mortal creatures can succumb to the Limits of Flesh through this power, being killed as normal if they suffer a total of 7 or more Enhancements as described in the sidebar on page XX.

Flesh Rank II

Quicksilver Flesh

Building upon his mastery of Enhance the Coil, the Nemissary further strengthens his abilities, reducing the cost in Anima to increase his abilities still further and taking one step closer to perfection.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Enhance the Coil*.

Effect: The Nemissary may now apply the benefits of *Enhance the Coil* to raising their Passion and Conviction.

Additionally, the Nemissary changes the cost reduction to Anima provided by *Enhance the Coil* to 2 points instead of 1.

Shape Flesh

No longer limited to simply altering his own flesh, the Nemissary may control and shape the flesh and form of others. With this Arietta, he can rebuild life into new and better shapes, healing injuries or condemning that life to a twisted existence until the end of its days.

Sustained Action, 1 hour

Non-Combat, Visceral

Cost: 1 Anima per desired Enhancement point as an initial cost, 1 Anima for each subsequent roll.

Use: Any 1 willing or restrained target.

Pool: Prowess/Medicine or Keening (0, or 2 if the target is unwilling but otherwise restrained).

Threshold: Desired number of Enhancements × 3.

Effect: Success creates the desired Enhancements in the target or heals a number of Wounds equal to the number of Enhancements which would otherwise be created. Any Enhancements gained are permanent unless some effect otherwise removes them.

Unless the character used the Medicine skill with this power when treating a human, the changes made to that person's body will eventually kill them slowly and painfully over the course of several months as the mutations develop into a vicious form of cancer.

Options: None.

Note: *Remember that there is a limit to how many Enhancements any individual can bear and bear in mind the problems associated with Regenerating Enhancements.*

Refine Self

No longer constrained to basic alterations of appearance, a Nemissary with this Arietta can grant sweeping and massive alterations to their form, growing wings, talons and armour and otherwise massively strengthening their body. These changes are disturbing to behold, emerging in twisted lumps and bubbling from the Nemissary's flesh before settling into their final forms.

Sustained Action, 1 minute

Visceral

Cost: 1 Anima per roll.

Use: Self.

Pool: Conviction/Keening or Medicine (0).

Threshold: Desired number of Enhancements × 3.

Effect: Success grants the desired number of Enhancements to the character.

Options: By increasing the Difficulty to 2, the Nemissary may reduce the time required for each roll to 1 Round.

Note: *Remember that there is a limit to how many Enhancements any individual can bear and bear in mind the problems associated with Regenerating Enhancements.*

The Horror Within

A dubious blessing indeed, this power brings a Nemissary closer to their Hollow than most would consider sane. Through it, their Hollow's physical traits and power are drawn closer to the surface, granting the Nemissary immense temporary strength but at a dangerous cost to the soul.

Visually, the Nemissary also takes on an appearance similar to their Hollow; normally their skin becomes paler and their hair darker, and they take on the disturbing predatory aspects common to the Brood.

Minor Action

Overt, Spite

Cost: Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (3 - Permanent Spite, Minimum of 1).

Effect: Success causes the character to both acquire their Hollow's traits and substitute their permanent Creed with their permanent Spite, for the duration of 1 Scene. For more information on Hollow traits, see page 229 in the Nemissary chapter.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent to increase the duration by 1 Scene per point of Outcome.

Flesh Rank III

Homunculus

This disturbing ability allows the Nemissary to birth new life by shedding their own twisted flesh. These malevolent little creatures are a form of Broodspawn; birthed from the Nemissary's own flesh the creature is bound to their will and shaped as the Nemissary chooses it.

Sustained Action, 1 hour

Bond, Brood, Visceral

Cost: Variable; 1 Light Anima and 1 Injured Wound per roll.

Use: Self.

Pool: Body/Resolve (Difficulty based on size of intended creature).

- **1:** Tiny
- **0**: Small
- **1**: Normal
- **2:** Large
- **4:** Huge.

Threshold: Based on the size of the intended creature and may be modified by the desired effect. Base Thresholds are as follows:

- **3:** Tiny
- **6:** Small
- **9:** Normal
- **18:** Large
- **54:** Huge

Effect: Success creates a stable Broodspawn of Type 1 or greater, that is utterly under the creator's control as per *Direct the Pack*. Only one creature can be controlled in this way and making a second Homunculus automatically frees the original from the caster's control, and it becomes a Broodspawn in all normal respects.

The caster can also at any point choose to relinquish control of this creature, or alternatively if they possess the power *Direct the Pack*, they can add their creations directly to their controlled Broodspawn, so long as they don't violate the normal limits for that power.

Living things created through the use of this power should possess stat-lines in accordance with a natural animal of the relevant size category and then should be evolved as per the rules for a Broodspawn in any way the character sees fit, so that they possess a final Synergy no greater than half the character's permanent Creed rounded down.

By increasing the Difficulty of this power, the character can improve the Synergy of the creature by 1 for each corresponding increase in Difficulty. This final Synergy may not exceed the creator's own permanent Creed.

Grace of the Undying

As the Nemissary's understanding of their own body deepens, it becomes possible to improve not just the efficiency of flesh and bone but the powers of the mind as well.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Enhance the Coil.*

Effect: The Nemissary may now apply the benefits of *Enhance the Coil* to raising their Reason and Cunning.

Additionally, the Nemissary changes the cost reduction to Anima provided by *Enhance the Coil* to 2 points instead of 1.

Note: *If both this Song Enhancement and the Song Enhancement* Quicksilver Flesh *are possessed, then the total cost of raising Attributes through Anima will be reduced by 3 each Round.*

Dark Restoration

All Nemissaries heal quickly, but for most the Brood's almost violent regrowth is beyond their capabilities; not so for the masters of Flesh who are willing to draw upon their Hollow's strength. With this Arietta the Nemissary's regenerative abilities match and even potentially exceed those of the Brood.

Standard Action

Innate, Spite, Visceral

Cost: 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: For the duration of the Scene, the Nemissary's Regeneration changes from Type 1 to Type 2. This Regeneration may still be suppressed as normal by spending a Focus point.

Impossible Form

Building upon the mastery inherent to *Refine Self*, the Nemissary enhances their body so that it may sustain ever more "improvements" before succumbing.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: *Refine Self.*

Effect: When adding Enhancements to themselves, the total number of Enhancements which may be safely added is increased by 4 and the Nemissary may now stack Enhancements twice.

Flesh Rank IV

Flesh Unrestrained

As the Nemissary's power grows, they can combine the knowledge of both *Enhance the Coil* and *Refine Self* to alter the entire process of twisting their own flesh so that it occurs in the blink of an eye.

Through this Arietta, the Nemissary can change their form not just to suit the needs to come but at a moment's notice to defend against specific threats or to rebalance their capabilities in an instant.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Enhance the Coil*, *Refine Self.*

Effect: The Nemissary alters the Arietta *Refine Self* in several ways. First, the Nemissary may stack Enhancements one additional time. This stacks with the effects of the *Impossible Form* Song Enhancement, allowing the Nemissary to stack an individual Enhancement up to 3 times if they also possess that Arietta.

It also speeds up the entire process of shape changing or allocating Enhancements so they may occur in the space of a single Free Action for an additional cost of 3 Anima. For a further additional cost of 1 Focus the Nemissary may use this Free Action as a Response; in which case the power is also considered to have the **Response** keyword.

Note: *This means that by paying the full cost of this power a Nemissary can change shape at pretty much any point they like without any meaningful amount of time taking place. This means that they could grow wings in response to falling, generate health levels as a response to being damaged, or increase Body as a response to successfully landing a blow in close combat.*

Under no circumstances may a Nemissary use this change of type to interact with another power or ability. For instance, if a Quality or Power were to grant the Nemissary a reduction in cost for taking a Free Action or a Response, it would not be applicable to this power, as the original power has never actually changed from being a Sustained Action.

Thousand Faces

Greatly expanding upon the capabilities of "Creeping Flesh", the Nemissary can now not only alter relatively superficial things, but totally change their appearance, altering even gender or species if necessary.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Creeping Flesh*, *Homunculus*.

Effect: This power alters power *Creeping Flesh* so that the Nemissary may make radical changes in body size and shape. The use of *Creeping Flesh* gains 3 Free Outcome, and by spending 3 Outcome, the Nemissary may change their shape into that of a natural animal. Doing so changes the character in numerous ways;

- The Nemissary replaces their Body attribute with that of the animal in question.

- The Nemissary averages their Prowess with that of the animal.
- The Nemissary gains any unique Qualities available to the animal, such as Flight, Claws or Toughened Hide.

The Nemissary's mind remains unchanged and the transformation is a purely physical one. The Nemissary can only change into the animal as the same relative size as their self, unless additional points of Outcome are used to change the Nemissary's size; in which case they may assume any animal as appropriate.

CONSUME

Certainly one of the most horrifying powers inherent to the Song of Flesh, the *Consume* Arietta enables the Nemissary to devour the flesh of others in moments by tearing off great sections of his enemies forms, literally absorbing the flesh and adding it to his own.

Song Enhancement

Requirements: *Rend Flesh*.

Effect: The Arietta *Rend Flesh* is enhanced so it now has a total Damage increase of +2. The user may also pay a cost of 1 Dark Anima. If they do so, each Wound inflicted upon a target immediately heals a Wound of the corresponding type for the user. Damage types are ignored for the purposes of this power and Wounds restored as a result of it are bound by the same limitations as Regeneration, meaning that Impaling and Baleful Damage cannot be healed through this effect.

FLESH RANK V

GREATER REGENERATION

Although fleeting, a Nemissary with this Arietta can massively increase their ability to regenerate. Combined with other powers, this can make the Nemissary almost impossible to kill through conventional means.

Minor Action

Visceral

Cost: 1 Light Anima.

Use: Any.

Pool: None.

Effect: Until the Nemissary's next turn, their Regeneration functions as if it was 1 category better. This power may explicitly stack with other effects which provide the Nemissary with Regeneration. In the event that the Nemissary already possesses Type 3 Regeneration, this power has no further effect.

Outcome: None.

ARSENAL OF FLESH

In a desperate situation, the Nemissary is capable of creating a number of Enhancements above and beyond what their body is capable of. These new Enhancements burst out of their flesh in a spectacular display of gore. Existing for a moment as tangled strands of knotted flesh, these Enhancements quickly take the shape the Nemissary desires.

Minor Action

Shaping, Visceral

Cost: 3 Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary may reflexively create a number of Innate Enhancements equal to their permanent Creed. Each of these Enhancements may be stacked with existing Innate Enhancements up to a maximum of the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

These effective Enhancements persist only until the Nemissary's next turn. If this power is used again, the benefits are replaced with a new set of Innate Enhancements chosen by the Nemissary.

Mother of Monsters

Through constant experimentation, a Nemissary with this Arietta has gained the ability to create Homunculi with far greater ease. With it, both the speed and ease of the process is increased massively, and used correctly it allows a Nemissary to birth a small army of hideous offspring.

Song Enhancement

Requirement: *Homunculus*.

Effect: The Nemissary lowers the Difficulty on all rolls to use the *Homunculus* Arietta by 1 to a minimum of 0, divides the Threshold required by 3 (rounding down), and changes the cost of that power so that it no longer requires a Nemissary to take Wounds as part of its cost.

Flesh Rank VI

Beyond Life

The Nemissary reaches the pinnacle of perfection; a being rivalled only perhaps by the Reapers or the ancient gods. With this power, he can stride the world like a Titan, his lightest touch rending the flesh of his opponents and birthing Broodspawn from their twisting remains.

More disturbing still, this power builds upon and combines with many of the Nemissary's other capabilities, removing his weaknesses and making him in a very real sense all but invincible.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary's Unarmed attacks are permanently enhanced, gaining the following effects;. All the listed effects explicitly stack with all other powers from the Song of Flesh;

- +1 Pool. This may explicitly stack with other effects or powers.
- The Nemissary's Unarmed attacks ignore any Resilience or Armour Points derived from the use of Song of Flesh Arietta.
- The Nemissary's Unarmed attacks gain the **Epic** keyword.
- For every Wound inflicted, the user may recover one of their own Wounds of an equal or lesser type.
- After the Nemissary has inflicted Wounds upon a target and regenerated as a result of this (see above), the Wounds the target sustained are doubled.

Furthermore, if a target is killed by the use of this power the Nemissary may reflexively and without cost transform that target into a Broodspawn as per the *Homunculus* power with the following modifications:

- All costs are ignored.
- All Difficulties and Thresholds are ignored.
- The new Homunculus must be the same size as the Nemissary's victim.
- The number of effective Successes rolled is equal to the number of Wounds suffered by the target after doubling has been taken into account (see above). In this unique circumstance, if the target would suffer more Wounds than they have available on their Wound track then these **are** counted towards the total for the purposes of this power.

Beyond Death

The first lesson every Nemissary learns is that death is not the end. Powerful and resilient, Nemissaries are difficult creatures to bring down, but when they are they are forced once again to the Judgement of the Shards.

Not so for those Nemissaries who have mastered the Song of Flesh and placed themselves beyond petty death. They are capable at the moment of defeat to shift their consciousness, allowing the Hollow to emerge in all its terrible glory. In doing so, their wounds are healed and their death abated.

More terrifying still, even the defeat of the Hollow isn't the end. The Nemissary can once again return to life, continuing a cycle which will end either in the destruction of their soul or that of their enemies.

Permanent Effect

Effect: If at any point the Nemissary would suffer a fatal blow, or otherwise is the victim of an effect that would kill them, they may choose instead of suffering the normal consequences of death to immediately pay a cost of 2 temporary Spite and allow their Hollow to take dominance, immediately regenerating a number of wounds equal to their permanent Spite.

If while the Hollow is in control of the character they are again killed, the player may choose to pay a cost of 1 temporary Spite which may not be modified in any way, ending the Hollow's dominance and regenerating a number of Wounds equal to their permanent Creed.

Both of these effects are counted as **Epic** for the purposes of resisting other powers. So long as the character's soul remains intact, this process can continue indefinitely and the character is essentially invulnerable to conventional harm.

Song of Will

These powers are amongst the strangest and most subtle possessed by Nemissaries, and originate primarily with the strengthening of the Nemissary's soul during their Second Breath.

The Song of Will can be used to play with the minds of others, or to alter a Nemissary's own perceptions. Its combat applications, though few, are fearsome, but its greatest strength lies in its ability to grant the Nemissary unique insights. There are few more effective spies or investigators in the world than the masters of the Song of Will.

Will Rank 1

Open The Echo Eye

Through the use of this Arietta, the Nemissary is made highly aware of many Songs, enabling them to automatically detect their use and potentially work out both their location and the nature of the power in question.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary is automatically aware when any target uses an Arietta with the **Echo** keyword. This does not convey the location of the user; only that an entity used such a power, unless the character makes use of the second ability below. The range of this ability is 1 mile for every point of the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

Minor Action

Echo, Response

Cost: 1 Anima of the same type as the power detected.

Use: In response to an Arietta with the **Response** keyword being used.

Pool: Cunning/Perception (4 - Rank of the Arietta detected).

Effect: The Nemissary locates the specific location of the entity using Arietta that was detected, and what type of supernatural creature that entity is.

Outcome: Outcome on this power may be spent in various ways;

- **1 point:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **1 point:** Detect the specific power used.
- **2 points:** Remove the Anima cost associated with this power.

Whisper of Vice

Nemissaries can be insightful creatures and their ability to perceive Anima allows them to read others easily. With this Arietta, they take this awareness a step further, enabling them to see the darkness in other people's souls and with effort to fan the embers of temptation into destructive and overriding impulses.

Standard Action

Echo

Cost: 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Any single living, non-Brood target.

Pool: Passion/Awareness (Target's Conviction - 1).

Effect: The Nemissary becomes aware of the target's Motivations which can reasonably be ascribed to negative emotions (such as Hate, Fear, Lust and so on). They may then choose to either cause one of these Motivations to become an Obsessive Motivation. Alternatively they can create a new temporary Motivation with a negative Foundation and Drive of their choosing, though a second use of *Whisper of Vice* would be required to make this new Motivation Obsessive. In either case, these powers persist for 1 week in the case of a human, or 1 hour in the case of Nemissaries.

Animals can be affected by this power as well but as they do not have Motivations they instead become dangerously aggressive when affected by this power, and in this case the power persists for 1 day.

In all cases, the Difficulty for the target to be affected by another character's use of *Whisper of Virtue* or *Whisper of Vice* is increased by the original user's Permanent Creed.

Outcome: The duration of this power may be multiplied by the total 1 + the Outcome spent.

Stolen Moments

Through this Arietta, the Nemissary can alter their perception of time, making them almost unbeatable in terms of reaction speeds.

Enhance Action
Echo

Cost: 1 or more Anima.

Use: Enhance 1 Initiative check.

Effect: When rolling Initiative, the Nemissary may choose to spend Anima to improve their Initiative Outcome by 1 per point of Anima. Anima spent in this way is recorded secretly and revealed when all other characters have rolled Initiative.

Enhance Action
Echo, Non-Combat

Cost: 1 Anima.

Use: Enhance one non-physical action based on visual acuity.

Effect: The Nemissary slows the rate at which they perceive the passage of time making visual tasks much easier. This can allow the Nemissary to real a great deal of information quickly, or make them a supernaturally capable sniper, thus reducing the Difficulty of such tasks by the Nemissary's Creed.

Note: *This power only helps the Nemissary in situations where very little strenuous physical activity is required. Whilst sniping or target shooting could benefit from this power, a gun battle under normal combat conditions could not; neither does close combat.*

Hollow Sight

By tuning into the whispers of his Hollow, a Nemissary gains insight into the Hollows of others. Enhanced in this way, he can potentially detect a great deal of information about Nemissaries in his vicinity.

Standard Action
Echo, Spite

Cost: Risk 1 Spite.

Use: One other individual.

Pool: Passion/Keening (Target's Conviction - 1).

Effect: Success grants knowledge of whether the target is a Nemissary or not, by detecting whether or not they have a Spite trait and what its Permanent rating is.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent to enhance this power in various ways:

- **1 point:** Identify the target's Temporary Spite rating.
- **1 point:** Identify the target's Hollow Nature.
- **1 point:** Send a short and entirely silent mental message to the target's Hollow.
- **1 point:** Remove the Echo keyword from this power for this use.

Will Rank II

Transmute

As they proceed on the road to mastery of their own minds, they learn to adjust the subtle power of Anima within themselves. For a moment's concentration, they can transmute one type of polarised Anima into another.

Minor Action
Echo

Cost: 1 Focus, 1 or more Light or Dark Anima.

Use: Any.

Pool: None.

Effect: Anima spent on this Arietta is converted into its opposing type; Light Anima becomes Dark Anima and vice versa.

Whisper of Virtue

Cousin to Whisper of Vice, this power functions in a similar way. Rather than laying bare a person's base instincts and desires, it enables the Nemissary to detect and then expand upon or impose the better parts of human nature.

Standard Action
Echo

Cost: 1 Light Anima.

Use: Any single living, non-Brood target.

Pool: Passion/Perception (Target's Conviction - 2).

Effect: The Nemissary becomes aware of all Motivations held by the target. They may then choose to enhance one of these Motivations which must be at least reasonably positive in some respect (so, Love, Duty, Hope, Pride) so that the target gains a point of Focus for working towards its Foundation, or 2 points when working towards the Motivation's Drive.

Alternatively, the Nemissary can create a new temporary Motivation for a character that must again be reasonably positive in the interpretation. In either case, the effects persist for 1 month, or 1 week in the case of Nemissaries.

Nemissaries are affected differently from humans by this power, and instead of gaining Focus from their Enhanced Motivations, they gain a point of Anima where they would have otherwise gained extra Focus from the use of this power.

Animals are also affected by this power but again without Motivations they are affected differently, becoming placid and receptive to training, giving +2 Pool to peaceful interactions with them. This power does not suppress the animal's natural instincts, but does incline them to a more benevolent stance. Predators will still hunt to feed themselves, and all animals will still defend themselves and their young to the last, but animals under the effect of this power, will generally not initiate conflict unless hunger or necessity compels them to do so. In the case of an animal, this power persists for 1 week.

In all cases, whilst under the effects of this Arietta, the Difficulty to use either *Whisper of Virtue* or *Whisper of Vice* on the target is increased by the original user's permanent Creed. Any successful use of such a power will replace and negate the effects of this Arietta.

Outcome: Outcome may be used to multiply the duration by 1+ the Outcome spent.

Shattered Reflections

By temporarily breaking his own mind, the Nemissary shifts his consciousness somewhere into the place between wakefulness and dreams. This experience, whilst traumatic, can grant the Nemissary deep insight into the troubles that vex him.

Additionally, his curiously distorted perspective causes him to view the world differently when violence is brought against him. This altered view allows him to view the situation from many perspectives at once, ultimately granting him a profound benefit in combat.

Minor Action

Echo, Spite, Void

Cost: 1 Focus, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Self.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (4 - Permanent Spite, to a minimum of 1).

Effect: For the duration of 1 scene, the Nemissary gains a strange insight into problems vexing them. The storyteller should offer a number of possible solutions to the Nemissary's current problems up to the Outcome of the roll. If there are less valid solutions than Outcome, additional details should be given instead.

In addition, whilst this power is active, the Nemissary gains several benefits in a combat situation. They gain 3 automatic Successes on Initiative checks, they are immune to surprise, and they gain a generic +1 Pool to all combat actions.

Outcome: This power persists for 1 additional hour per point of Outcome.

Dual Soul

The first step in a long road, this power brings the Nemissary into a strange accord with their Hollows. By bowing to its will in some extent, the Nemissary is able to create a new driving goal shared by both the Nemissary and the Hollow.

Rather than refreshing the Nemissary's own will, this new mental anchor allows them to regenerate Anima and ultimately once fulfilled abate his Spite.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary and their Hollow work together to create a new Motivation, over which the GM has final say. The foundation of this Motivation functions normally in all respects, but the Motivation does not count towards the character's normal limit.

The Drive of this Motivation functions differently from normal. Instead of regaining Focus, the Nemissary instead regains 3 points of Anima. In addition, if the Nemissary completes the Drive associated with this Motivation, they may decrease their Temporary Spite by 1, and then create a new Drive as normal, though the Hollow must also agree to the new Drive.

Will Rank III

Command the Heart

To know a thing is to command that thing; never was it more true than with this Arietta. Through a simple glance and a momentary manifestation of the Nemissary's Hollow, they can dominate the thoughts and actions of a human being, binding them completely and totally to their will.

Standard Action

Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Dark Anima.

Use: Any 1 normal human.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (Target's Conviction - 1)

Effect: The target is brought under the power of the Nemissary. Any commands the Nemissary gives during that time is treated as a Obsessive Motivation, and the target may under no circumstances attack the Nemissary, or directly work towards harming them. This state persists for 1 day.

In addition, a target of this power loses 1 Conviction per day. When this power ends the target will recover 1 point of Conviction per month until they return to their normal rating. If their Conviction drops to 0 however, the target suffers brain-death, becoming Broodspawn within minutes.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome extends the duration of this power for 1 day.

Blissful Slumber

The Nemissary's mastery of Anima has increased to the degree where they can heal to some extent their own wounded soul, enabling them to once again replenish Anima as if they were truly alive.

Permanent Effect

Effect: In addition to their other means of Feeding, the Nemissary now regenerates one half of their total Neutral Anima pool per night of rest.

Defy the Eye of Night

For all their imposing mystery and might, the Shards are not beyond the power of a Nemissary with this Arietta. With it, the Nemissary is potentially capable of temporarily forcing the Shard into dormancy, preventing it from exercising its powers.

Standard Action

Echo, Epic, Spite

Cost: 1 Spite, Risk 1 Spite.

Use: Any 1 Shard within both line of sight and 1 mile.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (Target Shard's Rank).

Effect: The Shard becomes dormant and unable to take any action, even ones normally useable while dormant for 1 day.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome increases the duration of this power for 1 day.

Black Hunger Awoken

Every Nemissary feels the need to feed, a hunger they can never satisfy. With this Arietta, the Nemissary projects that hunger outwards allowing them to consume the energies released by death in those around him.

Permanent Effect

Effect: Whenever a mortal target dies within the Nemissary's permanent Creed × 10 in metres, they may absorb Anima from that target.

For each target that dies, the Nemissary claims 1 Dark Anima, and if that target possessed an Awakened Anima Pool, the Nemissary may also claim up to their Conviction + permanent Creed in points of Dark Anima out of any remaining in the target.

In Combat, this absorption of Anima occurs at the end of a turn and is applied cumulatively for each target which died during that turn. In the case of multiple characters possessing this ability, the total Dark Anima for a turn is split between them with any remainder being lost.

Example: *Two Nemissaries each with this ability are facing one another. They each have a number of mortal assistants with them, three of whom die in the course of one turn. At the end of that turn, both Nemissaries would claim 1 Dark Anima, and the remaining point would be lost.*

If in the same situation, a third Nemissary had been present who also happened to die during that round and he had 3 Dark Anima remaining in his body, the two other Nemissaries would be able to claim a further 2 Dark Anima each.

This is because there is 4 Dark Anima from the 4 deaths, and 3 Dark Anima up for grabs from the Nemissary's Anima pool for a total of 7 Anima. Split evenly, this equates to 3 each, with 1 remainder which is lost.

In a situation where two Nemissaries are facing one another and one Nemissary can no longer absorb any more Anima but there are still points remaining, any left is split between any Nemissaries capable of absorbing more Anima.

Example: *In the unlikely situation that two Nemissaries are attempting to absorb 18 Anima between them, and the first Nemissary has a Conviction + Creed of 5, and the second a Conviction + Creed of 9, the first 10 points would be split evenly with 5 going to each Nemissary, and the remaining 8 would be given directly to the second Nemissary, though he can still only absorb a total of 9 points, so the last 4 points would be wasted.*

Will Rank IV

Channel Anima

With this level of mastery, the Nemissary gains not just the ability to spend Anima but to observe its flow, twist it and multiply its energies, allowing them to expend a quantity of Anima and multiply it, distributing it amongst their allies.

As the Nemissary does this, a faint light manifests in the air between their fingers, splitting into small strands visible even to mortals. These strands shift through the air until they find their targets and pass into their bodies.

Minor Action

Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Focus, 1 or more Anima .

Use: Self.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary spends 1 or more Anima and a number of targets equal to their Permanent Creed each receive a number of points of Anima equal to the Anima the Nemissary spent -1.

This Anima is of the same type – either Light, Dark or Neutral – as what was spent to activate this power, and no target may gain Anima through the use of this ability more than once per Scene; neither may this bonus Anima take a character above their normal Anima limits.

Pandemonium

No subtle tool, the Arietta *Pandemonium* inflicts outright madness upon an area, quickly dissolving a community into a collection of madmen ruled by their base desires.

Standard Action

Echo

Cost: 7 Dark Anima.

Use: Self.

Pool: Passion/Keening (0).

Effect: Every mortal target within 1 mile loses their grip on sanity and begins to act upon the Foundations of their Motivations without regard for consequences. In some targets this may be relatively benign but Negative emotions always take preference to Positive ones, and characters will begin to act aggressively on any violent impulses they have.

These effects persist for 1 hour, or until all the affected individuals are dead – whichever comes first.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent in various ways to enhance this power:

- **1 point:** Increase the range of this power by 1 mile.
- **1 point:** Increase the duration of this power by 1 hour.
- **3 points:** Render the effects of this power permanent unless countered by an appropriate ability with the **Epic** keyword.
- **2 points:** Remove the "Echo" keyword from this power.

Call Forth the Hollow

This terrifying and dangerous Arietta is a double-edged sword, allowing a Nemissary to call forth the Hollow of another, at great risk to their own soul, forcing the unlucky target to be the victim of their Hollow.

Standard Action

Echo, Spite

Cost: 1 Spite, Risk 2 Spite.

Use: 1 other Nemissary within line of sight.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (Opponent's Conviction + permanent Creed - permanent Spite).

Effect: The target's Hollow immediately becomes dominant for 1 Scene.

Outcome: Outcome may be spent to enhance this power in numerous ways;

- **3 points:** Remove the **Echo** keyword from this power.
- **2 points:** Increase the length of time the Hollow remains dominant by 1 Scene.
- **1 point:** Pay an additional cost of 1 temporary Spite to cause the target to gain 2 points of temporary Spite.

Will Rank V

Twin Minds

With this Arietta, the Nemissary is able to create a fundamental shift in the balance with their Hollow. No longer necessarily an antagonistic relationship, the Nemissary is capable of entering into a limited partnership with the Hollow, drawing upon its strength and abating its anger, but at the cost of their own actions to be dictated by the Hollow.

Minor Action

Echo, Response, Spite

Cost: None, or 1 Focus (see below).

Use: Self, or the Nemissary is targeted by an Arietta which uses that Nemissary's Conviction to set its Difficulty.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary either increases the Difficulty of the intended action against them or raises their Permanent Creed for working out an effective defence by a number of points equal to their permanent Spite. The Nemissary must then allow their Hollow temporary control as per the second effect of this power below.

Permanent Effect

Effect: At any point the Nemissary may voluntarily allow the Hollow to take control, albeit with certain restrictions imposed upon its behaviour. Beginning on the Nemissary's next action, the Hollow takes control of the character, but will act in a calm and controlled manner following the character's basic instructions for the remainder of the scene.

A Hollow given dominance in this way may act in a far more callous way than the character normally would and may certainly try to advance its own agenda, but it cannot directly disobey the character themselves, and may be forced back into dormancy if the player voluntarily spends a point of Focus.

If this power is used whilst the Hollow is dominant then the length of time that the Hollow is in control is increased from 1 Scene to a number of hours equal to the Nemissary's permanent Spite.

Further uses of this power do not increase the duration of the Hollow's control any further, but do lower the defensive benefits by 1 for each instance after the second. Finally, under no circumstances may the Hollow initiate the use of this power.

Gift of Chronos

With this level of mastery, the Nemissary can move beyond simple differences of perception and turn their vision outwards into a true change in the world. With enough willpower the Nemissary is capable of altering the flow of time about themselves, allowing them to move at incredible speeds.

This ability can even be pushed still further, enabling the Nemissary to quite literally flicker from point to point; albeit at a terrible cost to the Nemissary's sense of self.

Enhance Action

Echo, Overt

Cost: 1 Focus.

Use: Enhance any action in which the Nemissary is about to incur multiple action penalties.

Effect: The Nemissary reduces their multiple action penalties for this Round by an amount equal to their permanent Creed.

Free Action

Echo, Overt, Response

Cost: Special.

Use: Self, the Nemissary has 1 or more Motivations left to Invoke.

Pool: None.

Effect: The Nemissary temporarily sacrifices one of their Motivations and a permanent point of Conviction. This loss of Conviction affects Dice Pools generated and Difficulties derived from Conviction but does not affect a character's Derived Traits.

The character then lowers all multiple action penalties by their permanent Creed. They also multiply their Threat by their permanent Creed and gain 1 Automatic Success that may be explicitly stacked with other Song effects which generate Automatic Successes.

This power persists for 1 Scene. At this point, a Nemissary may choose to pay 1 Focus to extend the effects for an additional Scene. This process continues until the Nemissary no longer wishes to or cannot pay Focus. Once this power's effects end and the Nemissary has had at least one night of uninterrupted sleep, the lost point of Conviction returns. The lost Motivation will return at the end of the current Story or after one month has passed, whichever is longer.

The Black Hunger Manifest

Despised even amongst the most morally dubious Nemissaries, *The Black Hunger Manifest* is a truly terrible power. With it, the Nemissary can annihilate what he can see, literally devouring the souls of his enemies and killing them without leaving a mark.

Visually this power is disturbing as tendrils of twisted black light emerge from the Nemissary, latching on to his victims and pulling their souls screaming from their bodies.

Standard Action

Echo, Overt, Spite, Void

Cost: 1 Focus, 1 Spite, Risk 1 Spite, 3 Dark Anima.

Use: Any 1 target with a Fate equal to or lower than the Nemissary's permanent Creed.

Pool: Conviction/Resolve (Opposed: Conviction/Resolve).

Effect: The target's soul is stripped from their body, killing them instantly. The user may also attempt to Devour the target soul in the same way as per the rules on page 238, and gain a +1 Automatic Success on their Conviction rolls to overcome the target.

Outcome: None.

Will Rank VI

Wisdom of Ages

By far the most subtle Arietta of the mighty, it nevertheless has immense utility, allowing the Nemissary to reach inside their own soul and massively improve their efficiency with skills they possess. Through this, the Nemissary can gain unmatched levels of ability.

Minor Action

Echo, Epic, Innate

Cost: 1 Focus, 3 Anima.

Use: Self, the Nemissary must not have already used this ability during the current Story.

Pool: Reason/Keening (1).

Effect: The Nemissary picks a single skill. That skill is enhanced so that all Successful dice roll up once. After this first roll up, 6s will explode as normal. Furthermore, if the Nemissary is using this skill and draws with an opponent in an opposed roll, they gain 1 Automatic Success after all other modifiers are considered, meaning that the Nemissary will win all ties against an opponent using the same skill. Also, all Actions a Nemissary undertakes whilst using that skill are considered to have the **Epic** keyword.

Finally, if the Nemissary chooses to enhance the Keening skill, all Difficulties for Ariettas from the Song of Will are reduced by its rank in the Skill. Also, all affected Arietta are considered to have the **Epic** keyword. Regardless of which skill is chosen, these effects persist for one Scene.

Outcome: Each point of Outcome may be used to choose an additional skill to be affected by this power.

I Defy

One of the mightiest powers in the possession of Nemissaries, this Arietta allows a Nemissary to quite literally unmake time, forcing events to roll backwards, undoing harm, death and defeat.

The effect can be seen for miles in every direction as light tears and reality strains under the onslaught of the Nemissaries power. Observers see events seemingly flow backwards inside the twisting bubble of energy, before it finally snaps and reality resumes. Those trapped inside can only watch helplessly as their victories are stolen from them and reality conforms to the whims of another.

Minor Action

Echo, Epic, Overt, Response, Spite, Void

Cost: 1 Focus, 1 Spite, 3 Anima.

Use: Special, see below.

Pool: None.

Effect: When this power is activated, the Nemissary negates and/or removes all damage and ongoing effects on their person which occurred during the current Turn or the one immediately preceding it. Characters do not forget that these events took place and will react accordingly.

Note: *This power will undo anything, including the death of the user, but can only reverse the effects as applies to the Nemissary themselves. It will stop them being obliterated by a nuclear weapon for example, but will not actually stop the nuke itself from detonating.*

Outcome: None.

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Chapter X

The Brood

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Unique Broodspawn Traits

Like Nemissaries, the Broodspawn introduce several new Traits to the game; specifically Synergy and Evolution.

Synergy

All Broodspawn possess a Synergy Trait. For them, it replaces their Fate and serves many of the same functions. Like a Nemissary's Creed, its impact runs far deeper than Fate would, and it influences almost every aspect about a Broodspawn's abilities.

Because of the animalistic nature of the Broodspawn, their Synergy has a profound impact on their abilities, helping to define both their mental Attributes and their Skills. In addition to this, it serves as a Broodspawn's ability to process Anima and is deeply linked with the process of Evolution.

Advancing Synergy

Though Synergy replaces Fate for the Brood, it does not advance like it and instead progresses as a result of a Broodspawn's evolution. The full rules for this are explained a little later on in this chapter. In brief, Broodspawn progress through six distinct stages of life with Synergy rising by 1 each time the Broodspawn passes into the next stage. As a result, the weakest newly risen Broodspawn always have a Synergy of 1 and the most powerful terrors slumbering beneath the waves have Synergies as high as 6.

Ambient Synergy

Synergy for the Brood also has a second component part known as Ambient Synergy. This occurs only when the Brood gather into **Packs** and **Hordes**, and is in a way similar to the relationship between Creed and Temporary Creed, representing the current strength of the Broodspawn in the vicinity.

Unusually for a Trait it isn't applied directly to individuals but exists as its name suggests in the environment, radiating out from each Broodspawn a variable distance based upon the overall Ambient Synergy present.

This provides numerous effects, the most basic of which is a Dice Pool bonus to all Broodspawn generating it. It also poses a risk to Nemissaries due to their vulnerability to this particular manifestation of the Broodsong but also allowing them to detect the Brood and affect them in turn with certain Arietta.

- **Ambient Synergy 1:** Radius of the highest permanent Synergy in the Pack × 10 in meters. Ambient Synergy of this level provides no bonus Pool.
- **Ambient Synergy 2:** 100m radius. +1 Pool.
- **Ambient Synergy 3:** 1km radius. +1 Pool.
- **Ambient Synergy 4:** 3km radius. +2 Pool.
- **Ambient Synergy 5:** 7km radius. +2 Pool.
- **Ambient Synergy 6:** 13km radius. +3 Pool.

The radius from Ambient Synergy also denotes the area in which a Nemissary can clearly hear the Broodsong even without the Keening Skill. With it, they can detect Ambient Synergy from much further away as described in the Traits Expanded chapter on page 155.

Packs: The most basic unit for the Broodspawn is a Pack. This can encompass up to a dozen individuals with varying Synergy ratings led by a single Broodspawn. This Broodspawn is known as the Pack Leader and, if the leader is of Synergy 3 or greater, the Pack gains a unique ability depending upon the evolution of the Leader. Regardless of the individual Synergies, the overall Ambient Synergy of such a group will always be 1.

These groups are fragile and can only sustain relatively small numbers. If such a pack grows to more than a dozen or so individuals, it will likely splinter. This is particularly true if more than one Broodspawn possesses the highest individual Synergy.

In these cases, the pack will often split in two with these two stronger Broodspawn taking their respective packs in different directions. This process often repeats itself on a larger scale as well, particularly when whole communities are destroyed by the Broodspawn. In these cases dozens of packs may be created, each of which disperses to pursue its own simplistic agenda.

Hordes: Hordes are where the Brood's true strength begins to show. They form when an active mind attempts to gather Broodspawn together. This can occur in a number of ways; the most common of which is when advancing Synergy causes a pack leader to gain enough intelligence to perceive the tactical value in greater numbers. This requires a Broodspawn to have a Synergy of at least 3 and is most common in the Alpha and Gamma strains, but not unheard of in other varieties of Broodspawn.

No matter how it occurs, when a group of Broodspawn deliberately wants to advance their Ambient Synergy it must approach others. It needs to reach out to other packs and create a hierarchy of pack leaders of varying synergies like a pyramid.

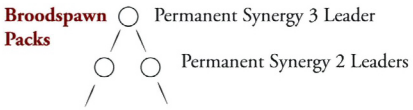
Each layer of the pyramid requires an escalating number of leaders as shown in the diagram below;

Impossibilities

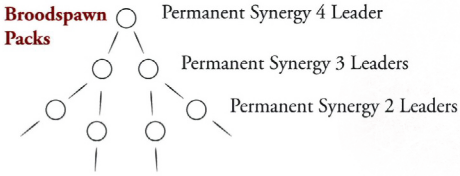
You may have noticed that a Horde cannot actually reach Ambient Synergy 6 according to the above rules, and there is a good reason for that. Only at the command of a Reaper can the Brood reach such terrifying levels of power. In fact, Ambient Synergies of 4 or higher are extremely rare, simply because the Prime Forms necessary to lead a Horde are rarely ever active in the world.

Bear in mind that a Horde with Ambient Synergy 5 would need a total of three Prime Forms, an apocalyptic event in and of itself, never mind a theoretical Horde of Ambient Synergy 6 which would need a Reaper and a total of 6 Prime Forms to sustain it.

Ambient Synergy 2 Horde



Ambient Synergy 3 Horde



There's also nothing to stop the Horde having more leaders than its rank requires and in fact this is particularly important, since if the command structure is disrupted, the Ambient Synergy will lower until new leaders are brought forward to correct the balance.

Example: *In the wilderness, a group of Broodspawn have advanced to the point that their leader has a Synergy of 3. Despite this, the small pack still has an Ambient Synergy of 1.*

Later, they attack a community. A few dozen individuals rise to become new Broodspawn. Since this is larger than what can be defined as a pack, it begins to splinter into three sub-packs; one led by the original and strongest Broodspawn at Synergy 3, and two led by what were its immediate subordinates, each with Synergy 2. This means that there are now three separate packs in the ruins of the village.

Normally that would be the end of matters, but the powerful Alpha decides to act with the full brunt of its intellect and attempts to create a Horde. It cannot make a Horde at Ambient Synergy 3 since that would require at least three leaders of Synergy 3, so instead this new Horde will have an Ambient Synergy of 2.

This works like a pyramid, requiring at least two Synergy 2 Leaders to maintain it. Since the Horde has at least three individual Alpha Strains with a Synergy of 2 or greater, they can maintain this structure with no problems whatsoever.

For the Horde to become bigger, its Leader would need to gain a Synergy of 4 and they would need to greatly increase their numbers. To reach Ambient Synergy of 3, the Horde would need, in addition to its Leader, at least two individuals of Synergy 3 or higher, and four individuals with Synergy 2 or higher, plus all their attendant packs.

Various leaders within the Horde will each form their own Packs as normal, applying any special Features to their Pack as they would if they were not part of a Horde. The Broodspawn Pack Leader with the highest Synergy inside a Horde serves as its Master. In a situation where multiple Broodspawn of the highest Synergy exist, they will fight for dominance with the victor emerging as the Master of the Horde and the loser accepting a lesser place in the hierarchy. **A Broodspawn that is the Master of a Horde gains access to the "Voice of the Mother" Feature,** described on page 273 later in this Chapter.

Hordes can be broken and when this occurs they break down into smaller groups of Ambient Synergy that may be maintained. Often, once the Horde is broken it will reform into new smaller Hordes or devolve into numerous Packs.

Universal Broodspawn Features

The following Features are common to some degree in all Broodspawn. Though the specifics of each Feature may vary between types, together they form the bulk of a Broodspawn's capabilities.

Broodspawn Facts of Life

Broodspawn function differently from normal characters in many ways. The most basic changes – those that don't require any major mechanical considerations – are noted below:

- Broodspawn are alive but no longer require food or sleep, though they will eat and sleep if left to their own devices and can suffer fatigue from long-term sleep deprivation.
- Broodspawn metabolise differently from humans, and as a consequence are immune to normal diseases or poisons.
- Broodspawn do not age in a physical sense but can expire due to the passage of time as noted below.
- Broodspawn cannot reproduce normally and are essentially sterile.
- Broodspawn blood is very different from human blood and cannot be used for transfusions. It also cannot have its DNA detected in a conventional sense.
- Animals find Broodspawn particularly disturbing and generally become highly aggressive in their presence.

Essential Being

Many of a Broodspawn's Traits function differently to those of a normal character. These changes are outlined below.

Attributes

Broodspawn do not normally possess the Conviction or Passion Attributes. As a result, Broodspawn do not possess Motivations or Focus and calculate their Vitality and resistance to social effects differently to other characters.

For the purposes of such derived Traits, a Broodspawn's Passion and Conviction are considered to be 4 or its Synergy, whichever is higher.

The Broodspawn's other Attributes function as normal and if, in the course of its evolution, it gains the **Free Willed** Feature, it will recalculate its Derived Traits and possess Motivations and Drama accordingly.

Skills

Upon their rebirth, Broodspawn lose their former personality and knowledge, along with the skills they learned in life. In their place, Broodspawn draw upon Ambient Synergy in place of skills, having an effective rank in any skill needed based on their Synergy.

The first number denotes the skill that the Broodspawn uses for aggressive or physical tasks such as hunting, fighting or tracking, and the second number represents the Broodspawn's skill in any other task it might be required to undertake.

- **Synergy 0-1:** Rank 2/1
- **Synergy 2-3:** Rank 3/2
- **Synergy 4-5:** Rank 4/3
- **Synergy 6:** Rank 4/4

Although Broodspawn can essentially use any skill, they can still only act appropriately to the level of intelligence they possess, and even the mightiest Broodspawn are still instinctual by nature and will never rely on technology in the way humans would.

Unarmed Combat

All Broodspawn are far more competent in this area than normal humans. They still use the Unarmed weapon profile but don't suffer any of the normal penalties for fighting unarmed, either to attack rolls or to damage.

Wound Penalties

Broodspawn are highly resistant to pain and as a result ignore Wound Penalties related to pain. This means they only normally suffer a Wound Penalty if they take Critical Damage.

Enhancements

Broodspawn often acquire Enhancements during their evolution. These function as normal with one exception; a Broodspawn's Regeneration considers all such Enhancements as Innate. This should not be taken to mean that a Broodspawn's Enhancements are considered Innate for any other reason unless they are specifically listed as such.

Anima Use

Broodspawn contain Anima within their bodies like other living things, and like many supernaturals they are capable of utilising this Anima. The process through which they do this is markedly different than what occurs in humans.

Rather than possessing their own replenishing pools of Anima, Broodspawn draw on a near-limitless collective pool. Each Round, a Broodspawn gets and may spend a number of Anima equal to its permanent Synergy.

Broodspawn don't use Anima pools normally. Instead, they simply spend Anima as it is available. Also, the limit on a Broodspawn spending Anima is always equal to the amount of Anima they are receiving. In the event of a Broodspawn's death, a small quantity of this Anima is retained up to that Broodspawn's permanent Synergy.

Some Broodspawn do possess larger Anima Pools, and when this is the case, they replenish Anima as above but may store it as normal. Such Broodspawn may also spend more Anima and when they do so, they take Damage like any other character, replacing all references to the Passion Attribute with permanent Synergy.

Broodspawn and Social Actions

Let's get this one out of the way; you can't reason with the Broodspawn – well, at least you can't have a conversation with them. That said, it is possible to intimidate them or get across very basic concepts.

Doing so is particularly difficult and any social Difficulties should be increased by at least 1 or 2 in the case of anything more complex than intimidation.

Qualities and the Broodspawn

A lot of Qualities are pointless where the Broodspawn are concerned, and all but the following should be removed from a character when they become one of the Broodspawn;

- Strong
- Tough as Nails
- Hardy
- Observant
- Graceful
- Quick
- Huge*

*If for any reason the Broodspawn's size changes, it loses this Quality.

The Hive-Spawn

Because of their rarity and as yet limited impact on the setting, the Hive-spawn's capabilities have been left deliberately nebulous in this book. As the setting is expanded through further supplements, we will return to the Hive-spawn in greater detail.

That said, we appreciate that it isn't always practical to wait, so for GMs wishing to take their own spin on the Hive-spawn, we've included an additional unique Feature which covers their basic capabilities and differences from the other Broodspawn. If you want Hive-spawn in your game, just build the Broodspawn as normal but add the Hive-Spawn Feature.

Example Broodspawn

Trying to apply all these templates in the middle of a game could quickly get very cumbersome. To help you with this, there is a complete write up of each type of Brood from Phase 1 to 6 in the GM's Toolkit, starting page 305.

These templates also all have the helpful feature of being based on the same human NPC, so if there's any doubt as to how the process of evolution works you can use these templates as a reference.

Unique Broodspawn

The Broodspawn strains presented here are definitely not the only ones, and GMs are encouraged to create unique and interesting strains of Broodspawn to challenge their groups. You should use the Broodspawn presented here as a starting point to give you a good guide to relative levels of power.

Initial Infection - Phase 0

Basically, every human being on the planet, and approximately 1 in 100 mammalian animals and 1 in 1000 reptiles exist at this stage of infection already.

This infection does very little to the host, other than providing an immunity to minor ailments, effectively having rid the world of the common cold. At the moment of brain death though, the infection activates.

What's left of the character will gain Synergy 1, and begins healing as per Type 2 Regeneration. Once they have healed their Wounds, this Regeneration ceases, at which point a new Phase 1 Broodspawn rises.

Broodspawn normally utilise their Anima in very basic ways, commonly wasting a significant amount of the Anima available to them. More advanced Broodspawn with access to Songs and other supernatural abilities can be truly terrifying as a result of their limitless supply of Anima.

Evolution

The Broodspawn don't learn and grow in the same manner as human beings; they instead Evolve, literally changing their nature bit by bit as they progress into ever more powerful forms.

This process proceeds through six stages, each normally corresponding to a rating in Synergy. Each lists any modifiers that apply to the base character and the requirements for advancing to the next phase. These changes are all cumulative, each following from the next with the exception of Synergy and any Features or Enhancements that are noted.

The first two are common to all Broodspawn and are called the **Basic Strains**. Most Broodspawn never progress beyond this, either being killed or devoured by others of their own kind attempting to reach greater heights of strength. Those few that do survive to enter Phase 3 shift into one of three broad categories together known as **Meta Forms**, but individually separated into **Alpha**, **Beta**, and **Gamma** strains. These strains function like the earlier ones but also have additional requirements for entering them, and a Broodspawn can only evolve into Phase 3 if they can meet these conditions.

Each of these exists at both Phase 3 and 4 and are all very different to one another. Alpha Strains are specialised towards leadership, Beta Strains towards brute force, and Gamma Strains towards stealth and cunning. These Broodspawn are somewhat rare and most humans have a poor understanding of their nature.

If a Broodspawn manages to survive all the way to Phase 5, they begin a final evolution into something far greater. This process requires massive quantities of Anima and flesh and transforms the Broodspawn into their final state known as **Prime Forms**.

Basic Strains

All Broodspawn begin their evolution at Phase 1, applying the template noted below to a basic animal or human. These strains are not specialised and are by far the most common encountered by humans. They are well known and easily recognisable, but fairly weak when compared to a Nemissary.

Pack Advantage: Packs led by a Broodspawn of this type have no special bonuses or penalties.

Phase 1 (Risen): These Broodspawn retain their host's original Attributes, with the following modifications:

- Replace Fate with Synergy 1.
- Remove all non-applicable Qualities.
- Increase host's Body by 1.
- Lower host's Reason by 3 to a minimum of 1.
- Lower host's Cunning by 1 to a minimum of 1.
- Remove Conviction and Passion Attributes. (Broodspawn handle Conviction and Passion differently from other characters. See page 266)
- May pay a cost of 1 Anima per Round to access Type 1 Regeneration.

To advance to the next stage, the Broodspawn needs to consume approximately its own bodyweight in human flesh and have been active for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Phase 2 (Ravager): These creatures, though not massively powerful, are now more than a match for an unprepared human being, and in larger groups could even drag down Nemissaries.

- Increase Synergy to 2.
- Increase Body, Prowess, Reason and Cunning by 1.
- May pay a cost of 2 Anima per round to access Type 2 Regeneration.
- Gain the **Natural Weapons** Feature.

To advance to the next phase, this Broodspawn must survive for at least one hour and consume double its body weight in human flesh during that time.

Alpha Strains

These Broodspawn are the rarest of all and represent the powerful command types amongst the Broodspawn. They are also unusual in that they will not tolerate the presence of other Alpha Strains in the same Pack. In these instances, they are often quite willing to kill one another to establish dominance.

Pack Advantage: A Pack of Broodspawn led by an Alpha Strain gains a number of Focus each Scene equal to the permanent Synergy of the Leader plus the local Ambient Synergy. This Focus is never regained when spent but may be used normally in all other respects.

Special Requirement: For a Broodspawn to advance into this stage, they must be part of a Pack and must successfully kill and consume a Broodspawn of Synergy 2 that is not part of their own Pack.

Phase 3 (Watcher): Silent and deadly, these creatures tend to be pack leaders and instinctually begin gathering Broodspawn, attempting to form a Horde.

- Increase Synergy to 3.
- Gain the **Free-Willed** Feature (This means the Broodspawn gets to assign a rating of 4 and 3 to its Conviction and Passion in whichever way it desires).

- Increase Reason and Cunning by 1.
- Gain the **Song User** Feature, and 9 ranks worth of Arietta.
- Pick any 3 positive Enhancements.
- Gain the **Resilient Mind** Feature.

To advance to the next phase, this Broodspawn must gain control of a Horde of at least Ambient Synergy 2, and then create a cocoon for itself in which it will remain for 1 week, emerging after that point as a Brood Mother.

Phase 4 (Brood Mother): The mistresses of the Brood, these creatures are both individually deadly and terrifying in their ability to draw vast hordes to them and think in strategic terms.

- Synergy increases to 4.
- Either reduce Body by 1 or increase size to Large.
- Gain an additional 9 ranks of Arietta.
- Gain +12 maximum Neutral Anima Pool.
- Choose an additional 6 positive Enhancements. These may be stacked up to 3 times as desired.
- Gain the **Broodsong Immunity** Feature.

To advance beyond this state, the Broodspawn must exist inside a rank 3 zone of Ambient Synergy for at least 1 month. At which point, it may choose to sever itself from Ambient Synergy and is regarded as hostile by other Broodspawn. This lasts three days, during which it spends its time killing and consuming every Broodspawn it comes across. If it survives its rampage it will reconnect to Ambient Synergy and begin the evolution into a Prime Form.

Beta Strains

These Broodspawn are the blunt hammer of the horde, capable of smashing aside almost any defence and sacrificing speed and intellect for raw killing power.

Pack Advantage: Packs led by Beta Strains are rare and normally occur only when a Horde's Master deliberately organises it. Such a Pack is in a constant frenzy, with all its members gaining +1 Body and regenerating one Wound of any type each time they have an opportunity to act that would not require Desperate Actions. Due to this frenzied state, Broodspawn in this Pack must always use the All Out Attack Manoeuvre and always attack the nearest viable hostile target.

Special Requirements: To advance into this form, a Broodspawn must possess a Body of at least 6 and consume fifteen times its own bodyweight in human or Broodspawn flesh.

Phase 3 (Brute): The Broodspawn grows to massive proportions, becoming a blunt engine of destruction, able to slaughter most foes which stand before it. These creatures pose a serious challenge for a Nemissary; particularly one who relies on brute force.

- Increase Synergy to 3.
- Increase size to Large.
- Increase Body by 2.
- Lower Reason, Prowess and Cunning by 1.
- Gain any 3 Enhancements which may be stacked up to 2 times.

To advance beyond this state, the Broodspawn must kill and devour at least a dozen human beings over a 12 hour period. It must then construct a cocoon of human flesh with a mass equivalent to between 16 and 21 adult human beings. They exist inside this cocoon for approximately 1 week before emerging as a Titan.

Phase 4 (Titan): These creatures are immense, rising as tall as buildings and are quite capable of annihilating entire communities on their own. Dedicated anti-tank weaponry

is usually needed to even harm these creatures, and only the most powerful Nemissaries would emerge from a battle with one unscathed.

- Increase Synergy to 4.
- Increase size to Huge.
- Increase Body by 2.
- Gain the **Shiva's Child** Feature.
- Gain an additional 6 points of Enhancements, and they may now stack Enhancements up to 3 times.

To fuel its evolution past this point, the Broodspawn must be ordered by a Brood Mother to begin killing and eating every Broodspawn in its vicinity until it has devoured at least 100 lesser Broodspawn. At this point, its mass begins to increase further, it breaks any bonds of control forced upon it, and heads for the nearest large body of water from which it will emerge in one month as a Prime Form.

Gamma Strains

These deadly creatures are the more subtle Broodspawn, possessing greater intelligence and lithe, nimble forms. This in no way makes them less deadly, however, and many have found to their horror that the spindly appearance of these Broodspawn is extremely deceptive.

Pack Advantage: A pack of Broodspawn led by a Gamma Strain are unusually cunning and stealthy. All Broodspawn in the pack gain the Cunning Attribute at a minimum of 3. They also use their primary Target Number for Stealth. On top of these direct benefits, the leader of the Pack may suppress its connection to Ambient Synergy, losing the benefits of it but also rendering the Pack undetectable through Keening. A Pack Leader who suppresses their Ambient Synergy in this way does not disrupt the composition of the Horde and may still have commands issued to them.

Special Requirements: The Broodspawn must have a Cunning of at least 3 and have survived and have stalked a human being, killing them without being detected.

Phase 3 (Stalker): These strange Broodspawn are stealthy, lithe, intelligent creatures, moving with purpose and predatory grace. They are particularly deadly and are one of the Broodspawn best equipped to fight a Nemissary.

- Increase Synergy to 3.
- Increase Body by 1.
- Increase Prowess and Cunning by 1.
- Gain +3 Pool to all uses of the Stealth skill.
- Gain 3 Enhancements which may be stacked twice.
- Gain the **Mercurial Flesh** Feature.

To advance to its next evolution, the Broodspawn must have stalked and killed, over the course of a day, a dozen humans. Then, it must find a secluded place to begin its transformation. It wraps itself in a cocoon and if it manages to remain there undetected for 12 hours, it will complete its evolution into a Wraith.

Phase 4 (Wraith): These creatures are lithe and fast with ever-shifting mercurial forms. They are incredibly dangerous and pose a very direct threat even to the most experienced Nemissaries.

- Increase Synergy to 4.
- Increase Prowess and Reason by 1.
- Gain the **Song User** Feature.
- Gain 9 ranks of Arietta.
- Gain +6 maximum Neutral Anima Pool.
- Gain 6 Enhancements which may now be stacked up to 3 times.

To continue its evolution, the Broodspawn must stalk and kill a Brood Mother. If successful it wears her flesh, collapsing into a cocoon from which it will emerge one month later as a Prime Form.

Prime Forms

Broodspawn which reach this stage possess terrifying capabilities. Their appearance should generally be the focus of an entire campaign and only communities which are armed to the teeth or powerful and experienced Nemissaries will have any chance of stopping on.

Pack Advantage: Prime Forms may not lead Packs in the normal sense but they may benefit from any Pack Advantage possessed by a Leader under their command if that Pack is within 50 metres of the Prime Form.

Special Requirements: The process of evolution into a Prime Form fails if there are any existing Prime Forms within 100km of the Broodspawn attempting to evolve.

Phase 5 (Abomination): Almost unstoppable nightmares, these creatures build upon the existing strengths of their lesser selves, transcending their limits and emerging from their bloody cocoons as a new and terrible form of life.

Broodspawn that complete the transformation into Phase 5 all gain the following effects:

- Increase Synergy to 5.
- Increase Cunning by 1.
- Gain any 3 Enhancements. Enhancements gained in this way and those gained from below may be stacked up to 3 times.

In addition to the changes above, the Broodspawn may pick any five of the changes listed below:

- Increase size by one step, increase Body by 3, reduce Prowess by 1.
- Increase size by one step, increase Body by 1.
- Increase Prowess by 1, gain 3 Enhancements.
- Gain an additional 13 ranks of Songs.
- Gain an additional 9 ranks of Songs.
- Increase Reason and Cunning by 1.
- Gain the **Song User** Feature.
- Gain the **Improved Song User** Feature.
- Gain +12 maximum Neutral Anima Pool.
- Gain +9 maximum Neutral Anima Pool.
- Gain the **Mercurial Flesh** Feature.
- Gain the **Shiva's Child** Feature.
- Gain the **Resilient Mind** Feature. If the Broodspawn already has this feature, it gains the **Broodsong Immunity** Feature.
- Gain the **Free Willed** Feature.

To increase to its next evolution, the Broodspawn must be guided to do so directly by a Reaper. No other lesser creature is capable of facilitating this transformation.

Assuming a Reaper is present to actually command the Broodspawn, it must devour several hundred of its lesser kin and at least one other Prime Form. It then submerges itself in an ocean and must remain there for seven years as its body matures. It will slumber until disturbed or called to war by someone or something with knowledge of its location.

Phase 6 (Nightmare Spawn): Slumbering beneath the waves, these creatures were mercifully never called to war by their makers. If one were to ever emerge it would drown whatever unfortunate region received its attentions in blood and fire.

These creatures are almost impossible to kill, requiring at the very least the intervention of multiple elder Nemissaries, and even then the battle would likely be a fierce and deadly one.

- Increase Synergy to 6.
- Gain Regeneration Type 3.
- Choose any 5 options listed for Abominations and apply them again to the Prime Form's Traits.

There are no known evolutions beyond this point. If it was capable for a Broodspawn to advance further, mankind's days would be numbered in an absolute and final sense.

Specific Broodspawn Features

The following Features are not common to all Broodspawn and are acquired through the process of evolution or as the result of gameplay.

Free Willed

These Broodspawn have moved beyond the semi-mindless nature of their lesser cousins, gaining fully-fledged personalities of their own. They regain a Conviction and Passion score and accordingly may make use of Drama and Motivations.

Unless specified otherwise, a Broodspawn with this Feature may assign a rating of 4 to either their Passion or Conviction, and a rating of 3 to the remaining Trait. Because of their strange nature they have 1 less Motivation and thus Focus than is normal. Their Motivations are also exceedingly primal, focused on base desires such as feeding or hunger. Their Drives are likewise simplistic, usually revolving around the creation of Hordes, the eradication of a particular community or city, or the death of a specific Nemissary.

For more information on how Broodspawn think, see page 284.

Song User

This Broodspawn is capable of utilising Songs in a similar way to Nemissaries. For all mechanical purposes they consider their Synergy to be the same as Creed where these Songs are concerned.

They may only use the Songs of Bone, Brood and Flesh, and favour none of these.

Improved Song User

To make use of this Feature the Nemissary must also possess the **Song User** Feature. It enables them to access the full range of Songs available to a Nemissary and allows them to count the Songs of Brood, Flesh and Bone as Favoured Songs.

Resilient Mind

These Broodspawn are particularly difficult to command through the Song of Brood. When affected by such a power, they may make a Conviction/Resolve check (remember Broodspawn normally base both these things off Synergy and Ambient Synergy respectively) against a Difficulty of their opponent's Fate.

If they succeed, they are immune to that specific power for the remainder of the Scene. If they fail, they are affected normally.

Broodsong Immunity

Broodspawn with this Feature cannot benefit from the effects of Ambient Synergy and are immune to being commanded as part of a Horde. They also are completely unaffected by any powers with the **Brood** keyword. This Feature does not stop the Broodspawn commanding a Horde or giving orders themselves.

Mercurial Flesh

With this Feature, a Broodspawn can reshape their body almost at will. By taking a Minor Action and paying a cost of 1 Anima, they may change any three of their Enhancements into any other legal combination of Enhancements.

Shiva's Child

This Feature makes the Broodspawn a multi-limbed monstrosity and all but impossible to overwhelm in combat.

It never suffers penalties for multiple actions which are taken as a result of being given an opportunity to act by an Opponent.

Voice of the Mother

Broodspawn with this Feature gain a number of advantages. First, they are directly aware of everything that any lesser Leader in the Horde knows or experiences.

As a Minor Action, they may pay 1 Anima to issue a command to either the whole Horde they are a part of, or to any one Pack within it.

Finally, these Broodspawn and their immediate Pack are immune to any command, whether occurring naturally or as a result of an Arietta, unless that Arietta possesses the Epic keyword.

Hive-Spawn

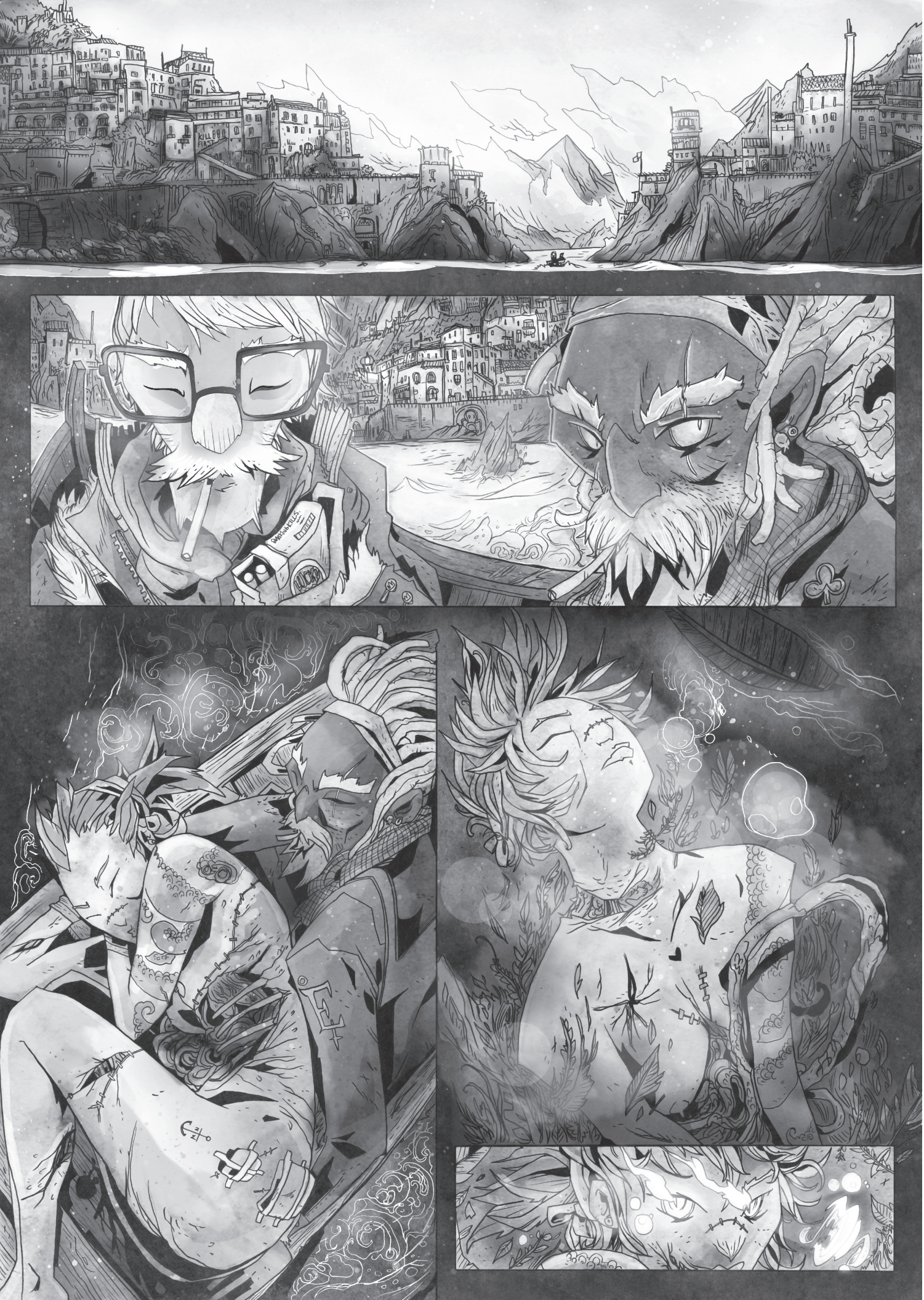
These rare Broodspawn were never human beings but were birthed lethal and whole in new and alien shapes. Mechanically, Hive-spawn resemble their lesser kin but possess several important differences:

- Hive-spawn are always individuals and cannot form packs or benefit from Ambient Synergy, nor may they serve as leaders or masters of a Horde.
- These creatures are immune to any effect from the Song of the Brood that would command them.
- Hive-spawn cannot be detected through the Song of the Brood and attempts to discern what orders they are under automatically fail.
- When facing Nemissaries, Hive-spawn gain a number of bonus Pool equal to half the highest permanent Spite of any Nemissary present.
- Any attempt to devour Anima from a Hive-spawn will reduce the Hive-spawn's Anima Pool as normal, but the would-be thief gains a number of temporary Spite equal to the Anima he would have stolen.
- Eating the flesh of a dead Hive-spawn does not result in the normal vulnerability to Ambient Synergy. Instead, 1 temporary Spite is gained for every point of Anima absorbed.
- All Hive-spawn gain 1 additional positive Enhancement for every point of permanent Synergy they possess. They may also stack Enhancements one more step than normal.
- Shards are incapable of affecting Hive-spawn with their abilities.

In addition to these basic effects, Hive-spawn which evolve to permanent Synergy 2 or higher gain the **Voidglass** keyword to both their Resilience and unarmed attacks.

Another quirk of their existence is their inability to advance beyond permanent Synergy 3. The reasons for this limit are poorly understood, but at least part of it is due to a state of what can only be described as insanity plaguing the Hive-spawn. Whilst they cooperate on a larger scale, they are individually highly erratic in their behaviour and often exhibit a quite disturbing playful streak, seemingly taking great enjoyment out of murder and torture, and any other unnatural act their bodies are capable of performing.

Perhaps because of their nature, other Broodspawn avoid these creatures. Whilst not always reacting to them as hostiles, they are not likely to come to their aid and some Brood Mothers have been known to hunt these creatures.



CHAPTER XI

GM's Toolkit

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Managing Advancement

A core and important duty to a GM is managing the growth of characters in the story. There are numerous rule systems in place for how this functions but all of them require a degree of adjudication on the GM's part to manage the flow of character advancement, so that it is neither too fast or too slow.

Advancement and Milestones

The first type of advancement – certainly the most common one – is through Milestones. As the Core Rules lay out, characters gain Achievement points, and for every three they gain within a Motivation they achieve a Milestone. This is all quite straightforward.

Where the GM's role begins is in managing exactly how many Milestones characters gain. The Core Rules covers the basics of this, but here we will go through each type in turn and explain more thoroughly what is involved.

Turning Up

The first Achievement point a player can earn in any game session is simply for being there. This should be straightforward enough with only two things which really need to be brought up.

First, a player who turns up and is disruptive to the game or otherwise refuses to take part should not get this award. With that in mind, don't punish players who are shy or who are not involved through no fault of their own. In this case, the award should only be denied if players were particularly unpleasant or unhelpful.

The second point is that you may wish to award this point even when players can't actually make it to a game. This is because during the course of the game a player will usually be able to gain Achievement points in other ways and so those not there can fall even further behind. Allowing those players to claim a single point even in their absence can help avoid this problem.

Generally, people want to roleplay and if they can't make a session it's not usually their fault, so on the whole we advise giving this Achievement point out anyway, unless of course the player isn't showing up repeatedly or just turning up to cause a problem.

Roleplaying Motivations

The second most consistent way to get Achievement points is through a character's Motivations; when you roleplay one, you get an Achievement point for that Motivation. Because this one is open to interpretation, it's very important for the GM to understand what was intended when we wrote the rules.

Roleplaying a Motivation means having your character act in a way which relates to and interacts with their Motivations but does not necessarily mean the player has to work towards them. If a player had a Motivation "End Slavery" and they took time for their character to break up a local slavery ring, then they would get the point for that Motivation. If the same character was confronted with a problem that required them to work with slavers, and the player roleplayed out the dilemma, then they should also gain the point.

As a rule, you should always be fair and award a player for each Motivation they manage to play. Normally that is fine, but this can occasionally cause a problem. Some players are just better at this sort of thing than others, and can end up stealing the limelight from more cautious or less confident players. The catch is that you don't want to punish a player for playing the game as it is intended, but you do need to make sure that the situation doesn't get out of hand.

A good way to resolve this is simply to hold better roleplayers to a higher standard. If a player consistently manages to achieve all their Motivations in a session, you probably need to raise the bar a little for what counts. If players object to this, take them to one side and explain the situation to them. A good player will understand, and if they raise a fuss just remind them that it is ultimately your game, and that they are not the only person who matters to the story.

Moving the Story Along

Another way players can get Achievement points is by generally helping out, and in particular helping to move the story along. Like roleplaying Motivations, this point is open to interpretation but is usually a bit simpler to deal with.

The bottom line is that if you find yourself in a jam or the story is grinding to a halt, and one of the players does something either to create a new plot thread or to get the group moving, you should award the Achievement point.

In addition to this, you might sometimes want to award this point for out-of-game help. This shouldn't be done often as it can breed favouritism, but should always be considered when a player does something genuinely helpful like helping to settle an out-of-character argument, or running down to the shop to pick up dice when you forgot yours.

All joking aside, this award should generally be given to just one player per session if it is awarded at all, and is intended to be an infrequent benefit.

Good Roleplaying

Last, but definitely not least, is the point earned for good roleplaying in general. This one is the most variable of all and is not intended to have anything to do with

Motivations. Rather, this is about roleplaying for roleplay's sake. It's the kind of thing which should be awarded when players actually roleplay their character's fears, sorrow or joy and so on. It should also be used as a way to encourage players to bring life to a story.

It's surprising how small an addition can really bring the setting to life. For instance, a player doing something as simple as going off to root through a market for his favourite brand of vodka can make everyone feel more involved in the setting. Ultimately, whatever the reason, when a player roleplays well, give them the award. Use it like a carrot on a stick to get the best out of your players. Specifically set the goals higher and higher; whatever got this award last time, try and get your players to better themselves to reach it again.

One final word of caution; remember what we said about roleplaying Motivations before. Judge everyone according to their own ability. A quiet shy player should be awarded for very small acts of roleplaying whereas your group's budding thespian should only get the points for real meaningful displays of drama.

Advancement of Arietta

One of the other major ways characters advance is through the acquisition of Arietta. This happens in one of four main ways. Firstly there is direct contact with the Shards, then Pacts and training by another Nemissary, and finally Devouring.

Normal Means

Rather than cover each method separately, we're going to talk here about how many points is appropriate overall. This is because unlike Achievement points, the ways of getting Arietta are a lot more fluid and can be directly influenced by the wishes of the players.

As a rule, players should acquire a new Arietta of a rank equal to their Creed every other Chapter. Because Arietta are often earned in bulk, this means you need to space out how often players come into contact with Shards. The simplest way to do this is to have the characters run into a new Shard of a rank equal to the group's average Creed every other Chapter. Granted, this assumes a group is moving from region to region frequently, which isn't always appropriate. A simple alternative is to use a Shard two ranks higher than the group's average Creed about every four Chapters. This sets a calmer rate of encounters and is more appropriate for the average game.

Obviously, both these options only really work when the Nemissaries are relatively low Creed, and this is quite intentional. As Nemissaries advance, their reach and the area that they can routinely travel through will become greater, making them move ever further afield or forcing them to seek out other means of advancement.

How Much is Too Much?

So, what's the bottom line? Well, it boils down to this. Over the course of a Story, your players should get in total about their Creed × 4 ranks worth of Arietta. Exactly how that happens really is at the mercy of your players and the story.

Ultimately, don't fret. It's better that players have slightly too many Arietta than too few. In the end, Creed serves as an ultimate cap on the Nemissary's power, meaning that advancement through Arietta is more of a "side-grade" most of the time, particularly because very few Arietta will actually stack with one another.

For Pacts, the advancement is per six months. This means that if you set out an adventure which will take approximately two to three Chapters and have each adventure take place about once every six months, then the characters will be getting appropriate advancement.

Of course, you can mix the two and have a scenario where the players are involved in a Pact but also visit other nearby Shards. In which case, you need to decrease the rank of the Shards overall to keep the pace of things right. Remember that all of this is a guideline, so feel free to speed up or slow down this form of advancement as appropriate.

Unpredictable Methods

Some methods of gaining Arietta can be difficult to account for. After all, you never know what choices your players will make. You might plan an adventure with the idea of them Devouring a particular adversary only to have the players take the moral high-ground. Also, players might suddenly decide to drop what they're doing and go looking for a Shard as a way of growing in strength before engaging in a big fight.

Because it's almost impossible to account for these sorts of things, the normal method described above actually assumes that the players will get three or four ranks worth of Arietta unexpectedly across the course of a Story. The reason we look at it like this is simply so you don't need to worry. Just keep in mind that if things start speeding up too much, you can always let the players encounter lower ranked Shards or avoid plotlines which bring them into contact with other Nemissaries.

Creed and Spite

The last sort of advancement and the one unique to Nemissaries alone is the constant flux of Creed and Spite. Both of these are very important to the game and come with their own pitfalls.

CREED

Ultimately, the single most defining element for a Nemissary is their Creed. It serves as a measure of almost all their capabilities. This means that the advancement of Temporary Creed, and as a result the advancement of Permanent Creed, is critically important.

Characters can really only gain Temporary Creed in one reliable way, and that is by roleplaying. Everything we said about Achievement points applies here, and in fact is probably more important because Permanent Creed should be kept mostly balanced within a group. A difference of one rank of Permanent Creed between players isn't critical but you should try never to allow a situation in which the difference becomes two or greater.

To avoid the imbalance, you should try to stick to a rule that players should be awarded between two to four Temporary Creed per Story. The intention is that a player will advance their character's Permanent Creed every two to three Stories depending upon how quickly you wish the game to go.

The tricky bit is making sure that players who roleplay a lot don't get too far ahead as this can seriously damage game balance. Again, keep in mind what we said about roleplaying; set the bar higher. If one player is particularly good at playing their Creed, let them get two or maybe three points of Temporary Creed ahead of everyone else but not any more than that. Their award should be advancing first, and not outpacing all other characters.

One thing the system is intended to do is to get players to roleplay. You should also understand that it is deliberately designed to punish power-gamers; after all, all the min-maxing in the world won't earn you awards based around roleplaying and, frankly, it never should.

What we mean is don't give power-gamers a leg-up just for the sake of it. Let the trenchcoated katana-wielding sociopath lag behind. Hopefully it will encourage them to actually roleplay their characters, particularly once they realise that non-min-maxed characters outstrip them in terms of power.

Finally, don't punish quiet players. I know we've said that before and we've referred you to it more than once, but it is so important that it needs mentioning again. Scale your expectations. If you allow people to be overshadowed, they will never grow, and growth both in character or in the real world is usually more important than your story, and definitely more important than the rules.

SPITE

Finally we reach the nasty one. This is the one trait where advancement is not really a good thing. Granted, your Spite trait can be helpful, but every rank of Permanent Spite is a step towards a character's destruction.

Spite differs from the other things we've explained here in that it can be acquired very quickly as a result of a player's actions and it can also be acquired as a cost for certain Arietta.

Spite is really a balancing mechanism; it's there to try and prevent players from going on killing sprees and using their most extreme powers without any care. Despite what's said in the text and the fluff, mechanically it's not really designed to kill the character. Managed carefully, there's no reason a character should ever completely succumb to their Hollow.

The role of the GM in all of this is to use Spite in a subtle way to influence your players' actions. Don't slam it on them; you are perfectly within your rights to award Spite points, but you should always – and we do mean always – give a warning.

You can use this in both overt and subtle ways. Subtly, it can be used to dissuade players from taking actions which might derail the story. For instance, you might warn a player that murdering a particular NPC will result in gaining Temporary Spite. Be careful though. Don't overuse this or players will almost certainly come to feel that you are giving your NPCs undue protection.

The other use for Spite is simply to stop random acts of malevolence. It's meant to be a visceral reminder that actions have consequences no matter how much more powerful Nemissaries are to normal humans.

Keeping all that in mind, Spite is not a stick to beat people with to force them into playing heroes or nice people. There's a big difference where Spite is concerned between murder and necessary death. This probably sounds like a contradiction but honestly it's not – at least in context.

For most people, murder would be an appalling, horrific sin, but for certain people it's an accepted part of life. For instance, an embittered Nemissary sworn to the Circle could kill people trespassing on his territory without gaining Spite. The same is true of a hardened slaver. The first time they dragged a child in chains to auction, they definitely gained Spite, but over time the act would become less shocking and eventually lose its importance to the character.

What we're getting at here is that Spite should be awarded based on the moral tone of the game. Judgement by peers is important in this; who you surround yourself with is also those you choose to judge you, and their beliefs and ethics should always factor heavily into awarding Spite.

Finally, Temporary Spite can be lost. Characters do need to make sincere effort in this respect—usually something that would cause them to lose it should take up much of a Chapter and should never be trivial. A Nemissary going out of their way to protect an orphanage and then not accepting payment should probably result in a reduction in Temporary Spite, but simply saving a woman from being run over in

the street would not. Certain spur of the moment actions should result in a Spite reduction, but these should be infrequent and linked to impressive roleplaying.

Remember that as we have said before, all of this is just guidelines. Just try to keep Spite advancement in perspective and don't let characters consume themselves, unless of course it's really good for the story; in which case, go nuts.

Advanced Characters

Sometimes you might want to play a game with more powerful characters than normal. The reasons for this can be numerous; you may simply want to play older and more established Nemissaries or you might want a mortal character to have considerable experience to make him somewhat comparable in capability to Nemissaries in a group.

The Quick Way

By far the fastest way of doing this is to decide on what Fate rank you wish the characters to have, then give them a variable number of Milestones and points of Arietta (if applicable) based upon this.

- **Fate 2:** 4 Milestones, 8 ranks of Arietta.
- **Fate 3:** 7 Milestones, 17 ranks of Arietta.
- **Fate 4:** 10 Milestones, 29 ranks of Arietta.
- **Fate 5:** 13 Milestones, 44 ranks of Arietta.
- **Fate 6:** 16 Milestones, 62 ranks of Arietta.

These totals are not cumulative and Milestones and Arietta are resolved just as if they've been gained in game. In addition, for every 3 Milestones, you should consider the character to have completed a Motivation and thus gained an Attribute rank.

Permanent Spite is also set by the character's Fate when building Nemissary characters in this way, as shown below:

- **Fate 2:** Permanent Spite 2
- **Fate 3:** Permanent Spite 2
- **Fate 4:** Permanent Spite 3
- **Fate 5:** Permanent Spite 3
- **Fate 6:** Permanent Spite 4

Characters' temporary Spite is the same as normal for a starting character, plus 1 for every point of Permanent Spite above 1 that character possesses. In addition, a character may voluntarily increase their permanent Spite by 1 to gain a number of bonuses equal to their new permanent Spite chosen from the list below:

- 1 Milestone.
- Gain starting Fate in ranks of Arietta.
- Gain 4 temporary Creed.

Temporary Creed gained in this way can increase a Nemissary's permanent Creed allowing them to gain access to higher-ranked Arietta. If a Nemissary's permanent Creed increases, their Fate will be replaced by it as normal but do not recalculate anything. For character creation, advanced or otherwise, use only the starting Creed to work things out.

Obviously characters of increased power will have additional access to equipment. Frankly, we recommend just allowing such characters to start with anything they like, within reason; after all, for a determined Nemissary, gaining something is usually only a matter of time, something which also applies to sufficiently badass humans.

The Long Way

It's a bit ironic that this section will be shorter than the one above. Essentially, the long way of advancing a character is to run a highly abridged type of game. Don't use the dice, and just talk through everything. Pass through whole sections of a character's life in conversations. Let the group work together and go step by step gaining Milestones and Arietta as if it were a normal game, just at a massively accelerated pace.

This type of thing can take a session or more to do. It's involved and drawn out but has the advantage of creating advanced characters without sacrificing the sort of attachment that actual gameplay brings. We recommend this method primarily if you plan to have a long and in-depth story involving powerful characters; after all, such entities don't emerge in a vacuum, and building them this way allows you to create the various NPCs, hideaways, towns, villages and so on necessary to support such characters.

Shards

Just like characters, the Shards themselves possess traits, though not always in the same way as normal characters. In a sense, Shards function like a disembodied character in that their physical forms are essentially immune to harm, but they are themselves incapable of taking any physical action. In addition, the Shards have specific rules on how they can interact with the world.

Shards possess Fate, which in their case is a measure of how powerful and important to the world's story the Shard is. It also influences what other Traits and abilities they possess. A Shard's Fate is not based on character points like normal, but instead is simply a function of the needs of the Story and is entirely in the hands of the GM.

Only a handful of Shards in the world are rated at Fate 6, and the great majority fall somewhere between the ratings of 2 and 3. These Shards, regardless of power, are always at least 2 metres in height and sometimes as tall as 10 or 15

metres. Importantly, however, size in this instance is not necessarily a measure of power.

Shards with a Fate of 1 are normally somewhat smaller than this, being less than a metre in size and thus are man-portable. Such Shards may not be counted for the purposes of supernatural effects which require the presence of a Shard, such as a Nemissary's Harrowing, as they lack the power necessary.

Some Shards can also exist in a dormant state, possessing an effective Fate of 0. They do not interact with the world at all when in this state, and likewise may not be counted for supernatural effects which require a Shard.

Shards with a Fate of 2 or more cannot normally be moved. Though in extreme circumstances they may consent to it, any attempt to move them in other circumstances is doomed to failure. No amount of strength can move a Shard from its position if it does not wish to be moved, with the sole exception of a truly dormant Shard, which can be moved.

Shards are generally impervious to harm, though small fragments can be broken off them using Voidglass items. Even this damage, however, will be recovered quickly, and ambitious groups can chisel off quite a few fragments of a Shard, though as explained below this can be very dangerous.

Shards and Intelligence

A Shard's reasoning capabilities vary based on their Fate, and they normally possess a Reason and Cunning equal to twice their Fate. The Shard's intelligence, however, is of a deeply alien variety and they cannot communicate with humans using any verbal language which we understand. Instead, Shards communicate in metaphors which for Shards of lower Cunning and Reason are clumsy and fairly vague, and for those with greater intelligence being far more succinct.

If a Shard ever needs a Conviction score, its effective rating is equal to 3 times its Fate. In addition, a Shard will possess any skill it needs to use at a rating equal to its Fate + 2, to a maximum of rank 4.

Supernatural Capabilities

Though indirect, the Shards' powers should not be underestimated, and they may use any of the capabilities listed below that are appropriate to their Fate.

Fate 1 – Communion: The Shard is capable of expressing itself through visions with any creature within Fate × 10 metres. This communication can be detrimental in the long term and any creature that spends more than their Conviction in days in proximity to the Shard will develop a temporary Obsessive Motivation of the Shard's choosing. If they do not then leave the Shard and remain in its presence for the same period of time again, the temporary Obsessive Motivation becomes permanent, replacing one of the characters existing Motivations. If the character still does not leave, or already possessed a permanent Obsessive Motivation then they will instead be rendered totally insane, losing their Fate trait and becoming a raving lunatic. Nemissaries and creatures possessing the "Inured" Quality are immune to the negative effects of Communion with the Shard in this way.

Fate 2 – Catalyst: At this point, the Shard is capable of helping a Nemissary undergo the Second Breath and choose a Creed. It can also, at its discretion, utilise the Arietta of **Whispers of Virtue** and **Whispers of Vice**, without needing to pay any cost, though the Shard may do this only once per Scene.

Fate 3 – Enlighten: For good or ill, these Shards can bring forth dormant characteristics within a human. If the Shard chooses, it can elevate a non-primary character to a Primary one, by igniting the potential spark of greatness within them. This effect can be used only once per year for each rank of Fate the Shard possesses.

If a Nemissary is in its presence, the Shard can offer this gift and will either cause the Nemissary to gain or lose 1 temporary Spite at the Shard's discretion. This effect may be used once per Scene.

Fate 4 – Benediction: The Shard is capable of healing or inflicting terrible wounds on every mortal thing in its vicinity. It can bestow Type 2 Regeneration on any creature within Fate × 10 metres. This effect may also be used to restore to life a human being that has been dead for no more than seven days. Alternatively, it can cause one living creature to suffer a number of Injured Wounds equal to the Shard's Fate each Round that they remain within its radius.

Either effect may be used at the Shard's discretion, or alternatively it may combine them both, trapping all targets within its effect in a state of hideous agony which will prevent them from taking any action except for crawling out of its radius. These effects may be maintained for as long as the Shard chooses.

Fate 5 – Deus Ex Machina: The Shard at this point can extend the effects of any lesser power to an individual which has been in its presence at least once before, anywhere within 500 miles × its Fate. It may do this once per day, but may not exceed the normal limits of the power it is duplicating.

Fate 6 – Ascension: For better or ill, the Shard can create new Nemissaries. This can be applied to any human who dies in the Shard's presence and the resulting Nemissary

will be counted as one of the Chosen Shaping, from a rules perspective. This power may only be used once a year.

In addition, given the near mythical status of these Shards, the GM should feel free to invent other powers as necessary to maintain the flavour of the campaign. These Shards' powers are massive and in general can do most things which wouldn't change the world forever.

For example, they can raise the dead, grant access to artefacts and weapons, spontaneously gift someone with skills or Songs, and certainly duplicate any Nemissary power in this book.

Created Shards

Some Shards can be created by Nemissaries, usually in the form of weapons. These Shards always begin at Rank 1, gaining all the normal abilities associated with that rank except that it may not grant Arietta to Nemissaries through Communion, nor may it form a Pact.

As a weapon, whenever such a Shard deals damage to a target, that target loses 1 point of Anima of the Shard's choice. Beyond this, they function as whatever weapon they are crafted as, with a damage bonus of +1, albeit made from Voidglass and with a mind of their own. As a tool, such an item will grant 1 Automatic Success to appropriate rolls. Finally, as a decorative item, the Shard may provide 1 Neutral Anima to its owner once per day.

Unlike other Shards, when a Created Shard advances beyond Fate 1, it does not always grow in size. This is down to the Shard's choice and ultimate motivations. If it chooses to grow, it will be treated in all respects like a normal Shard, losing any of the special effects for its unusual origin. Assuming the Shard wishes to remain in its compact state, it will gain the abilities of Shards as normal but the range of these abilities will never be greater than its Fate × 10 in meters.

As a Shard advances, it will gain access to its abilities as normal. For weapons and normal items, its damage bonus or Success bonus will be equal to the Shard's Rank. These Shards have a downside, devouring 1 point of Anima from their acknowledged wielder per day, and 1 point the first time they are drawn in any given combat or used in a Scene.

Shards not formed for a specific purpose simply increase their available pool of Anima to be equal to their current rank. As this state is more natural, they have no additional drawback.

Pacts

Shards can form a Pact with Nemissaries. This arrangement can be beneficial as it allows a Nemissary the means of learning Arietta and the Shard a way of expanding its influence in the world. To form a Pact, a Shard must be at least Rank 2. When approached by Nemissaries seeking Communion, the Shard may offer the Pact. This agreement can be almost anything the Shard chooses and if the Nemissary or Nemissaries agree, the Pact will be created.

The Shard can ask anything it likes for this Pact but it is highly unlikely to make unreasonable requests or set complex goals. This is due to the fact that the Nemissaries may always refuse the Shard's wishes, and the fact that the Shard is limited in its communication options and thus would find it impossible to express highly complex goals. These goals are also usually fairly permanent in nature, otherwise the Nemissaries would gain little to no benefit and thus would be highly unlikely to agree. For instance, a Shard might impress upon a group of Nemissaries that it wishes a particular community protected or destroyed, or it might wish a group of Nemissaries to allow no living thing to move through a particular mountain pass.

Assuming the Nemissaries follow the Shard's wishes, they gain Arietta as described on page 225 in the Songs chapter. The Shard can withhold this benefit but only if the Nemissaries have violated the agreement in some way; in which case a Shard can hold the gifted Arietta to ransom bestowing them on the Nemissaries only when they have made appropriate reparations.

Finally, when threatened or its goals are significantly thwarted, the Shard may send out a psychic distress signal to Nemissaries in the Pact. If the Nemissaries respond and defend the Shard and is interests, it must gift them a single point of temporary Creed, or a reduction of 1 temporary point of Spite.

Shard Advancement

Over time, a Shard's powers can grow, and in a sense they can advance like characters. Since they have only one meaningful trait, this advancement is far less rigid than it is for a character and serves the needs of the Story before all other concerns.

Normally the advancement of a Shard, whether natural or created, will occur over the course of years or decades. For Shards which routinely achieve their goals, this process will be somewhat quicker occurring in the lower end of the spectrum. For Shards which are isolated, or otherwise have little success advancing their goals, this process will take much longer, taking decades at a minimum.

When Shards do advance, they very rarely advance in total more than one or two ranks above their starting Fate. Sometimes, a unique Shard might grow more than this, going all the way from rank 1 to 6 but this should be rare enough that it should not have occurred in the century the Shards have been active.

One unique means of advancement open only to Created Shards is Devouring souls. This can occur only in the case of Shards being used as weapons. When a Nemissary or sentient Broodspawn is killed with such a weapon, it may attempt to Devour the soul in the same way that a Nemissary would. Instead of the normal dice pool used, the Shard rolls 6 dice + its Fate against a TN of 3+. If it succeeds and the target's Fate Creed or Synergy was at least equal to its own Fate, then it advances a point of Fate.

Since it lacks normal traits, the after effects of this process are different to what occur in a Nemissary. Instead of gaining Spite, the Shard's nature will shift closer to something truly malevolent. After about three Devouring attempts, this process will be complete irreversible and the Shard will no longer want anything but the destruction of all living things.

Shard Behaviour

The Shards' motivations are mysterious and quite frankly they're meant to stay that way. Of course, if you are reading this as a GM, you still need to adequately portray their actions in game. First of all, bear in mind that Shards are still individuals. Without giving away too many of the setting's secrets, each Shard is an individual entity. It has its own desires and motivations, just like a human being, and their goals can be highly complex.

When dealing with a specific Shard, it helps to decide whether it falls into one of three broad categories. Essentially, this boils down to whether the Shard is helpful, neutral or dismissive. Also, it's possible to get extremes of these behaviours, with Shards being benevolent or malevolent. These extremes are rare, however, and by and large the Shards tend towards a more neutral point of view.

It's also important to keep in mind that each Shard is an alien intelligence. They don't perceive things the way humans do. Specifically, their sense of ethics is entirely different. Essentially, the Shards are capable of understanding wrong in the context of murder or the violation of a person, but do not properly grasp concepts such as ownership.

For example, a Shard can understand murder and perceive it as wrong. Likewise it would perceive torture as wrong, but yet it is incapable of really understanding the concept of theft. Also, Shards have an unusual concept of ownership, and tend to view it purely in the context of one soul owning another. Simply put, they understand the nature of hierarchy and usually perceive people trying to break that hierarchy as wrong, even if humans around them see it as appropriate.

Curiously though, this does also tend to extend even to people enslaved within view of a Shard, but only if that person doesn't immediately assert their determination to be free. In the Shards' minds, there are no shades of grey in ownership; either you submit or you refuse and face the consequences.

For instance, while a Shard won't generally recognise theft, it will usually see an escaped slave as guilty of violating another being's rights, and almost every Shard would side with the slave's master. All of this can add up to some pretty unusual ethical points of view on behalf of a Shard. Furthermore, each Shard picks up peculiarities beyond these, some of which are learned behaviours after being exposed to humans.

Shards which are not isolated tend to fall quickly towards two extremes of behaviour. Either they come to tolerate the existence of humans around them and generally become very quiet, hoping to minimise the damage their presence causes. Conversely, the humans' dark natures could slowly infect the Shard, making it become ever more malevolent where humans are concerned. Notably, several regions have been rendered completely uninhabitable because of a Shard with a grudge.

Communicating with the Shards

It's in the Shards' natures to answer questions, after a fashion, but it's important to understand that the Shards despise giving unearned information away. It's almost impossible to convince a Shard to give a simple answer to a question, though all Shards are actually compelled to give some form of an answer.

In most cases, Shards will seek to answer questions someone puts to it by giving them a vision which will lead that person to answering the question themselves. With more benevolent Shards, the route suggested is usually the least painful one to gaining the information required, whereas the more malevolent Shards, if they don't just try to kill the questioner, will certainly direct them to at best a dangerous journey.

For example, if a character were to pose a Shard a question such as 'What happened to my wife from before the Fall?', the Shard's response would generally not be to show the character what happened. Rather, it would show a series of images which would ultimately lead the character to a hall of records which contained the information they sought.

In terms of what the Shards actually know, the answer is fairly complex. In practice, the Shards know almost everything. How they achieve this knowledge though is a mystery, and they don't actually have conscious access to this information. Curiously enough they are only generally capable of utilising it when someone asks a question. This also raises the issue of the setting's big questions; for example, do the Shards know what happened to the Reapers, and do they know what the Mother truly is.

The answer, simply, is yes. The problem is that the Shards have no way of properly communicating this information, simply because there is no way other than directly communicating it to pass that knowledge on.

Certainly, Shards may send someone who asks these questions on journeys, but all these journeys can do is lead the character to know more. They cannot unfortunately answer the fundamental questions. The nature of existence isn't something that can be truly defined.

Motivations of the Shards

Here's where things get really sticky. Obviously you, as a GM, need to have some real idea of what the Shards are after. The catch is they are not all after the same thing. What's coming next is a spoiler, and if you don't want to know, don't read it.

The Shards did not originate here. The Shards are closer to machines than supernatural entities. They were sent here during the Black Rain with the express purpose of bringing human civilisation to its knees. Frankly, something went very wrong, and the Shards themselves don't really know why. They have an idea, and they know that something – some powerful presence on the world – reached out and changed them all fundamentally.

Most were entirely rebuilt by the experience, meaning that the Shards' motivations are now largely individual. Most don't want to harm us at all. They'd honestly like to see us come through this, and see themselves as helping to define a great cycle of life and death; a process of rebirth of which the Nemissaries are a very important part. For some, though, the state of the world makes them bitter, and they want nothing less than the eradication of every living thing.

Some Shards see the Broodspawn's actions as a kind of cleansing, and believe that the Mother's victory is the best solution. These Shards only grudgingly help the Nemissaries because somewhere deep down they find they can't help themselves.

Last, and most unusual of all are the rare Shards that just want to watch the world burn. Either they have seen too much, or something went terribly wrong when they were freed from their former control. These Shards want death on a massive scale, and will stop at nothing until all things return to dust.

What caused the Shards to change their natures in this way is something that is up to the GM. In the future, as the game line's greater plot-arc continues, more secrets will be revealed bit by bit, and the answers are coming, but for now, remember that the game world is your own, and you can do what you want with it. It's quite likely by now that you've formulated your own opinions on where the Shards came from and why. We suggest you run with it; it's not like we're in command of a Plot Enforcement Battalion, or would use one even if we could afford it.

GMing Advice

Below you will find a selection of material to help you better understand and therefore run various situations in the game. All GMs of any experience level should find this information useful and certain very critical pieces of information to running the game are contained within.

BROODSPAWN BEHAVIOUR

One of the most important things for a GM to get their head around is how the Brood act in response to various situations in game. Initially, newborn Broodspawn are essentially animalistic. They have little or no connection to the Mother's Song, and absolutely no sense of self. These Broodspawn perceive everything in the world that draws their attention as either an enemy or food.

These creatures simply ignore everything that falls outside those parameters. They're not even truly aware of others of their own kind and will respond to every situation by first attempting to overcome the enemy, and when no enemies remain they will attempt to feed.

All of this serves to make the Brood's initial actions highly random. In ignorance of one another these first-generation Broodspawn will spread, sometimes covering large distances fairly quickly, and this chaotic nature proves to be a strength in the second phase of their growth.

Inevitably these first Broodspawn, known as **Risen**, are cut down and destroyed in great numbers, as they lack the formidable regenerative capabilities of their more evolved kin. What usually happens then, is that these first Broodspawn force survivors to establish safe havens and bulwarks against further attacks, but generally their activities leave streets full of dead bodies.

In this first phase, it's easy to be fooled into believing that victory is near. Amongst these abandoned corpses, more Broodspawn will rise, but without enemies these creatures will simply feast. Whilst survivors are licking their wounds and preparing themselves from a second onslaught from the Risen, what they will generally find instead is an eerie silence, with perhaps the occasional shriek or gunshot as the Ravagers begin to emerge.

The **Ravagers** are very different in many ways from the other Broodspawn. Their consciousness begins to expand and they hear the Song clearly for the first time. Its power courses through them, and from this point on they gain the characteristics so feared and associated with the Brood. Their minds are sharper; though still animalistic, these creatures are far more cunning, and are quite capable of recognising armed individuals and moving stealthily outside lines of fire.

Furthermore, they now possess an awareness of others of their own kind, and the more that gather, the greater their sense of self becomes. In many ways this is a curious phenomenon and works like an inverse of what normally happens to a crowd.

Imagine that instead of a gathering of these creatures becoming more chaotic, it's like a calm settling upon a stormy sea. The presence of other Broodspawn allows these creatures to better perceive their surroundings and makes them capable of far greater intuitive leaps. Isolated, these creatures are still animals, albeit cunning ones, but in groups of twelve or more, they begin to display pack-like behaviour, utilising sophisticated tactics.

On an even larger scale, as their numbers pass fifty or more, their awareness takes a second leap; they now become capable as a group of acting on a larger strategic scale. While each individual cluster of Broodspawn will function like a pack, the larger horde begins to display large-scale tactics, dispersing in the face of concentrated engagement, and seemingly capable of deploying reserves, scouts and other tactical elements of an army.

On an individual level the Broodspawn themselves are still totally unaware of this grand strategy, but the whole in this instance is much greater than the sum of its parts. It's also usually at this stage that the Broodspawn shift into a new pattern of behaviour. Some packs – perhaps one in six to one in twelve – will turn on one another, descending into an orgy of bloodshed. The single survivor will then devour its former pack-mates, and evolve into an entirely new level of creature.

Three primary types of Broodspawn emerge from these struggles, the most imminently dangerous of which is the Beta Strain **Brutes**. These massive monstrosities of flesh begin to respond to the cries of lesser Broodspawn, utilising themselves as living battering rams in order to overcome defences which claws and fury alone are incapable of penetrating. These creatures are then locked into a chain of evolution into ever larger and more deadly forms. They become, in a sense, living engines of destruction, losing any hope of further growth of reasoning capacities, their minds remaining locked at no greater intellect than that of a Ravager.

Very different from these brutish monstrosities are the Gamma Strain, or **Stalkers**. These strange Broodspawn are possessed of a far greater intelligence than their fellows. In fact, as individuals, they display a sense of self and higher reasoning capacity. Indeed they are capable of operating basic technology and display a remarkable aptitude for stealth. These creatures always seem to operate in support of the Brood's hordes, and they have a powerful instinct not to place themselves in direct danger, unless a victory would be all but assured. Only if the Brood grow desperate as a whole will these creatures and their evolved forms be drawn into the common brutal tactics the Brood employ.

In small groups or alone, the Stalkers operate well in advance of the main horde, spreading fear and panic everywhere they go. They usually do their very best to leave corpses intact, or to devour them whole, as they are quite aware of the possibilities gained by additional Broodspawn; though it should be noted that they certainly possess the level of intelligence required to be patient and to attack when it's more suitable to do so. These creatures will sometimes lay low for days at a time waiting for the right moment to strike.

The final type of Broodspawn to emerge under normal circumstances is the Alpha Strains, or **Watchers**. These creatures are extremely important to the Brood, and represent a kind of leader caste amongst the Horde. Not only is their individual power immense in comparison to their fellows, but they also bring an additional order to the Broodsong, magnifying its intelligence greatly. Under their leadership, the Brood's large-scale ability to act in a coordinated manner passes down to the pack level, allowing extremely sophisticated tactics and granting additional motivation and intelligence to the lesser Broodspawn.

These creatures are also capable of directly influencing the evolution of their fellows. Whereas normally this process is an instinctual one, happening as and when needed, under the direction of a Watcher and its more evolved forms, more specialised Broodspawn will emerge as needed. Essentially these creatures can then be created whenever necessary by the Brood.

Furthermore, under the direct leadership of these creatures, the Brood will begin to display less orthodox tactics, and will start utilising their regeneration to its fullest capacity. Overall, the Brood will change from using a careless series of blunt strikes, to something more akin to an endless series of smaller waves. The Broodspawn will begin to attack, but then retreat as soon as any serious loss becomes evident. As survivors attempt to neutralise the corpses to prevent their resurrection, a new wave of Broodspawn will begin their assault. Inevitably the survivors will be forced to combat these new Broodspawn, giving the original wave time to heal.

Even if the survivors manage to regroup and return to cover, the Broodspawn will then likely begin the process again, slowly wearing away at the resolve of the defenders, using this tactic to eat up bullet after bullet in futile engagements, all the while under the calm assurance that they will be victorious in the end.

Of course, this can all change quickly, when units specialised in combating the Brood are deployed against them. Incendiary weapons, spear guns, archers and Voidglass sabot rounds can quickly decimate the Broodspawn's numbers, denying them the chance to regenerate. In these instances, under the leadership of a Watcher, the Brood will fall back rather than persist in a doomed assault. Unless the horde is utterly broken, however, the victory is likely to be short lived, as the Brood will then proceed to the next phase of their evolution.

This happens when the first **Brood Mother** emerges. Normally, this will occur when an Alpha Strain devours enough Anima or survives long enough to complete its metamorphosis, but occasionally the fall of a Nemissary can suffice just as well.

Under the guidance of a Brood Mother, new Brood can be born without the need to kill. This means that the Brood can replenish its numbers in isolation, and furthermore specific types of Brood and otherwise unique entities can be bred to suit their needs. At this stage, if the Brood are not stopped, they will continue to grow. Inevitably any given community will fall under the sheer onslaught of a near limitless number of foes that are each difficult to kill.

Brood Behaviour and Nemissaries

Of course, the presence of Nemissaries changes all of this. Their abilities make the various predetermined strategies of the Brood unsound. Individually, Broodspawn treat Nemissaries as one of their own and react in very similar ways. A Nemissary is also quite capable of intimidating small groups of Broodspawn.

This neutrality persists only while the Nemissary doesn't make themselves a threat. If they choose to fight rather than simply interact with or ignore the Broodspawn, they'll be met with violent reprisal. Unlike where humans are concerned, this isn't necessarily likely to attract the attention of Broodspawn in the immediate area. Without the higher reasoning capabilities provided with greater numbers or the appearance of a Watcher, Broodspawn will react as if this is simply one of their own consuming in order to evolve, and in this way a Nemissary can decimate small groups of Broodspawn with little serious opposition.

As the Brood's intelligence grows, particularly as Watchers are unleashed, this behaviour changes once again. In fact, the Brood become downright aggressive towards Nemissaries, and will seek to incapacitate them at almost any cost.

The reasons for this are fairly straightforward. They know on an instinctual level, that if they can beat the Nemissary into submission and hold it long enough in their presence, they can create a new Brood Mother out of that Nemissary's broken mind – after all, in most cases it's simply a matter of time until the Nemissary submits.

Where Watchers or an existing Brood Mother is involved, things get a little less certain. Whilst the Brood will still react violently towards Nemissaries, these creatures' higher reasoning capabilities allow them to decide on a more individual level whether killing the Nemissary would be a better idea.

Normally, they'll only go this far if, in their judgement, they won't be able to hold the Nemissary long enough to force the transition. Also, a Watcher close to becoming a Brood Mother may not want the competition, and may kill the Nemissary simply to prevent the emergence of a rival.

Where the **Harbingers** are concerned things get murkier still. These Nemissaries willingly become part of the Broodsong, retaining much of their consciousness in doing so. Because of this, almost all Broodspawn – even Brood Mothers – are subservient to them. This shouldn't mean that a Harbinger can force the Brood to take actions which would be of the detriment of the Brood as a whole, but even without a Harbinger using Songs to enforce their power, the Brood will generally see to any request made.

Other Nemissaries can also use similar capabilities to wrestle control of the Brood, and this can produce numerous strange situations. Sometimes the Brood will simply tear itself apart in an orgy of violence as its mind goes to war with itself under a Nemissary's influence. Usually, when a Nemissary does gain control, the Brood tend to act as if that Nemissary were themselves a Brood Mother or Watcher, acting in the way it normally would, but allowing that Nemissary to direct the larger course of events.

This is actually one of the weaknesses of the otherwise extremely useful Song of Brood. Many Nemissaries have been undone when they believed that they had total control over the Swarm only to realise that this didn't stop individual groups of Broodspawn from slaughtering the very communities they had been told to protect.

This doesn't stem from a desire to rebel; rather the Nemissary cannot override the basic instincts of Broodspawn unless they take command of a small group personally. If told to protect a community, the Broodspawn will simply follow their instinct to increase their numbers to complete the order. Less-evolved Broodspawn are simply incapable of grasping the finer points of such an order.

Of course, some Nemissaries are powerful enough to sidestep these problems, but at these levels their control is so great that the Broodspawn act more like automata than living things, simply existing as puppets for the Nemissary's will, and disregarding their base instincts.

Hives

Hives are like a cancer; a malign presence in the otherwise pure intentions of the Brood. This might sound strange considering what the Brood will happily do to humans around them, but it's important to understand that the Brood as an entity has no concept of malice – it simply acts on instinct, and even when higher intelligence emerges, it's simply an outgrowth of that same basic desire to make all things whole.

Human emotion, however, and the Harbingers in particular, taint this very nature. The individual emotions and desires of those who impose their will upon the Brood create a strange imbalance in that great consciousness. These psychic wounds fester until eventually something snaps, and a unique form of Brood Mother rises.

Though mercifully very rare, these creatures most commonly emerge in the unusual scenario that a Harbinger is consumed by their Hollow, or when an act of particular malevolence happens in the vicinity of an emerging Brood Mother.

Something about these new creatures is very different. Even other Broodspawn perceive them as somehow "wrong", and will avoid them. These new Brood Mothers, now simply known as a Hive, begin to grow. Normally they burrow, distancing themselves from the threat of reprisal, and there they make new, better children.

Unlike normal Broodspawn, these Hive-born were never human. Each is a construct of flesh and Voidglass, and like their Mother these creatures are utterly malevolent.

In addition, their song is distinctly different from that shared by the Broodspawn. Nemissaries have learned, often with terrible consequences, that the powers of the Song of Brood generally fail utterly when directed against the Hive-born.

The Broodspawn kill, sometimes messily, but these creatures take a perverse joy in murder. They kill slowly, drawing out the experience for as long as possible, often torturing individuals to death when they have the time. They also begin a new behaviour which baffles Nemissaries which have observed it – they begin to take live prisoners.

Though in unusual cases the Brood has been known to do this, they have only been seen to do this in an attempt to create new Harbingers, and even then only under the orders of an existing Harbinger. The Hive-born, on the other hand, take as many living captives as possible, favouring the young over the old. Specifically they seem to target youths between the ages of 18 to 25. They take these prisoners back to their patron Hive, where they are somehow integrated with the creature's consciousness.

What happens next makes even Nemissaries of the Defiled Shaping shudder. The Hive seems capable of utilising the feeding method known as Defilement, and is even more effective at it than even the most dark and

twisted of fallen Nemissaries. These poor victims are tortured physically and mentally, their souls destroyed and slowly torn asunder so that the Hive can feed and grow stronger with every passing day. The Hive seems capable of prolonging the suffering of these individuals and so far it seems that they can be kept alive for months or even years in a state of perpetual agony that's hard to even contemplate. The best torturer imaginable would pale in comparison to what these horrific monsters can inflict.

Certain individuals are also marked out amongst these victims. For these, the Hive begins a process similar in almost every respect to what happens to Nemissaries of the Defiled Shaping, though so far in every instance the subject has died. Why the Hive persists in doing this is something of a puzzle; particularly since it seems to be giving those individuals an easy way out. This mystery is one of the greatest unanswered questions about the nature of the Hives. Some amongst the Nemissaries though note that these strange behaviours, and the appearance of the Hive-born, are disturbingly similar to Reapers, and those who know a great deal about the Hive are inclined to believe it to be the most pressing and deadly threat facing mankind.

Hollow Behaviour

Hollows are, in a way, a representation of everything a Nemissary hates about themselves. Their actions accordingly stem from a character's inner nature. As the GM you'll often need to adjudicate these spiteful and cruel creatures, and there are several things you'll want to bear in mind as a result.

The first is that Hollows are not suicidal. They'll certainly attempt to wreck the character's life and even goad them into dangerous situations, but they won't ultimately go far enough to see their host dead. Mostly this is because they simply don't want to die. Even the most blunt and direct monster knows that on some level the death of the host means death for it.

Curiously, this unwillingness to truly endanger the character's life doesn't apply to the Hollow's Final Victory. They are one and all entirely blind to this particular failing and will never accept that their victory will be a short-lived one. Each and every Hollow's only true desire is to consume the character. This is the second part of a Hollow's Nature.

Essentially, they wish to make the character like themselves; they want the two of them to be the same. The Hollows aren't just about random acts of cruelty – they literally want the character to become what they despise.

Without outside intervention this is the only way a Hollow can see the world. To its mind, its entire existence is to attempt to force the character to acknowledge the things they despise about themselves and ultimately accept them.

The irony is that Hollows are actually a form of defence mechanism, put in place to help support and challenge the character. It's something about the Nemissary's rebirth that taints this process. Something in the Hollow snaps at that point between life and death, and it loses its ability to think objectively about its existence.

Even given all that, it's not impossible to make a Hollow see reason. Through patience and the use of Arietta, the Nemissary can start establish a dialogue with their Hollow.

What this boils down to is that the more the Nemissary ignores their Hollow and refuses its desires, the more bitterly the Hollow will fight for control. A character that accepts their own dark side and bows to at least some of the Hollow's demands can form a two-way relationship with these selfish creatures.

From the Hollow's point of view, this is normally just another attempt to corrupt the character. Like everything else they do it's self-serving. It doesn't mean that this same self-serving nature can't benefit a character, but remember as the GM that the Hollow is only ever looking out for its own interests.

The Hollow and Other Characters

We've explained how a Hollow thinks. Where things get complicated is other people. Less intelligent Hollows hate the world and everything in it. They particularly despise anybody that their Host actually likes, and given half a chance to actually act, they'll vent their rage immediately upon those closest to the Nemissary.

The more intelligent Hollows are able to think more objectively. They still view everything through a lens of trying to corrupt and defile the character, but they are capable of seeing the value in other people. Remember that Hollows don't want to die. If they are intelligent, they won't go on killing sprees if they honestly believe that the repercussions will be the death of their host.

These Hollows prefer to use more subtle tactics to antagonise those a character loves; indeed, they will often favour hurtful words and careful manipulations over outright violence.

This also brings up woeful narrative opporunities. If the Hollow thinks it can get away with something, it will almost certainly do it, regardless of the hurt or offence caused. Hollows are vehement creatures and want to ruin everything the world has left. Worse still, the more terrible and destructive the action, the more aggressive the Hollow will become. Left to its own devices, an intelligent, free Hollow is likely to use their host's powers to wreak devastating long-term destruction.

Long-Term Relationship

We've briefly mentioned that a character can establish a dialogue with their Hollow. Doing this is very tricky. Remember, the Hollow only wants to corrupt the character, or at least normal Hollows only want to do this.

The only way such a relationship can be built is if the character gives in to some desires of the Hollow and baits it along. By playing a dangerous game of cat and mouse, they can keep the Hollow believing it's winning without actually surrendering their soul to it.

If a character treads carefully, even a Hollow in control will be reticent to cause undue carnage. After all, if the Hollow believes the best way to corrupt the character is subtly, it's actually likely to feign trust and restraint. Even if this is only a deception, the net result can be that the Hollow doesn't go around burning people to death because the colour pink offends it. By the same token, characters won't fall to their Hollow only to awaken finding themselves in the middle of an "amusing art piece" involving the bodies of their friends and family.

It needs to be stressed that this is a very dangerous game for Nemissaries to play. After all, just because the character believes they're not being corrupted, doesn't mean the Hollow isn't winning – it can just mean the character is in denial.

Extreme Situations

After everything we've said, is it ever really possible to build a meaningful dialogue with the Hollow? The answer is yes, but only in exceptional situations.

It's said that a lie repeated often enough becomes the truth, and the fragile balance of a character appeasing their Hollow can, with time and effort, become an actual reciprocal relationship. This is incredibly difficult as it requires exceptional roleplaying and a genuine desire on the character's part to confront the dark parts of their nature.

This doesn't mean denying them or working to fix them; it means learning not to hate them. If, and only if, they can learn to accept the darkness – not fear it or bow to it, and definitely not hate it – can they turn their Hollow into something more akin to a malevolent ally or dark persona.

There are no mechanics for doing this, and frankly it's not as simple as mechanics. Think about it for a moment; we all have parts of ourselves we dislike, actions we would never act on. Even if only wanting to hit a particularly irritating co-worker, no-one in this world has lived their life without wanting to do something they couldn't.

Imagine trying to let go of that – not just accept it but actually be at real peace with the monster you could be, to accept that those desires are a natural part of life. There's still a difference there between acting upon them, but actually accepting that the darkest parts of the human condition are a part of us is not an easy task.

To make the Hollow an ally, that is exactly what must be done.

Judgements

Death and rebirth are central to the themes explored in Sins, and Judgements serve as one of the primary tools to drive that home. Other sections in this book have described what causes a Judgement, but have been deliberately vague on any mechanical details. This is because Judgements, their effects and consequences, fall very much into the hands of the games master.

What Happens in a Judgement

During a Judgement, a character is thrown into a kind of dream world. In this place their fears and insecurities are made manifest. Each Judgement is also linked to the nearest Shard, and in a way the whole process is a little like a play, with the character's nightmares being the actors, and the Shard taking the place of the director.

All Judgements ultimately confront the character with these self-doubts. What happens next is based very much on how the character reacts. Under ideal circumstances, a character will react by confronting their fears and doubts in various ways, overcoming them one by one.

Assuming the character succeeds in confronting these fears, they escape the Judgement and return to life. Of course if they fail to confront them, things get messy. In this case, the character is almost certainly destroyed for good. If they had not yet gained a Creed, they never become a true Nemissary and simply fall back into the status of Broodspawn forever. In other cases, the character is normally consumed, disappearing forever into darkness.

How to Run a Judgement

First of all, it can be tricky to bring all the elements necessary to run a Judgement. Perhaps most importantly, the GM needs to have a good idea of what the character about to go through their Judgement is like. This can create problems if the game hasn't been running for a long time, or if a particular player has made a very bland character. It's important to deal with this sort of thing in one way or another.

In most cases, a quick conversation should be enough to work out some basic details on what you should do. For instance, it's often enough to simply go over with the player the various questions that character generation poses; after all, if these have been answered, you should generally have enough information to go on.

Remember that everyone has fears and insecurities. Even if a player insists that their character doesn't have any, that in itself is an insecurity. For instance, where a player resolutely sticks to their idea that their character fears nothing, then you can easily run with a fear of simply being afraid. Deep down, every character must have a weakness somewhere. They're not human if they don't. If all else fails, remind a player that without those insecurities their very

humanity is lost and they will fail the Judgement before it even begins.

Once you've worked out the basics – at least what the character's fears are – you can proceed in one of two ways. The first is to take that player aside and deal with the Judgement individually. The second option, and the way we recommend, is to make it a group experience. In either case, the GM will need to run various NPCs that will emerge throughout the Judgement. The reason why we suggest doing it as a group experience is because a GM can easily give these roles to members of the group and that way the Judgement can be undertaken for an individual player without making the group wait and do nothing.

It's important to look at the Judgement as a series of challenges. A character should be presented with choices, and what they decide to do defines whether they should succeed or fail. Ultimately, it's not about dice rolls; it's about choosing to overcome a problem rather than run away from it.

Normally a Judgement should last between 1 to 3 Scenes, and as each one is resolved, the GM can either determine that the character has failed, in which case they gain a temporary Spite, or that they have succeeded, in which case they move onto the next Scene.

Now, a word of caution; success and failure are very subjective. It's easy to get stuck on the way we would resolve a situation, and that isn't what's important. All that matters is that the character acts and resolves the situation in their way. As long as they make a choice and overcome the problem, they should move onto the next scenario. Only doubt and a fear of action should result in temporary Spite.

If a character does fail at one of these scenarios, the GM should immediately move onto the next, after the character gains their Temporary Spite. Of course, if they succeed, that might be the end of the Judgement all together, and once the GM feels the character has sufficiently overcome the fears and doubts represented by the Judgement, they should be free to leave. In addition, if the character's way of resolving the situation aligns with their Creed, they should be given 1 Temporary Creed as a reward for success. However, if a character fails two consecutive scenarios, the Judgement is a failure and the GM has two basic options.

Normally, a character that fails their Judgement should be destroyed as mentioned above. However, if a GM feels this might disrupt the game, or they specifically would like to be lenient, they can instead give the character one permanent rank of Spite and allow them to escape the Judgement.

The First Judgement and the Second Breath

In the normal course of things, all Nemissaries have already had one Judgement before the game begins during their Second Breath. Some GMs though might prefer the idea of running through this particular Judgement with players individually before the game begins as a prelude, or alternatively a game might begin with the players playing human characters, and they are then elevated to Nemissaries. In which case, it's important to understand what this first, very unique Judgement is like.

It begins when the Nemissary first reaches a Shard, and brings about a sense of peace; at least for a little while anyway. Each Nemissary feels before them some of their strongest emotions. This feeling never lasts, however, and soon enough the Shard begins to confront the Nemissary with their fears and doubts.

Unlike normal, though, the Nemissary doesn't have a Creed to protect them, and so the Shards are far more aggressive in dredging up the painful events in the new Nemissary's past. In addition, without the protection that the Creed offers, the lure of the Broodsong is an almost overwhelming power in this situation.

Through all of this though, there is still hope. As the new Nemissary confronts their various fears and doubts, their responses will draw them towards one of the Creeds. As this happens, the Shard will begin to tailor the scenario and environment to fit that ideology. If they ultimately stick to the path they are choosing, they'll emerge through the far side of the ordeal with a Creed.

It's important to understand that doing this is not just like joining a faction, or accepting a belief. It's a fundamental change to the nature of the Nemissary's soul. It represents a powerful additional bulwark against the Broodsong, and offers each Nemissary a means of properly controlling the Anima inside them and harnessing the full might of their Songs.

Judgements of this type should take place over a minimum of three Scenes, with the first Scene being neutral in tone and the subsequent scenes being used to lead the Nemissary closer to their Creed. Judgements of this type have one additional difference in that the Nemissary does not gain Temporary Spite for failing one of the Scenarios, but of course the consequences are still truly dire and a failure in this case will finally and irrevocably turn the Nemissary back into a Broodspawn.

Running the Game

The game needs a Games Master. If you are reading this, you have probably never done that before. This whole section is dedicated to at least trying to make the process of GMing for the first time less traumatic for you.

The Basics

Before you go anywhere you need to understand the basics of how GMing works. The whole thing functions a little like a play with the characters being actors in the

story, the GM in which case sets up the scenes and provides narration to events. The players don't handle every character, and these other characters are the Non-Player Characters, or NPCs; through them, the GM will tell his or her story.

Ultimately the whole thing is a group exercise, with the GM building and presenting the world but the players moving the whole thing along and injecting life and drama into the story.

Stories

No-one should expect to run an epic tale straight off the bat. Starting GMs often set their sights too high and find themselves disappointed as a result.

The best way to begin is usually to start small. Try and start the game with a plan to run a single contained story; something with a beginning, middle and an end. If this blossoms out into a long-running campaign, that's great, but if it doesn't then don't worry about it.

The reason we say all this is because a concise story is always better than a rambling tale, and they are a damn sight easier to plan and execute than giant interconnected storylines.

Think of most modern TV shows. There's normally a long-running plot thread, but each episode has to stand out on its own as good entertainment. Usually, you don't even get a big hint in terms of what's to come regarding the main overarching story until later in the series, and even then it's often a slow gradual climb towards an epic finale.

In a sense, you can look at a whole series in the same way as an episode. They both have beginnings, middles and ends, and it's this structure which is most important when telling a good tale.

Planning

The easiest trap to fall into is the idea that as the GM you need to have considered every possible outcome. This is particularly likely if you've only ever run a pre-published adventure. As these have to be contained they don't take allowances for players stepping outside the expected course of events. Often, they'll be forced to railroad the choices of the players as a result.

To most players this is one of the most irritating things a GM can do. Before you know it, it can turn what should be an engaging group activity into an adversarial one, where the players provide clever solutions only to be shot down in order to force them to walk between the lines.

The easiest way to avoid this is to plan with loose, instead of rigid, ideas in mind. For example, say we are trying to work out the idea for a story. We decide we want to do a Murder Mystery. We decide who was murdered, why, how, and who actually performed the deed.

If we were writing a novel, I could work backwards from this point or towards it. We'd construct scenes and build on things slowly until it all came to a finished product, but a roleplaying game isn't like that. If you try to script out every scene, you will fall into the trap we've talked about above.

Instead, it's better to worry about all the non-player characters involved and what their motivations are. By knowing why the person was murdered, we can think in our heads how that character will act. Then all we have to do is find a reason why the players would be involved, and then just let events unfold naturally.

Because we've planned in this way, so long as the players choose to investigate the murder we can't really go wrong; the scenes will write themselves. If you dangle a mystery in front of players they will normally bite. You can watch them running around and investigating, and generally making your life easier by conducting large parts of the story themselves.

This has the advantage of letting you concentrate on the meat and bones of the game. It allows you to not worry about trivia, and helps keep the players involved in everything that's happening.

Interacting

The other major duty that falls to GMs, and perhaps the hardest, is properly portraying NPCs. Frankly, this can be daunting. The players only have to worry about a single character whereas you have to worry about dozens.

That said, there are some good ways to make this whole process easier. Firstly, remember that the story is ultimately about the players and the other characters don't need nearly as much detail to work. When you are designing them, think about broad character traits – even exaggerated ones are good. After all, the players are going to interact with you so frequently that if your characters only have subtle character traits they are likely to be missed. Most of the time it doesn't hurt to create larger-than-life characters; they tend to be the most memorable anyway.

When players approach someone, always try and begin a conversation. If players want to default to dice-rolls to resolve situations, that's fine, but it's often useful to do this simply to set up the flavour of a scene. For instance, say the characters are in a town and want to buy supplies. There's no need to develop an entire cast of characters just to cater to this, but a savvy merchant adds character.

So, when the characters go to sell their gear, rather than simply pulling out a table from the book, address them with a short sentence or two as a merchant. You don't need to labour the point; just a quick "Morning, stranger!" or a question about whether the road's been kind or not can really get across a sense of involvement.

If players choose to talk with these NPCs, it's never a waste of time. Sometimes the best discussions in a series or a movie are the trivial ones. Often they serve to develop interesting titbits about characters that we wouldn't

otherwise find out, and breathe life into scenes that would otherwise be mechanical and dull.

When it comes to major NPCs you do need to take more care than this. You should always try and take time to think about their goals and motivations when dealing with the players. Try to portray them with a particular theme in mind. If all else fails, base them on a character you know well; it can actually be kind of amusing watching the players trying to guess.

Description

Of all the things to learn as a GM, this one is trickiest to master. It takes practice and time to get this right. The long and short of it is that you can do both too little and too much when it comes to description.

Try always to give the players the information that's relevant, but don't overdo it. For instance, telling the players they've arrived at the local town is probably too little information. Telling them that they've arrived at the local town, that it has precisely 23 buildings, 4 bars, is whitewashed on most of its southern side, has slated roofs, an old barricade made of car parts, is next to an old scrapyard on a hill and has a river running through it is a bit too much information.

What you want here is the happy medium between the two. For instance, when the players approach the town you might say "You see a collection of houses off in the distance. The place looks defensible and many of the buildings seem to be constructed from old scrap. From the looks of the sentries, it seems like you'll receive a reasonably warm welcome."

One of the reasons not to supply too much information is that you don't want the players to miss essential details. This is particularly true in any kind of investigative game, as understating details can quickly ruin the plot. If, when describing a scene you give too many elements, players have a habit of blanking out and only remembering a few choice details. To combat this, you need to keep your descriptions reasonably short, and highlight certain key pieces of information.

Let's say you are describing a murder scene. You want the players to know that the body is facing north in the room and the blood trail leads towards a window. You could phrase it like this:

"The room you enter is dark. Shadows cover most of it and on the floor is a body. It faces north and a blood trail extends along the floor, up to a point on the wall where it meets a window." In this way, you've set the essential points of a scene without over exaggerating any element.

Sometimes, no matter how carefully you do this, the players will miss the point. In these situations the simplest remedy is to have an NPC point out the information. For instance, let's say the players were investigating that room.

A Neat Trick

As much as we'd like to think so, we're not all geniuses. We can't plan for every possible contingency, but some of the characters that we portray in the world are. This presents a problem. You might not be able to plan five steps ahead of what your players have got anticipated, but a particular villain might be.

There's a really good trick you can use to get around this plan. Don't decide what the real plot is. Just set up events and let the players reach their own conclusions. Take from all those ideas the one that seems the best. Add in a few twists and turns, and then your villain will seem like a genius. This way, all the pieces will come together at the end and as long as you time your games correctly, you'll often have a week or more to think of a satisfying conclusion.

This might seem a little cheap but it actually tends to make players feel better than if you pre-planned everything beforehand; after all, everyone likes to be proved right. If the player's suggestions turn out to be at least partly true, they'll gain a sense of ownership over the story and generally, no matter how many twists you pull, you'll all come away from it feeling for the better.

The Rules Lawyer

Eventually you are going to encounter a particular form of player. This is the Rules Lawyer. They will not just read the book or build their characters, but they will memorise and reference every little rule in the book. They'll hold you to task when you want to deviate from the letter of the rules and argue almost every point that crops up.

This can be incredibly disruptive to a game. The truth of the hobby is that we can't always pick and choose the players we want, and so it often falls to a GM to find a way to deal with the problem without dismissing the player.

The simplest way is to point out that written right here is the following: The GM may alter or ignore any aspect of the game that they feel shouldn't apply to the story they are creating.

If this still doesn't placate them, just remind them gently, or firmly if needs be, that what they're doing isn't appropriate, and that discussions about the minutia of rules should take place outside of gameplay, and certainly not while you're in the middle of trying to run busy and complex scenes.

"WISH-FULFILMENT?"

One trap that many GMs fall into is letting the players achieve everything they set out to do. Either because they generally want the players to succeed, or because they're worried about the reaction when players fail, they set Difficulties too low or don't ask for rolls at all. Given what we've just been discussing, one might think this is not such a bad thing; after all, the story's still happening isn't it?

In the short-term that's true, but over time there is a serious catch. Sooner or later the players will come to the understanding that their actions have no consequence and they will achieve everything they set out to do. This destroys the mood of the game and damages that all important group effort that we've previously spoken of.

Bit by bit the soul of the game will die, and no matter how impressive the players' achievements or your storytelling, events will ultimately seem hollow and pointless.

They talk about the clues but don't key onto the fact that the facing of the body is significant.

An NPC might address the players in the following way; "You know, this seems a little strange to me. Why would someone take the time to face the body towards the window. That's north, isn't it? Does that mean anything to you?"

In this way, you've given the information you need in a way the players can't fail to notice, but isn't literally telling them. This kind of thing is important for a good story as you don't want to have to directly say every detail that's important. If you did, the players would stop thinking of it as a story and start reducing everything to mechanical terms, which is exactly the sort of thing you want to avoid when GMing.

PLAYER INPUT

We've touched on the fact that you need the players to help you build the story. Players normally want the same things you do, whether they articulate it or not. They want to be entertained and they want to feel like they've done something meaningful.

To really get the game going as well as you can, you need to draw them out. This means not dictating to them, and getting the players to insert their own details into the world. The last thing you want is for the whole exercise to become like you're reading a script. Even worse, is if your relationship with the players becomes antagonistic and the game devolves into trying to beat one another.

The simplest way to involve the players in this is to make them feel like their characters' actions have meaning. You can do this by adjusting your story to their actions. Never force the players to do anything; at least don't use your power as a GM to force them to do so.

It's okay to nudge and prompt the players down a certain path, but don't tell them they must do a thing. Always bear in mind that it's better for your plot to be disrupted than to dismiss a player out of hand for finding a way to sidestep it. In the short run, stopping players from messing with your ideas can seem like a good idea; after all, most GMs will have spent a lot of time building NPCs and setting up the environment they want, and when the players find a way to kill your favourite bad guy or manage to rob the bank without ever walking in the front door, it can be understandably irritating.

The problem with your bad guy suddenly having an armoured helmet, or the bank developing a three foot thick steel guard underneath it is that the players begin to feel like their ideas are pointless. They turn up and follow your script but they lose the idea that what they do has meaning.

In the long run this kills games; after all, you only have so many ideas. If you go with the changes your players make, you get a wealth of new options. Try and look at disruptions to the plot as new opportunities. If you find a plot that you planned ruined, just ask the group for a little time while you work things out. Players – decent ones at any rate – will understand this; after all, most aren't blind to the fact that they've just disrupted your well laid plans. Certainly, the vast bulk of them didn't do it to be bad; they just played their character.

Remember – don't punish players for doing this. It's better for everyone if you don't.

THE RULES

It falls to the GM to adjudicate the rules in the game. A part of this is telling the players what Difficulties they need to roll against and putting them against appropriate opponents. More than this it's up to the GM to decide when the rules are really relevant and to serve as arbiter for any disputes that arise.

Above all else, remember that the rules are not a straitjacket. Roleplaying isn't like a normal game with winners and losers; the point is for everyone to tell a story together and to have fun. The rules are there simply to provide a framework so that success or failure can be measured. Both are important for a story and sometimes the rules just get in the way.

This means that you should always feel free to change or ignore rules that you want to. Keep in mind, though, that you should remain consistent in this; players can easily accept a single change without rancour but if those changes are applied randomly, they'll quickly become annoyed with how you're handling things. Try also not to rule with an iron fist. If a discussion about the rules arises, hear people out and take their opinions into account.

Actions

Adjudicating Actions can seem a little bit tricky at first and it can be difficult to get the right mix. It's easy to feel like you need to get the players to roll for everything they do as a way of giving them input in a game. This is actually fine but tends to slow down the pace of a story. It's a bit like where a TV show or film labours on unnecessary details. It doesn't really ruin things, but it doesn't help them either.

The flip-side of this is making too few rolls. If everything the players do happens as a form of narrative, things may flow well but you'll often be left with a story that seems to lack substance. The ideal balance is to have players only roll when it's important, or – and here's the trick – when they ask to.

There's no problem with letting an entire scene go by without a single roll; so long as the players don't want to accomplish anything particularly difficult, don't force the rolls. With this in mind remember that Difficulty goes all the way from 0 to 6. There's little point making players roll for Difficulty 0 tasks unless you need to know how well they succeed.

The best example of this is investigation rolls. It can be tempting to up the Difficulty of these to make the task seem hard, but that doesn't really help the story any; after all, you don't want the players to fail. You want them to generate information which helps the story carry on.

If you never allowed the players to roll, you'd just be giving them exposition. Instead, you set the Difficulty to 0 and see how many Successes, and therefore how much Outcome, the players acquire. In this way the players feel like they had an input on the scene and the whole thing has a sense of important to it. If you set the Difficulty too high then the players might fail. This is alright, but in an investigative game it might cause more problems than it's worth.

The other type of situation which usually requires rolls is when the players want to do something risky. This can be near enough anything, from jumping from open windows to trying to seduce the governor's daughter. What matters is that failure has potentially serious consequences.

Again, these consequences don't have to be lethal, but they make the players feel like their actions have consequences and stop the game devolving into a wish-fulfilment exercise.

Specific Difficulties

Difficulties are a tricky thing. As we've just said you need to be careful with how you assign them. Difficulty 0, when used, should normally be applied to tasks where you simply want to know how well the character succeeded, and we've mentioned this briefly above. The higher Difficulties need a little bit of extra discussion, which is what we're talking about here.

What Measure is a Power Gamer?

Ooh, these cause some headaches. Nearly every player, when they first start off, won't get the nature of the game – not completely at least anyway. They'll be worried more about what their characters can do in a mechanical sense than the interesting roleplaying opportunities that surround them.

This is normal and it's a phase most role-players go through and then learn to put aside. Unfortunately, some never learn. They still cling to making the most powerful character possible. If you are not careful they can prove very disruptive to your game.

Strictly speaking, it's not always their fault. Whilst some power-gamers like to just twink their characters, others are actually the result of bad GMing.

We've discussed before how a sort of arms race can develop, where GMs try to outdo the players with Difficulties and powerful foes, and the players as a result try and find every tiny loophole they can to gain an advantage. The best way to solve this is normally through a reasoned discussion.

Sit the players down and explain your position and that you feel the extremes they want to shift their characters to are inappropriate. Try to not be adversarial and point out that you don't expect them to have god-like proficiency in everything they do. If this doesn't work, you can always force the point by simply refusing to allow them to spend CP in a way you consider unbalancing.

We feel we need to stress that this should be a last resort as limiting the players directly nearly always causes more problems than it solves.

Difficulty 1: Players with a competent Dice Pool are very likely to succeed against these Difficulties. That said, even this little increase offers a small chance of failure and serves to blunt the number of Outcome achieved. It's useful for reminding the players that something is trickier, but shouldn't ever be relied upon for stopping the players from doing something.

Difficulty 2 and 3: These are where things start to get really hard. At this point the players will need a meaningful number of successes just to achieve the task. Failure becomes a very real option and a high number of Outcome becomes unlikely. These Difficulties should be used where success or failure will change the story.

They are particularly useful when it doesn't particularly matter if the players will succeed or fail at a task, but where the results are interesting in either case. They can also serve as a roadblock for weaker players who are trying to achieve something which you don't think is actually possible. In general, these Difficulties should crop up infrequently and probably once or twice a session at most.

Difficulty 4 and 5: These Difficulties are almost impossible. They rarely crop up as part of the natural course of the game and should be exceptionally uncommon in any circumstance. You only really want to use them to really drive home the point of just how difficult something is, or alternatively in situations when you really would rather the players fail. In either case, **use them sparingly**.

Allowing these sorts of Difficulties to crop up with ease can breed power-gamers quickly, and shift the game from a cooperative exercise into a sort of arms race between you and the players.

Difficulty 6: This one is almost impossible. To achieve it, a character needs at least 7 Successes. To put that in perspective, that's a total Pool of 10 against a Target Number of 3 just to give an average chance of success.

If players are throwing pools of that magnitude around easily, something has probably gone very wrong with the game. We can't stress enough to use these Difficulties sparingly if at all. If for any reason you think you need a Difficulty higher than 6, then you should wonder why you're letting the players roll at all.

Opposed Actions

These actions are really useful for pitting players against other characters without actually resulting to combat. They can actually be very interesting and used to heighten tension or create mood. They are best used as a way of representing things that can be visualised like an arm-wrestling contest. Most importantly, they should be used only where the actions of one character directly oppose the actions of another.

For instance, a foot race wouldn't really be appropriate. Both characters in that case are competing but they could both potentially roll very well and wouldn't impact upon one another at all. Granted, there can only be one winner, but that's just determined by who gets the most Outcome overall.

These rolls should be used to represent situations where two characters are directly opposed to one another. One can't succeed without besting their opponent, meaning they won't generally come out very far ahead. Good examples include the arm-wrestling we've mentioned above, a debate, or again, in a more physical context, one character trying to get through a door while another tries to stop them.

Unlike other actions, Difficulties don't normally apply to these. Granted, they could, but there wouldn't be any point because both characters would suffer the same penalty, and as a rule of thumb when a penalty applies to everyone, it's ignored for simplicity's sake.

Again, don't overdo it and let these actions crop up naturally in the course of a story. They're good for involving players and giving them a sense of challenge, and can also be particularly useful for showing players how good an opponent is without just telling them.

Sustained Actions

Before we go any further, let's just say these are very different from the other actions players will undertake. First of all, they require a lot of time. This can sometimes be minutes, hours, days or even months, and usually commit a player to finishing them once they are begun. For this reason alone they should be used sparingly.

The reason for this is very simple; they re-focus the story, quickly centring all the attention on one sequence of events. This can be helpful from time to time and even excellent storytelling. Viewed in terms of a montage, they can actually form the centrepiece of an epic story. That said, things can easily get out of hand. After all, you don't want to deny the players the ability to do things, but if they suddenly decide in the middle of a story they want to craft a masterwork sword, you can be understandably vexed on how to proceed.

Since these type of actions are most commonly initiated by players rather than requested by you, you need to tread carefully. Try to break up what the player is doing with references to the rest of the party. Even shift aside the normal sequence of rolls and interject other scenes in between. If all else fails and you can't think of a way to accommodate what the player wants, just explain to them that deciding they are going to spend several days crafting a new sword will take them out of the main story, at least for a time.

In which case, make all the rolls quickly, note them down, and then treat everything the player does as a single scene and narrate it accordingly in the form of a montage. The player might have wished for more detail but in these situations the group comes first and in the long run they'll usually thank you for that.

Combat

Of all the topics to discuss, this one is probably the most important. We don't say that because combat should be the central focus of the game; rather we mean it in the sense that it's the single easiest part of GMing to get completely wrong.

Hopefully if you're reading this, you already have a firm grasp of how the combat rules work. If you don't, stop right

now, go back and read them. As a GM don't go into things without understanding the basic rules and those rules in particular; there's just no point. So much rests on you to adjudicate the situation that not understanding the rules can completely ruin a game session.

Now, we don't mean to imply that you should memorise every single rule by rote. Nobody can be expected to do that. What's important is that you have a firm grasp of how things work; how one action flows from another and how the general structure of events unfolds. As long as you know this, you should be able to deal with minor problems without having to stop events and refer to the rules.

Combat is the time when the rules of the game become most critical. Simply put, it's because the player characters' lives are on the line. A whole slew of problems can be created by a single sloppily-handled combat.

Running a Combat

So your players have pissed off the wrong NPC, the Broodspawn have just come into town, or the Big Bad has finished his monologue and it's time for some hurting. In any case the talking is done and the bloody business of combat takes centre stage.

First off, getting across where everyone is and what's going on is your most important responsibility. If you're coming into this blind and have never run before, or from a game that uses miniatures, this can be a significant challenge. The simplest option is to mark locations on paper. This will work fine in most situations as positioning isn't particularly critical in the HOPE Engine and it's more than okay to simply abstract the locations of individuals.

When using this strategy, don't worry about marking out every single detail, just the ones that are actually relevant to the combat. For instance, if the combat is taking place in a building, it's not a bad idea to draw a square map of the room the characters are in.

Don't labour on details. If there is cover note this down and note the starting positions of characters of note. When dealing with mooks, you don't need to be too specific. Hell, it's fine to just mark them as a general area. After all, they're probably going to drop quick enough so remembering exactly which one is which isn't all that important.

As rounds proceed, feel free to scribble over what you've written and redraw the positions of various characters. Different coloured pencils or makers can be very helpful for this sort of thing but they're not really necessary. The point isn't to be specific; just to give everyone a good general idea of where they are.

In terms of mechanics, try and keep things flowing but resolve separate events independently. You should always do it this way to maintain a clear structure, and nowhere is this more relevant than when players or characters undertake multiple actions. These can quickly become complex, involving multiple characters and shifting the order of initiative about. As we've laid out in the Combat Rules, don't panic. Like we've just said, resolve each of these situations as one separate event and then move on to the next.

Too Much Input

A word of caution; this can backfire. You need to be careful that you don't encourage players to overdo their descriptions. Most role-players are exhibitionists to some extent and as a consequence they like to take the centre stage. When it's their Action they have every right to do so but some players will take it too far.

The option of gifting Focus points can act as a very useful way of controlling this. Simply only reward the player with Focus when their descriptions are at a reasonable length. If you like, you can think of it like training your players and in a curious way it's actually a pretty good analogy. As the GM you have to try at least to tailor the game to what you want and rewards are often the simplest way of doing this.

Description in Combat

Closely linked with running a combat is describing it. Just like descriptions in general, this one can be tricky to master. Again, you don't want to say too much or too little. Saying nothing will result in a dry combat and keeps everyone's mind focused entirely on the rules. Saying too much gives opportunities for people to forget exactly what's going on and what's happening.

It might seem strange that too much information can actually confuse the issue, but look at it like this. Just like with describing an investigation, the more details you inject into the scene, the more there is to keep track of and the easier it is to forget the important points.

The best way to handle things is usually to begin each new round with a quick description of the situation as it stands. For instance: "Six of the attackers are still standing. The two to your right look wounded and you can hear your comrades getting closer behind you".

In terms of individual actions, a very short description is normally appropriate, particularly when an NPC beats a player. Don't just assign damage; describe what happens. Even if this doesn't seem important, it keeps the combat feeling more like part of a story as opposed to an exercise in mathematics.

"The blows reign in and you fumble. The assailant manages to catch you with his knife, leaving a deep cut in your side."

This only applies when an NPC manages to hit a player. When a player succeeds, it's really their job to describe

Absent Players

You can face similar issues simply through the complexities of real life. Most players in your games will generally want to be a part of them. Life, though, often conspires to prevent this. If these players are kept out of the loop and their characters never advance, they can quickly become bitter at the situation.

As a result, we advise that if players miss games through no fault of their own, they should still receive a similar amount of Advancement to the other players in the group, and their characters should be assumed to have either taken a background role in the adventure or pursued other interests. Remember that just because someone can't be there, doesn't mean they don't want to be there and that they wouldn't be a productive part of events if they were.

what happens. Getting players to do this can be a bit tricky. The easiest way I know of is to get them started. Describe a few of the players' actions for them, but keep offering the players the opportunity to inject details themselves. If all else fails, remind the players that good roleplaying can earn them Focus and interesting combat descriptions certainly fall into this category.

Judging a Combat

The last thing you want as a GM is the slaughter of your player group – well, actually that can be an interesting goal at times, but only if the players really deserve it. What I mean is it doesn't really serve anybody's purposes if the players all get killed. One of the parts of combat that can be difficult is not letting this happen.

This might seem strange since Nemissaries are very powerful characters. Usually, they'll be able to triumph over most things you throw at them; certainly lower rank Broodspawn and most humans won't present them with much of a threat. As a result, you can find yourself making things harder and harder without really meaning to. What then sometimes occurs is your slightly tweaked difficulty coincides with a bad run of luck on the part of the players and leads to a humiliating slaughter.

This is not normally a good thing. Players resent it and it can wreck plots, so the careful use of enemies is paramount. To prevent this, make sure you have a good grasp of exactly how strong differing adversaries are. This isn't a guarantee, and sometimes you'll just have to "cheat". Granted, in a sense you can't really cheat as the GM, because you are the final arbiter on how reality works in your game world and thus the story. That said, it falls to the GM to also be fair.

We've mentioned again and again that you shouldn't laud this power over your players. What you can do is stack the odds in their favour or against them. You can also deliberately lie about the results of certain dice rolls. This is one of the reasons why GM Screens are often popular. The fact is, all your careful planning can simply be ruined by bad luck; the dice are not your friends. They are whimsical and fickle, and favour no-one. The entire point of them is to inject random chance into the game and because of that, however unlikely, it is possible for even the weakest opponent to triumph over something as terrifying as a Prime Form Broodspawn. Granted, the odds of that are ridiculous, but it can happen.

As a game, Sins has the helpful buffer that death isn't always the end, so just because the group loses or a player character dies, it doesn't mean that the game is over. Just remember what we've said and be careful.

Specific Problems

We've discussed a wealth of very general information on how to run a game properly. Now, to round things off, we want to talk about a few specific problems which might occur.

Real Life Problems

It's unfortunate but not everyone will be engaged in a game, and frankly this is a real tricky issue. Most of the time, the people you want to play this game with will be friends or family, and as a result things that they can do in game can have real world consequences.

We're going to tell you a little story here to serve as a kind of cautionary note. Some of the writing team were involved in a very successful game for quite some time. The other people involved were all on good terms and met once or twice a week for a game.

As time went by, the relationship between characters in the game became more antagonistic. For a little while this was interesting and as a consequence the GM encouraged it. In the end however it had disastrous consequences. Whispered conversations and plotting behind each other's backs became a point of real annoyance. Things in the game soon escalated as one plot was replaced by another and eventually screwing with plans and the destruction of property elevated all the way into character death.

Now we're not saying that characters killing each other is necessarily a bad thing. Hell, we've been in games where that was not only good fun but also a truly epic end to an exhilarating campaign. In this case though, the GM allowed a player to arbitrarily execute another player. Not a fair fight, mind you; just the push of a switch and six months of character development down the drain. The end result was that most of the people involved didn't speak to each other for more than a year in one way or another.

To an outside observer reading this, it might seem silly or even funny how a game could be taken that far,

but remember this; the longer a game goes on, the more attached we are to our characters. We often lose ourselves in the experience of roleplaying and in game slights can become very real insults; the cheap handling of a situation can become a serious sticking point even in an old friendship.

The best way to avoid all these sorts of issues is always to keep any backstabbing between players at the table and a part of the game. If people know what you're doing, and have a reasonable chance to intercede in events, they'll feel at least like they were part of the story. An end to a character is fine, but an arbitrary end to one is just a cruel joke.

Problem Players

For all the same reasons we've discussed above, disruptive players can be a real headache. It's even worse when they don't mean to be. There are a lot of ways in which a player can disrupt the game and there is simply no way to list them all here.

Two of the most common we've already covered earlier in this chapter; that of course being power-gamers and rules-lawyers. There are also subtly more awkward players which require a gentle hand to deal with them properly.

First of all, some players enjoy the spotlight too much. They aggressively grab the GM's attention and attempt to always steer things towards their character's goals and desires. If you are blessed with an entire group of players like this, it will never really be a problem. In fact it will be one of the most ideal situations; you could practically rely on your players to write the story for you.

The catch is that the bulk of players aren't like this. They don't do nothing, but they are certainly not that energetic. They can get overwhelmed by the presence of such a player and end up feeling like they are redundant to the story.

The simplest way to handle this is usually through time management; if the player isn't doing this deliberately, you can just allow the spotlight to linger on them on a while and then shift to someone else. You can keep the momentum, and incidentally engage other players, by shifting attention from one to the next and giving each player their allotted time.

If this doesn't work, you're probably best just talking to the player in question and asking them to tone things down, or deliberately play a character who isn't as assertive. These types of role-players tend to enjoy a challenge, and rather than being offended, asking them to play something out of character will simply be an interesting opportunity to them.

The other extreme to this is players who don't engage. They want to be in the game but don't speak up. They might be shy or not confident with playing a roleplaying game. It's very important to approach these players carefully. If you try and force a solution to the problem you can end up making it worse.

To handle these players, try to engage them slowly. Give them small snippets of spotlight and don't expect a great deal out of them initially. Encourage them to make a few observations here and there but quickly shift attention to others. When they do speak, make sure to quiet the rest of the group and listen carefully. Be careful not to ridicule any of their ideas and in general try to build up their confidence so their level of comfort will increase with the game.

If you are patient and persistent, you can help these players out of their shells and make them just as much a part of the game as everyone else.

Remember that sometimes this isn't based on shyness. There are also players who have genuine problems communicating. For them, you should follow a similar strategy but bear in mind that the problem isn't going to go away. It's never good to alienate people for the sake of having an easier life, so in the end the best solution is to adjust your style of play to make allowances for these type of players.

Time Management

The last thing we want to talk about we have already touched on briefly; how to manage time. In our experience, we think it's one of the most important aspects of being a GM. It sounds simple; give everyone their allotted portion of attention and keep the story moving. In reality, it's a lot more complicated than that. It's not just about players but also about pacing. Virtually every GM we've ever encountered started by running games at a rapid pace which built towards an epic climax.

We do this because we want to imitate the stories we love. In our minds, we tend to only remember the important aspects about them. When we think about our favourite movies, we don't think about every minutia and detail. What sticks in our minds are the impressive scenes, the fights, the love affairs and the heroics. It's easy to forget that what made all these things impressive is the little details.

We remember a friend of ours once asked us why we were bothering to read a book about medieval agriculture; after all, what relevance did it really have to the game? None of the characters were going to be farmers. Hell, the odds we were never going to bring up what we've read within the group.

Our GM replied that you need to understand the little things to make a world live. We can only describe our own lives convincingly because we've lived them. When you're trying to describe a totally alien environment you need to have a frame of reference. We tried to explain that it was by understanding these building blocks that we could weave a more convincing story together.

He didn't really get it, but we think perhaps it was the nature of the example. What we're trying to get at is that a fight with a villain is meaningless if you don't feel something for the characters involved. You have to love or hate them.

Bad films fail because we don't care about the characters, and good films succeed despite what flaws they have because we hang off their every word.

This all comes down to pacing. Beginning, middle, end; you have to have them. Stories fall down like houses of cards if they don't. The most epic conclusion known to man will always feel like skipping ahead to the last chapter of a book, hollow and pointless, if you don't work with your players to make it really matter.

Final Words

In the space we have, we can't tell you everything there is to know about GMing. You could probably fill volumes about it. We've tried to do our best to give you the wisdom of what little we've picked up in many combined years of playing roleplaying games. What we really want to stress is to anybody wanting to start out as a GM, the rewards are great, but it's also a hell of a commitment.

Your own success can be something of a curse; people want to play with good GMs, and you can easily create a situation where your own players don't want new input, because they don't want to suffer through the early tentative steps of a learning GM. That's the thing though; GMs learn – good ones do anyway. We all start off with our individual strengths and flaws. The learning we do is to smooth them out.

For instance, we had a friend who had the potential to be a fantastic GM. His characters were always warm and believable and his villains interesting. He set up good scenes and told a good story, but he never mastered pacing. He never took the time to read enough of the setting and the world to really make it live and breathe.

You see, when a story has enough impetus and strength, it can build itself for a time, giving you a chance to breathe. One way or another he was never willing to make the effort to move beyond his flaws. That's what you have to do to learn; put in the time and effort, and no hobby in this world will reward you as much as the stories, worlds and the wonderful memories you'll craft together with your players.

Useful Stuff

In this final section we are going to give you a whole goodie bag full of diseases, NPCs, animals, example Broodspawn and a quick overview of the level of degradation most structures from the 20th Century would have suffered, along with the type of goods still likely to be useful after a hundred years of neglect.

Diseases

Life's cruellest joke, diseases are one of the most lethal killers in all of nature. Though Nemissaries will rarely suffer their effects, they can certainly still use them to their advantage; not only that but no matter how strong normal human characters become, they are no more resilient to the various plagues of the world than the rest of mankind.

Example Conditions

The following Conditions represent bacteria and viruses found in nature, both those commonly encountered by normal people and the rare few that have been successfully weaponised or even created by mankind.

Anthrax: This strain of bacteria is often mistakenly identified as an airborne toxin. It's actually an ancient disease which has been killing humans and animals for thousands of years or more. The breakdown of world governments and the lack of immunisation programs has allowed this awful disease to spread and become relatively common once again.

Worse still, the bodies of those killed by the disease can harbour it for up to 70 years or more, often causing reinfection when animal corpses are disturbed.

Vector: Most commonly ingested, or via blood contact. This represents contact with endospores often found within animal remains and in nearby soil. Alternatively, this substance can be weaponised and functions as a gas which may prove fatal in even small amounts.

Virulence: 3 / 5+

Interval: 1 day

Persistence: 6

Effect: When in its ingested or airborne form, a victim reduces Body by 1, and incurs -1 Pool penalty on all Actions. In its blood contact form, a victim takes 1 Injured Wound.

When ingested or inhaled, Anthrax has few visible effects and manifests in a similar way to a cold or less severe flu. As time goes on, this will be replaced by serious nausea and coughing up of blood as a patient's respiratory system begins to collapse.

In its blood contact form, Anthrax affects only the immediate vicinity of the initial infection site, causing a noticeable black ulcer and considerable skin bruising. This can continue into full necrosis as the infected area begins to rot. The one mercy of this necrotising process is that it is usually painless – at least until the infection grows out of control.

Pneumonia: Not a specific bacteria or virus, this rather represents a particular set of symptoms common to various harmful microbes. In the modern world, it's rarely fatal due to good living conditions and antibiotics. In Sins it is no small order and has returned once again to being one of the largest killers of the weak, old, and infirm.

Vector: Airborne

Virulence: 4 / 5+

Interval: 2 days

Persistence: 4

Effect: When pneumonia first takes hold, increase all Difficulties relating to Body, Cunning and Reason by 1. Subsequent effects cause a reduction in Body by 1 each time.

The specific symptoms vary but nearly always resemble those of a heavy flu accompanied by shortness of breath and a persistent cough. As the condition worsens, patients will begin to suffer wild fluctuations in body temperature accompanied by chills, aches and pains as the body begins to shut down.

White Fire: This horrific weaponised disease has its origins in the Ebola Virus. Created in secret prior to the Fall, it was always intended to be a devastating weapon, deployed against an enemy while one's own troops remained inoculated and safe. It took on a different aspect entirely when it was observed that samples of Broodspawn corpses seemed to actually be harmed by the virus.

As a result, it was deployed on a massive scale in the hopes of stopping some of the larger Broodspawn without having to resort to nuclear weapons. In both respects this failed and it now remains one of the most tenacious and horrifying reminders of mankind's own folly.

Vector: Airborne or ingestion. This virus can persist in soil and harmlessly in plants for decades, potentially re-exposing populations.

Virulence: 7 / 3+

Interval: 6 hours

Persistence: 9

Effect: The victim loses 1 Body and takes -1 Success penalty to all Actions. In addition, if the disease manages to affect a patient twice, their primary senses – such as the eyes, ears and nose – and many extremities will have rotted beyond use, rendering the victim completely helpless.

Within hours of infection, the victim's skin takes on a deathly white pallor. Bruising and lesions swiftly follow, causing a network of dark lines to spread across the patient's skin. In the centre of each lesion forms a small white abscess. As the condition worsens, the victim's extremities begin to necrotise, the eyes will begin to decay, weeping pus and blood.

Soon, the victim's lips, ears and skin will follow, and in the hours before death, the victim will begin to resemble a corpse in an advanced state of decay.

Convenient Information

You cannot be expected to know everything, and whilst preparation for a game is helpful, there are some things which are just difficult to find out without sifting through large amounts of information. For your convenience, we have included a small sampling of particularly useful facts which might help you in running Sins.

Urban Decay

Exactly what is left of the world before? It varies depending upon what we built really. The Great Pyramids for instance would likely be the last human edifice remaining on the planet, even still standing thousands of years after the most durable modern structures have fallen. Of course, for Sins we are only really worried about what's here a hundred years from now.

Old houses, particularly those built of brick and stone will most likely still be standing albeit in severe disrepair. This is particularly true of areas with colder and drier climates. In these cases, the buildings themselves will likely be standing but any roofs or supports will have almost certainly collapsed. Homes like this, if cared for properly, can certainly have lasted – in fact many communities are based around a core nucleus of reinforced domestic homes surrounded by the ruins of other house stripped to maintain the community and build serviceable barricades.

Skyscrapers and tower blocks, for the most part, will have collapsed or at least be on the verge of collapse at this point.

Where they've been cared for or in areas with persistent human occupation a few might still be in reasonable repair, but for the most part the skylines of the great cities have long been reduced to rubble.

In both these cases, plant life significantly complicates matters. Occasionally, it can actually serve to support buildings with vines and trees acting as much needed structural support. More commonly, plants will prove invasive, tearing apart buildings and destroying foundations. This process will have affected almost everything mankind has built. Roads will be cracked and shattered by generations of unchecked growth and even the major cities of the world are run through with an endless variety of plants and trees.

Perhaps the most striking thing to disappear will be some of those works we most recognise. Almost every monument, bridge and dam on earth will have corroded and collapsed, in some cases creating an impressive, if morbid, spectacle, and in others reshaping entire regions as ancient rivers reassert themselves.

Another thing that will have completed disappeared are tunnel networks, virtually all of which will have flooded or collapsed without consistent repair. That said, there are a few places in the world where such installations were built to take advantage of the native environment. In these areas, more complex human construction and engineering may very well have endured. Also, well-reinforced mines and structures that lie well above sea level may still be explorable in some fashion.

Overall it's best not to get too caught up on the specifics here. What we said above was extremely general and the world is a big place. In the end, realism is less important than the needs of a good story, but consistency and logic generally do help to tell one.

Materials Left

"Quite a lot" and "not much" pretty much sums it up. Certainly, there's enough waste in the world that we can't get rid of whether we want to or not. No matter where you go, you will find junk. It might be well hidden, mind you, even covered by trees, but millions of tons of plastics don't disappear overnight, even if it does happen to last a century.

Most metal items have long since rusted to nothing at this point. Cars are barely recognisable and building supports are long gone. The world's entire supply of petrol has evaporated and you will find virtually no stored food anywhere.

Some canned goods may have theoretically lasted this long but by and large anything so useful has long since been scavenged and used for food in the days after the Fall. Similarly, many drugs and medicines will have persisted, but again they are likely to have been already used.

Books, CDs and even computer components can still be found amongst the rubble, most of which will have survived in fairly good condition. Virtually no guns or ammunition remain from the 21st Century but again that's generally due to use, rather than rust or decay.

As a rule, most things that were available in the 21st Century can be found somewhere, but most often they will be replicas rather than originals. Many of the things we take for granted such as sweets, coffee, tea and synthetic fabrics are now extremely rare, with original pre-Fall items being worth a small fortune.

Just like with the stare of buildings, there's no need to dwell too much on what exactly can have survived. Also remember that almost anything manmade can survive as long as it is maintained, repaired and above all kept dry.

Oddities

There are various things that have changed in the world which aren't just related to time. For instance, virtually every nuclear warhead on earth is gone. The Reapers destroyed them, systematically and with great efficiency. Those that they did not, we fired and as a result it is possible that less than a dozen remain on the entire planet.

The changing climate has made the world colder. As part of this, storms and seasonable changes are far more extreme than they once were. Another thing is the near total lack of anything resembling a Global Positioning System. Virtually no satellites remain and the few that do certainly aren't made available by those who control them.

The Shards also create certain eccentricities. They play havoc with radio signals, often preventing radio communication within miles of their locations. They also have a tendency to attract storm conditions and areas which have powerful Shards frequently see some of the most extreme weather on the planet. The Shards also cause issues with flight. They don't down planes completely, but the large-scale disturbances they create black-out the instruments of the planes. This tends to mean that only the most experienced of pilots can fly safely at all.

Another change of terrifying magnitude is one easily missed by the average person; the world's oceans are almost completely devoid of life. Plankton still exists, thriving at times to impossible amounts and turning entire sections of the world's seas red, and it's the lack of fish which causes this. It's the Broodspawn killing all those fish that also makes travel by ocean a hazardous proposition at best.

Rogue's Gallery

The world is full of interesting and unique people that it pays to take the time to stat up. Unfortunately, players have a habit of murdering them before they have a chance to so much as monologue. To avoid that inconvenience we've printed below a fair variety of prebuilt humans, animals and all the common evolutions of the Broodspawn.

Humans

These NPCs represent a broad swathe of the type of individuals you might find in a given community. Some are highly competent survivors, and others are simply bystanders. They are presented as mostly complete characters but don't include Qualities or Motivations. If those become necessary to know, it falls to the GM to introduce them on an individual basis. Unless stated otherwise, all equipment is assumed to be of Normal Quality.

Guard: This template can be used to sum up a pretty average combatant. It makes a good stand-in for caravan guards, Sheriff's deputies, or random mooks defending a town.

Most guards will be of average physical build and tend to be amongst the better fed and healthier members of a community. Usually they'll be wearing weather-resistant clothing and have gear appropriate to their station.

Binoculars, gas-masks and sunglasses are particularly common accessories, as are trench-coats, dusters and heavy boots. In any case, these individuals tend to at least look the part.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 4, Reason 3, Conviction 3, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 2, Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 2, Authority 3, Resolve 1
Learnt Skills: Keening 0, Stealth 1, Crafts 0, Survival 2, Knowledge 1, Medicine 1
Combat Skill: Marksmanship 3, Archery 0, Fight 2, Melee 1

Fate: 1

Wounds: 3/2/1/1 **Threshold:** 3/5/9/13/17

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand:	(5/5+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)
Shotgun:	(4/4+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-Handed)

Equipment: Shotgun, gas mask, travelling pack.

Soldier: This template is appropriate for experienced troops, either hardboiled sheriffs, veterans of town defences or Breaker soldiers in their prime. These guys shouldn't be taken lightly and a group of them should pose at least a challenge to a group of Nemissaries.

These guys mean business. Most will be well built, fit and in the prime of life. Usually they'll sport numerous scars and injuries, and have a fearsome look about them. They tend to be arrayed most of the time in the full outfit of their profession. Quite literally festooned with guns, they also normally sport heavy armour, bandoliers of ammunition and other specialised tools of their trade.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 5, Reason 3, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 3, Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 2, Authority 3, Resolve 2
Learnt Skills: Keening 0, Stealth 2, Crafts 1, Survival 2, Knowledge 1, Medicine 2
Combat Skill: Marksmanship 3, Archery 1, Flight 2, Melee 1

Fate: 2

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/5/9/13/17

Resilience: 2 (-1 Pool, Hardened, Ballistic)

Initiative: 6/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand:	(6/5+)(Damage 4) (Threat 1)
Shotgun:	(7/4+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-Handed)
Spear-gun (Ballistic):	(6/4+) (Damage 6) (Threat 1) (Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Impaling, Two-Handed)

Equipment: Spear-gun (Ballistic), shotgun, combined combat gear*, gas-mask, chemical cloak, survival equipment.

About the Stats

You should know that all the NPCs in this section have been made with certain assumptions. First of all, their combat statistics are all presented as if that character were attacking a normal sized human being, therefore Dice Pools may need to be adjusted if this is not the case.

Also, where you see an asterisk (*) or similar symbol, it means that a piece of gear or an Enhancement is affecting the trait. To work out which, look for the item with the corresponding symbol.

Finally, none of the entries in this section have Qualities or Specialities. This is not an oversight, but rather because they represent generic examples of their kind they weren't given them. GMs should feel free to add Qualities and Specialities of their choosing to any of the humans or animals in this section.

Average Joe: These people are nothing special. They make up the vast bulk of individuals you are likely to encounter in the world. Their skill sets normally vary a bit from this mould and you can simulate pretty much anybody by just swapping a few of the skills around on the sheet.

There are very few common themes here, other than these people tend to be dressed in clothes which suit their profession. Unless they are important NPCs they probably won't stand out in any other respect.

Attributes: Body 3, Prowess 3, Reason 2, Conviction 3, Passion 2, Cunning 3

Natural Skills: Athletics 1, Perception 2, Logic 1, Panache 2, Authority 1, Resolve 1

Learnt Skills: Keening 0, Stealth 1, Crafts 1, Survival 1, Knowledge 1, Medicine 0

Combat Skill: Marksmanship 1, Archery 0, Fight 1, Melee 1

Fate: 1

Wounds: 3/2/1/1 **Threshold:** 2/4/7/10/13

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 4/5+

Combat:

Hand to hand:	(4/6+) (Damage 3) (Threat 1)
Knife:	(3/6+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)
Shotgun:	(5/6+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-Handed)

Equipment: Trade tools, knife, borrowed shotgun in an emergency or other suitable light armaments.

Nomad: This template is intended for wanderers, either as individuals or as part of a group. In terms of overall CP they are closer to a guard or a soldier than the Average Joe, but aren't quite as formidable in combat as those types.

This template is useful if you need to quickly figure out the stats of a group encountered in the wilderness, and while not massively combat focused can actually be surprisingly dangerous if ever allowed to become the hunter rather than the hunted.

These people nearly always have heavy travelling robes. Often this will include gas-masks, sunshades, and large backpacks. They might have pack animals or carts with them, and they tend towards carrying a wide variety of armaments. Most commonly this will include at least spears, but also likely extends to shotguns and traps, and even explosives in some rare cases.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 4, Reason 3, Conviction 3, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 3, Perception 3, Logic 1, Panache 1, Authority 2, Resolve 3

Learnt Skills: Keening 1, Stealth 2, Crafts 2, Survival 2, Knowledge 1, Medicine 1

Combat Skill: Marksmanship 2, Archery 1, Fight 1, Melee 2

Fate: 1

Wounds: 3/2/1/1 **Threshold:** 3/5/9/13/17

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand:	(5/6+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)
Spear:	(5/5+) (Damage 5) (Threat 2) (Reach 1, Variable, Impaling)
Shotgun:	(6/5+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Slow Reload, Simple Munitions, Single Shot, Two-Handed)

Equipment: Fine quality travelling gear, 3 spears, shotgun, rain coat, radiation medicine.

Grizzled Veteran: These people are not pushovers. They've seen more than enough fights to go around and they are one nasty customer. Given the right circumstances they could prove a threat even for a Nemissary.

You should use these types of people sparingly and this template could easily be adapted into a serious antagonist for a starting group.

These people are individuals. Other than military overtones, they don't tend to dress in a particular way. They are normally armed to the teeth and their appearance is usually of surprising quality, including numerous well-kept guns and other armaments which may include highly specialised and rare ones.

Attributes: Body 5, Prowess 5, Reason 4, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 3, Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 2, Authority 3, Resolve 3

Learnt Skills: Keening 1, Stealth 2, Crafts 0, Survival 3, Knowledge 2, Medicine 2

Combat Skill: Marksmanship 4, Archery 2, Fight 3, Melee 2

Fate: 3

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/6/11/16/21

Resilience: 2 (-1 Pool, Hardened, Ballistic)

Initiative: 7/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (7*/4+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)

Spear-gun (Ballistic): (7*/3+) (Damage 6) (Threat 1) (Two Handed, Impaling, Simple Munitions)

Adv. Combat Shotgun: (8*/3+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Auto-Fire 2, Two Handed)

Equipment: Learnt combat shotgun, Spear-gun (Ballistic), Combined combat gear*, Intimidating outfit, Gas-mask, Radiation gear, anything else he needs.

Community Leader: This is a template for another much more advanced NPC. Certainly not a combatant, these people can still be dangerous. They are extremely competent in terms of social ability and defence. This template is best used to represent exactly what the name says, and with a little bit of tweaking it can also serve as an experienced trader or non-martial military leader.

These guys tend to be well dressed and at least reasonable to look at. Other than that, details tend to vary tremendously and need to be decided on a case by case basis as appropriate.

Attributes: Body 3, Prowess 4, Reason 5, Conviction 4, Passion 4, Cunning 6

Natural Skills: Athletics 1, Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 4, Authority 3, Resolve 3
Learnt Skills: Keening 2, Stealth 0, Crafts 2, Survival 1, Knowledge 3, Medicine 2
Combat Skill: Marksmanship 2, Archery 1, Close Combat 2, Melee 0

Fate: 3

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 2/4/7/10/13

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 9/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (7/5+) (Damage 3) (Threat 1)

Equipment: Fine quality clothing, anything else within reason can be gained with minimal effort.

Animals

Though not likely to provide direct opposition to the characters, animals are nevertheless important to the world. Some exist for reference or to provide traits from which to build Broodspawn. A few, such as wolves or bears, could provide a real physical threat to the players.

Animal traits are presented a little differently to human ones. The main difference is that they don't possess skills in the normal sense, simply having a basic skill rank and then notations of any skills in which the animal is particularly proficient. Also, animals may possess Enhancements, all of which are considered Innate and don't imply that the animal is mutated in any way – they are simply used to represent the natural capabilities of such creatures.

Small Cat: A scraggy little creature, it bears much more in common with a wild cat than its domesticated ancestors. Frankly, it looks like it wants to scratch you. Basically harmless, this can be used to represent any small animal in a pinch.

Attributes: Body 1, Prowess 4, Reason 1, Conviction 2, Passion 3. Cunning 2
Note: *Tiny size.*

Fate: 1	**Skill:** 4+ (Stealth & Athletics 3+)
Enhancements: None.	

Wounds: 2/1/1/1 **Threshold:** 1/2/3/4/5

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 4/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (5/4+) (Damage 1) (Threat 1)

Dog: This is a pretty average canine. The template can be used for most breeds of dog that are still domesticated, or for smaller or less aggressive breeds of wild dog.

Dogs are much as they have always been. Their appearance varies tremendously and as virtually no breeds survive intact to the modern day, they can possess almost any combination of canine features.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 4, Reason 1, Conviction 3, Passion 4, Cunning 2
Note: *Small size.*

Fate: 1	**Skill:** 5+ (Survival 3+)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons.	

Wounds: 3/2/1/1 **Threshold:** 3/5/9/13/17

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 3/5+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (5/5+) (Damage 6) (Threat 1)

Great Cat: This can represent lions or tigers, and is a pretty terrifying combatant. Trust us, even a Nemissary wouldn't want to tangle with one of these creatures. Given how many great cats were kept in zoos before the Fall, it's not surprising that there are breeding communities of tigers in the mountains and hills of America.

It's hard to describe these creatures as anything but majestic and beautiful. All the tragedies of the world have done nothing to diminish the predatory grace of the great cats.

Attributes: Body 7, Prowess 5, Reason 1, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 3
Note: *Large size.*

Fate: 2	**Skill:** 4+ (Stealth & Athletics 3+)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons.	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 4/8/15/22/29

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (7/4+) (Damage 9) (Threat 3) (Impact 3, Reach 1)

Grizzly Bear: If you really want to teach your players a lesson in humility, let them piss one of these off. Trust us, unless they are pretty damn hard, they're about to get their heads torn off their shoulders and their body made into interesting patterns of blood-work in the local woods.

These things are fairly common in North America, and survive despite the Brood and every other hazard that's come their way. There's a good reason; few other animals will go anywhere near one, and even the average Broodspawn would just end up as dinner.

If you see it from afar you might call it beautiful or even majestic. If you've just annoyed it, that's probably the last thing on your mind. Teeth, claws and more teeth is probably more what you're thinking of – that, and if you can run faster than the guy next to you.

Attributes: Body 8, Prowess 5, Reason 2, Conviction 5, Passion 4, Cunning 3
Note: *Large size.*

Fate: 2	**Skill:** 4+ (Close Combat & Athletics 3+)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons, Natural Armour.	

Wounds: 5/4/3/1 **Threshold:** 5/9/17/25/33

Resilience: 2

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (7/3+) (Damage 10) (Threat 3) (Impact 5, Reach 1)

Small Bird: Mostly harmless, this template can be used for any small birds up to the size of a large hawk.

There's not much to say here about appearance other than that most birds have a stunning natural beauty and you should probably describe them as such.

Note: If this profile is being used to represent something like a pigeon or a sparrow, ignore the combat stats and assume they are incapable of doing anything but fleeing as such birds are highly unlikely to pose a direct threat to anything larger than themselves, let alone an adult human.

Attributes: Body 1, Prowess 5, Reason 1, Conviction 1, Passion 3, Cunning 3
Note: *Tiny size.*

Fate: 1	**Skill:** 4+ (Athletics 3+)
Enhancements: Wings × 2*	

Wounds: 1/1/1/1 **Threshold:** 1/2/3/4/5

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 4/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (6/4+) (Damage 1) (Threat 1)

Wolf: Consummate survivors, wolves have clung to life all across America. They don't always do well, but packs of them do manage to eke out an existence in the sub-arctic climates of the north. This template can also be used to represent creatures such as hyenas or specifically bred attack dogs.

Beautiful and savage in equal measure, wolves are a rare treat of something majestic in an otherwise visceral and awful world.

Attributes: Body 5, Prowess 4, Reason 1, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 3

Fate: 1	**Skill:** 4+ (Survival 3+)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons.	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/6/11/16/21

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 4/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (5/4+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1)

Horse: Surviving across much of the world, both in the wild and in human hands, horses seem forever linked to humanity. They are useful and sturdy creatures, albeit temperamental and easily spooked ones. Numerous breeds exist, and the template below represents a very average specimen.

Horses vary tremendously from place to place, both in terms of size and colouration. Most are well built and attractive creatures with coats of deep brown hues and spots of white.

Attributes: Body 8, Prowess 4, Reason 1, Conviction 3, Passion 3, Cunning 2
Note: *Large size.*

Fate: 1	**Skill:** 6+ (Athletics 3+)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons.	

Wounds: 3/2/1/1 **Threshold:** 5/9/17/25/33

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 3/6+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (5/6+) (Damage 10) (Threat 3) (Impact 3, Reach 1)

Broodspawn

Like animals, the Broodspawn don't possess all the traits inherent to humans. Specifically, just as noted in the rules for the Brood, their skills are based on Synergy rather than any actual learning, so each Broodspawn simply has a notation of its target numbers for the two types of tasks it can accomplish; that being killing things and, well, everything else.

All the Broodspawn presented here are based on the Average Joe template. As a result, this can serve as a useful reference for how evolution proceeds in practice through each of the stages.

Risen: The first and weakest of the Broodspawn, this represents the Average Joe almost immediately after rising from the grave.

Still largely human, this Broodspawn's form is marred with splatters of gore and still adorned with torn clothing. Its eyes and teeth betray its changing nature. Their eyes have lost their human appearance and become jet black orbs. Its human teeth have begun to fall away, replaced with jagged shark-like ones.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 3, Reason 1, Cunning 2

Synergy: 1	**Skill:** 5+/6+
Enhancements: None	
Unique Features: None	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/5/9/13/17

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 3/5+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (4/5+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)

Ravager: These creatures have normally been alive for a few hours and are certainly a more significant threat than their lesser kin. They regenerate quickly now, are difficult to put down and often attack in swarms. Their behaviour is also somewhat different. Unlike the jerky movements of the Risen, these creatures are lithe and predatory. A glimmer of intelligence has returned to their eyes and they move with deadly purpose.

A Ravager is still human in form but can no longer be mistaken for anything but a Broodspawn. Its nose has fallen away and it now possesses a maw rather than a mouth. Its limbs are elongated and it stands nearly a foot taller than its human self. Its long fingers now possess distinct claws and its movement are distinctly alien, fluid and disturbing.

Attributes: Body 5, Prowess 4, Reason 2, Cunning 3	
Synergy: 2	**Skill:** 4+/5+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons	
Unique Features: None	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/6/11/16/21

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (6/4+) (Damage 7) (Threat 1) (Impact 2)

Watcher: The first of the Alpha Strains, the Watchers are not to be underestimated. They are a reasonable threat on their own but their real danger is their tendency to form packs and even hordes if left to their own devices.

Remember that these creatures have intellect well above the animalistic level of their lesser kin and can direct their packs or even hordes in complex strategies designed to isolate and defeat their opponents.

This creature stands tall; its body resembles that of a Ravager but claws and armour plates now grace its form. Its face now has multiple sets of eyes, all gazing with a perverse intelligence at its prey. From its head and back emerge a mane of tentacles, twisting and writhing in the air as if to some song only the Watcher can hear.

Attributes: Body 5, Prowess 4, Reason 3, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 4	
Synergy: 3 **Anima:** 6	**Skill:** 4+/5+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons, Tentacles, Natural Armour	
Unique Features: Free-Willed, Song User, Resilient Mind	
Arietta: Any 9 ranks /Max rank 3	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 3/6/11/16/21

Resilience: 2

Initiative: 7/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (7*/4+) (Damage 7) (Threat 3) (Impact 2 Reach 2) *Grapple +1 Pool

Brute: These things are nasty. Anybody who decides they are going to stop one with brute force is going to get a rude awakening. Even Nemissaries will need to bring out the big guns or use seriously powerful Arietta to stop one of these things.

A Brute is massive, standing nearly 8 feet tall and its original body now takes the place of its shoulder. One arm has grown massive in scale, featuring sickle claws and additional eyes. Its form is built entirely around this killing appendage. Its new head, burst from what would have been the human's torso, is totally alien. Virtually every vestige of humanity has been abandoned in this pale and twisted creature.

Attributes: Body 7, Prowess 3, Reason 1, Cunning 2	
Note: *Large size.*	
Synergy: 3	**Skill:** 4+/5+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons × 2, Natural Armour × 2	
Unique Features: None.	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 4/8/15/22/29

Resilience: 4

Initiative: 5/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (6/4+) (Damage 11) (Threat 3) (Impact 6, Reach 2)

Stalker: The unseen killers of the Brood, these things are particularly dangerous one on one and even more-so because they refuse to fight fair. Unlike the other Broodspawn, these guys won't come charging at you; they'll wait until you're resting, sleeping or taking a dump, then with something approaching maniacal glee, they will do their very best to tear you limb from limb.

This creature is thin, seeming almost frail for one of the Broodspawn, its limbs and fingers long and exaggerated. Their skin seems to change with the environment, both colour and texture shifting, breaking up its form and aiding the creature's stealth. Its head resembles a Ravager in all respects barring its eyes; like a Watcher, there is a malign intelligence there, far more than its animalistic body would suggest.

Attributes: Body 6, Prowess 6*, Reason 2, Cunning 5**

Synergy: 3	**Skill:** 4+/5+ (Stealth +3 Pool)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons, Increased Prowess*, Increased Cunning**, Natural Armour	
Unique Features: Mercurial Flesh.	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 4/7/13/19/25

Resilience: 2

Initiative: 8/4+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (9/4+) (Damage 8) (Threat 2) (Impact 3, Reach 1)

Brood Mother: Rarely encountered, these creatures can be the focus of an entire campaign. Their individual physical capabilities are immense but the real threat is that they never appear outside of the largest Hordes. Defeating one could be a campaign in itself and they will likely never be encountered without at least a dozen Ravager guards and more likely a handful of Brutes and Stalkers waiting in the shadows for an opportunity to strike.

The Brood Mother is massive, its bloated form standing at least 12 foot high. Likely, the mass of its body and multiple tails would make its length many times that. Its face resembles the Watcher it once was, but now its many eyes are organised, keen and focused. The tentacles have expanded, even replacing its legs as its main means of locomotion.

Attributes: Body 7*, Prowess 6**, Reason 3, Conviction, 4, Passion 3, Cunning 4
Note: *Large size.*

Synergy: 4 **Anima:** 18	**Skill:** 3+/4+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons, Tentacles × 2††, Natural Armour × 2, Increased Body × 2*, Increased Prowess × 2**	
Unique Features: Free Willed, Song User, Resilient Mind, Broodsong Immunity.	
Arietta: Any 18 ranks / Max rank 4	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 4/8/15/22/29

Resilience: 4

Initiative: 8/3+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (10/3+) (Damage 9) (Threat 7) (Impact 4, Reach 6††) *Grapple +1 Pool

Titan: This thing isn't really intended to be taken on one on one. Its' resistance to damage is immense, and its size and special abilities allow it to fight many opponents at once with ease. Even on its own, this creature could level most settlements; hell, even an anti-tank rifle wouldn't be a guarantee of stopping it. Nemissaries should think very carefully before going into combat with one, and the GM should use these horrifying creatures sparingly.

Grown in size even beyond the Brute, this thing is now closer to a house in scale. Dozens of additional limbs festoon its body. Even its means of movement no longer resembles that of a human, becoming some perverse parody of a great cat. Every part of it shifts and moves and every limb ends in deadly appendages.

Attributes: Body 10**, Prowess 5*, Reason 1, Cunning 2
Note: *Huge size.*

Synergy: 4	**Skill:** 3+/4+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons × 3, Natural Armour × 3, Increased Prowess × 2*, Increased Body**, Tentacles*	
Unique Features: Shiva's Child	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 6/11/21/31/41

Resilience: 6

Initiative: 6/3+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (9/3+) (Damage 16) (Threat 5) (Impact 11, Reach 4) *Grapple +2 Pool

Wraith: Even more deadly than the Stalker, this creature is the premiere assassin of the Brood. One on one it will probably be able to prevail over a Nemissary of equivalent Creed, particularly if this creature gets the drop on them. Frankly, this creature won't ever enter a fight without the element of surprise.

It's also worth mentioning that these creatures are not only intelligent but malicious. Unlike the other Broodspawn, this thing will happily go after your friends and family, and wear their skin just to taunt you. In fact, the example presented here is perfectly capable of altering its form to appear as human beings, and given a chance could wreak untold havoc in a settlement.

This monstrosity's form is ever-shifting. Most of the time, it appears vaguely human with its long limbs moving and twisting in the air. Even like this, its skin has a fluid grace, warping and twisting, making it seemingly impossible for you to pick out a solid shape in its mercurial form.

Attributes: Body 6, Prowess 9*, Reason 3, Cunning 5**	
Synergy: 4 **Anima:** 12	**Skill:** 3+/4+ (Stealth +3 Pool)
Enhancements: Natural Weapons × 3, Increased Prowess × 3*, Increased Cunning**, Natural Armour × 2	
Unique Features: Mercurial Flesh, Song User	
Arietta: Any 9 ranks /Max rank 4	

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Threshold:** 4/7/13/19/25

Resilience: 4

Initiative: 9/3+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (13/3+) (Damage 12) (Threat 2) (Impact 7)

Abomination: Mechanically, this Prime Form template is based on a Titan, and represents one of the most directly deadly things in the setting. Stopping one, for anything but elder Nemissaries, is all but impossible. It could blaze a trail of destruction across an entire state with ease.

Putting one in your campaign is a bit like dropping a nuke. Everyone will notice. To maintain any semblance of realism, you should bear in mind that pretty much every elder Nemissary in an area will drop what they are doing and converge on the location. They might not engage it immediately but they'll be damn well thinking of ways to stop it. If the players are responsible for making one of these, the first thing they are likely to do is clean house. Honestly, the players would deserve everything they get.

This creature towers over everything around it. Standing as tall as a small tower block, the scale of the creature is difficult to believe. It resembles some strange combination of cat and squid, moving its immense form with a grace that should be impossible for its size. Its face is a mass of eyes and fangs, its dozens of limbs ending in razor-like claws, and hundreds if not thousands of pseudopods and tentacles dangling below its immense bulk.

Attributes: Body 16*, Prowess 6*, Reason 2, Cunning 4	
Note: *Gigantic size.*	
Synergy: 5	**Skill:** 3+/4+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons × 3, Natural Armour × 3, Increased Prowess × 3*, Increased Body × 3*, Tentacles* × 2, Multiple Eyes, Tremor Sense	
Unique Features: Shiva's Child, Resilient Mind	

Wounds: 5/4/3/2 **Threshold:** 9/17/33/49/65

Resilience: 6

Initiative: 12/3+, +1 Success.

Combat:

Hand to hand: (11*/3+) (Damage 22) (Threat 9) (Impact 17, Reach 8)
*Grapple +3 Pool

Nightmare Spawn: Get ready to end the world. No, seriously. This thing is almost unstoppable. The Reapers made them as super-weapons and never finished them. If one wakes up, you might as well be unleashing a Great Old One. Frankly, that's the closest thing to the concept we're trying to get across here.

We've given stats here to imply that they could be defeated, but without Rank 6 Arietta, the odds are stacked against pretty much anything. If you are about to use one of these, ask yourself "Do my group REALLY deserve this? Do I hate them that much, and do I want to wreck my own plot?"

Frankly, if this isn't the end of a Story in which your players have reached Rank 5 or 6, or where its emergence is a major plot point, just don't.

In appearance, this creature's size is maddening; potentially hundreds of feet tall, its body covers more than a city block. Its individual features are difficult to make out, and its entire form is a writhing composite of tentacles and limbs shaped loosely like some monstrous dragon; wings, tail and terrifying maw all included.

Attributes: Body 19*, Prowess 5*, Reason 2, Cunning 4	
Note: *Titanic size.*	

Synergy: 6 **Anima:** 6	**Skill:** 3+
Enhancements: Natural Weapons × 3, Natural Armour × 3, Increased Prowess × 3*, Increased Body × 3*, Tentacles × 2, Multiple Eyes, Tremor Sense	
Unique Features: Shiva's Child, Resilient Mind, Broodsong Immunity, Song User, Mercurial Flesh	
Arietta: Any 14 ranks /Max rank 6	
Note: *Nightmare Spawn possesses Type 3 Regeneration at all times.*	

Wounds: 6/5/4/3 **Threshold:** 10/20/39/58/77

Resilience: 6

Initiative: 12/3+

Combat:

Hand to hand: (10/3+) (Damage 25) (Threat 10) (Impact 20, Reach 9)
**Grapple +3 Pool*

Charging Powers (Optional Rule)

It's possible for Broodspawn to gain access to Arietta they can't actually use. To counter this, we suggest an optional rule that allows Broodspawn to take an Indirect Action each round to charge a power.

Essentially they can put aside up to their Synergy in Anima per round by doing this. Once they've accumulated enough Anima, they can use the power.

This is particularly appropriate for things like the Nightmare Spawn where the idea of it charging up a power such as *Lance of the Firstborn* is just too awesome an image to ignore.

If you are using this, you might also want to consider letting a particularly impressive stunt or seriously damaging hit to the creature disrupt the whole process and stop it using a power.

The Black Crows

One of the only common animals associated with the Broodspawn, the Black Crows are not combat creatures. They resemble normal birds, albeit covered in blood and with compound eyes.

They serve as the eyes and ears of more intelligent Broodspawn – in particular the Harbingers. They don't pose much of a threat in and of themselves, but left alone they will quickly summon other Broodspawn to a location.

Mechanically, if you need stats for one, just apply the Risen template to the stats for a bird of your choice.

Chapter XII

The East Coast

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In the history of America, the East Coast has always occupied a position of great importance; from prominent national figures, to the ravages of the Civil War, it has stood throughout time as the heartland of a great and diverse nation.

Even now, at the end of the world, it remains a fulcrum point upon which great events turn. In this blasted land, mankind struggles to reassert itself, ushering in great crusades and bitter feuds. Through it all the Nemissaries stride like the gods of old—their power felt in every corner of this shattered land.

History

America's history is in many ways a paradox; certainly, compared to the rest of the world, America's history is a short one indeed. It's a tragedy in some ways that people view the nation of America as the sum meaningful total of that ancient continent. In reality its story began long ago when mankind's ancestors crossed the great ice and, driven further south in the search for fertile lands, made it their own.

All of this is fairly common knowledge. What's not known is that the journey of those ancient peoples was not completed for a simpler reason than is often thought.

Secrets Lost

Millions of years ago, an object fell from the heavens. By the reckoning of modern scientists, it was an immense meteorite. It struck the Earth and created the region known as the Gulf of Mexico, and ended the reign of the then dominant species of Earth, changing history forever.

The truth is stranger though; while an object did strike the Earth at incredible speed, it was not an asteroid. There was nothing natural about that jet black shard of the Void which fell to Earth.

It was not the first, and nor was it the last, and the people of those ancient times had an inkling of these first Shards' true power. It was a search for these fragments which drove the ancient peoples of the world, and in their own time, through pain and loss, they came to understand some of the Shards' secrets.

The Gifts of the Gods

The tribes of mankind were in awe at the power of the Shards. They spread across the Earth, seeking them out, and often enough their encounters met with disaster. In their stumbling, as often as mankind gained the favour of the Shards, they awoke the Brood from its slumber.

The tales of monsters at the dawn of time – of dragons and demons – stem from these first encounters, and only the half-woken nature of the Shards prevented mankind's extinction and the rise of the Mother.

Not every civilisation was so unfortunate, however. A few glimpsed true wonders in the depths of the Shards. A chosen few were given vision and power. Mighty civilisations rose, their development accelerated massively by the gifts and the wisdom of the Shards. Amongst the greatest of these are the long vanished civilisations of South America.

The Maya and the Olmecs were the greatest holders of these secrets on that continent. Far from simply taking the wisdom of the Shards, they learned to harness their power and their disseminated wisdom flowed to the other great tribes of their time.

Over the centuries though, much of this pure first knowledge was lost. What had begun as purely mechanical sacrifices designed to placate the Shards' hunger, became an all-consuming faith. The more peaceful tribes began to be consumed by the coming of younger, more warlike civilisations.

Death of the Keepers

Regardless of the rise and fall of these civilisations, all of it was for naught. Their struggles were eclipsed by a far more dangerous enemy. In the 15th Century, the nations of Europe turned their eyes to the Americas, and bit by bit began the extermination of their culture.

Watching with horror, the priests of the ancient civilisations of the Olmec and the Maya realised that their knowledge would be lost with them. To their eyes, these conquistadors were like blind children, having no concept whatsoever of the horrors they might unleash. In desperation, these Keepers buried the Shards, and fled north with their knowledge, praying each day that the slaughter would not awaken the Brood for a second time.

In the north, they found distant cousins but no escape from the horrors consuming the Americas. One by one the holders of these ancient secrets fell, and piece by piece the knowledge of how to contain and utilise the Shards' power was lost to the march of history.

The Last Days

As the ages turned and old civilisations died, a new one rose – the America that the modern world is most familiar with. It began as virtually nothing; colonies of no worth beyond the cotton they produced, but in time through struggle and pain it became amongst the powerful nations of its age.

Fall and Rebirth

They say that the greatest fall the hardest, and nowhere was this more true than in the birth pains of the Second Renaissance. In the wars, America suffered greatly, and turned inwards at the end of the 21st Century. The rise of powers which could challenge it for the first time in

generations made the once all-powerful nation insular and paranoid.

Its foreign goodwill expended and its economy in the process of total collapse, America nearly tore itself apart. Its great institutions came crashing down one by one, and its faith in manifest destiny began to wane.

The first Great Crisis came with the attempted secession of Texas. The situation proved to be a disaster. The Federal Government, crippled by infighting and diverse public opinion, failed to respond properly. Within months, violence took the place of negotiation, and a civil war was only averted by the narrowest of margins.

In this time of uncertainty and struggle, America felt the first true benefits of the Second Renaissance. As its government spiralled closer and closer to the brink of destruction, America opened its eyes to the rest of the world again.

The rising power of India and China, and the drive to begin the mass exploitation of space gave America a glimmer of hope. The all but crippled industries of America turned their attentions to space, and new charismatic leadership bid everything on the venture to come.

A New Age

In those years America found a new lease of life. The gamble it had made paid off. As the world's eyes turned to space, America led the way a second time. Its industries were regenerated and in time America became synonymous with the Space Race once again.

This new fortune though was not destined to last. On March 17th 2132, the Black Rain began. Like most of the nations of the world, America had little time to prepare. It moved to protect its best and brightest and the government had done all that it could to prevent the country collapsing into anarchy. None of it mattered though. The Black Rain came, and the apocalypse never materialised.

Stunned, the people of America turned on their leaders. In their eyes, too little had been done to attempt to save ordinary people. Rioting and looting had claimed thousands of lives and the country was on the brink of ruin. In this climate of fear and anger, the government did the best it could to restore order, but it was in vain. Soon, the Brood rose, beginning their assault across America.

The major cities of the East Coast were hit hardest by the Brood's rise. High population density coupled with the anarchy following the Black Rain allowed the Brood to spread initially beyond any hope of control. As luck would have it however, the American military responded quickly and decisively in its attempt to curtail the Brood.

The Coming of Blacklight

Whilst the CDC worked frantically to develop some countermeasure to Echidna, the military worked desperately to contain the infection. Initially the combined efforts of the federal agencies met with some success. Borders were closed and communities quarantined, while advanced military hardware met the Brood full on.

Soon, survival scenarios and small engagements were replaced with something closer to an all out war, as hundreds upon thousands of Broodspawn met the military roadblocks and well-defended communities. For all the Brood's fury, it seemed like the government might win out. No matter how fast the Brood replenished its numbers, nor how quickly the Broodspawn regenerated, they couldn't stand against offshore rail-weaponry, incendiary rounds and the full mechanised might of a 22nd Century army.

While the battle took place, another conflict was raging. In New York the dead littered the streets, and survivors were helpless as the Brood hunted them through a dead, empty city.

At the height of this conflict, the military made an ill-fated attempt to retrieve survivors and VIPs from the city. The attempt met with disaster; the evacuation was a shambles and the survivors spread through the city, with the Broodspawn hunting them with almost malicious glee.

It was in these fatal final hours that the Reapers first made their presence known to the world. The creature, codenamed Seraphim, made its proclamation and proceeded to ignite something akin to a nuclear weapon in the centre of New York city, devastating much of Manhattan.

The people of America were left in stunned silence. No less than three hours later, an attack began by a second Reaper on military bases across the East Coast. By all accounts, it took this creature, codenamed Blacklight, less than twenty-four hours to destroy every major military installation on the East Coast.

Blacklight's next appearance was never common knowledge to the public, but the military was certainly aware, as it took less than twenty minutes to penetrate and destroy the presidential bunker in Washington D.C. By this point though the president and joint chiefs of staff had already been moved to a more secure location.

Blacklight then proceeded to target large camps of survivors, notably toying with those he assaulted, like a cat playing with its food. It's from these incidents that the most accurate descriptions of Blacklight emerged.

It was described standing at least three metres tall, a creature whose body was composed almost entirely of a

Shameless Plug

Incidentally, if you'd like to replay those events, feel free to join us on our website to buy the adventure "Sins: Dead City".

glossy black material similar to the Shards that fell in the Black Rain. Its form was said to be basically human, but with two great black wings, and its face was blank, save four blue eyes. The most evocative part of its appearance was its namesake; a crown of what appeared to be black fire around its head.

Nuclear Fire

Blacklight seemed unstoppable. Across the world, news filtered back that no less than seven of these creatures had appeared, and where before the Brood had been a disorganised mob, they now moved like an army.

All across America the pattern of the Brood's activity changed. Instead of wasteful assaults, the Broodspawn refused to engage the American armies head-on. They attacked small towns and survivor holdouts instead, dramatically increasing their numbers. Worse still, they began to breed.

Soon the military was desperate. It now seemed victory was slipping out of their grasp. On the East Coast, the situation had been largely contained by the firebombing of major cities, but in the more central states the Brood had managed to consume almost every living thing without serious opposition. It was estimated millions of Broodspawn were active in the area. Worse still, Blacklight had continued its assaults, making a coordinated defence almost impossible.

It was then that a ray of hope emerged from China. One of the Reapers there in a remote region, had been killed by a nuclear detonation. Seeing no alternative, and with Blacklight drawing closer every day, the President and the Joint Chiefs authorised a nuclear strike on American soil.

Nothing could have prepared them for Blacklight's survival. The blasts ultimately achieved little but to poison America's largest farming zones. Complicating the matter still further, fallout threatened to kill many thousands more. Though the largest concentrations of the Brood had been stopped, it soon became apparent that those killed indirectly by the blasts rose as Broodspawn just as surely, beginning the nightmare all over again.

Within days, the Joint Chiefs, the President, and the heads of the army were dead. Blacklight was victorious. The Brood stood unchallenged and within striking distance of wiping out every living thing on American soil.

Loss and Pain

At the moment of their supreme victory, when all hope seemed lost, the Reapers vanished. Leaderless and disorganised, the Brood ceased to breed, becoming isolated horrors, and people began to emerge from their shelters. The holocaust which had been unleashed had made life difficult at best. The survivors clung on tenaciously, determined to survive at any cost, and survive they did.

With little or no means of communication, and certainly no help coming, the survivors were alone. The first problem facing most of them was famine. With no ability to grow crops, most communities were forced to scavenge to survive. The lucky few were in areas with ample resources. A handful even managed to reach regions untouched by nuclear scarring or the Brood, setting up isolated mountain communities, scratching a living in the remote parts of America.

The great majority were forced to move continuously from small town to small town, gathering supplies as they went. Little by little the webs of communication spread again. Eventually small communities began limited trade with one another.

Salvation

Mankind's survival was perilous. The communities that survived knew that scavenging would last them only so long, but lacking the power to challenge the Brood, a solution seemed little more than a pipedream. It was amongst the despair of these first days that the Nemissaries made their appearance.

No-one knows where the first Nemissaries made their stand. They were simply too few and too scattered to record their numbers accurately, but regardless they changed the world forever.

The first Nemissaries made their mark in blood. Born of pain and suffering, without guidance these early champions turned their wrath on the Brood and expired in a blaze of glory. Soon though, more cunning and reasoned Nemissaries emerged. They began to organise and gather, and tested the limits of their new-found powers. Soon areas thought lost forever to the Brood were reclaimed. With the power of the Nemissaries came a glimmer of hope, and under their leadership it seemed mankind could rise once again.

It was one of these first Nemissaries that brought about the Great Salvation; a hope that gathered survivors all throughout the East Coast – the Pyreflame Crusade.

The Rise of the Pyreflame

The Pyreflame, like most religious movements, began on a small scale in a tiny settlement known as Tyman's Watch in Maryland. Here, one of the Nemissaries made a proclamation. They stated that the Nemissaries were the last children of God; they represented the Saviour remade. This lone Nemissary, known to history as Mara Caillow, taught that the world was not damned through the Rapture or the wrath of God, but rather made through mankind's own sin.

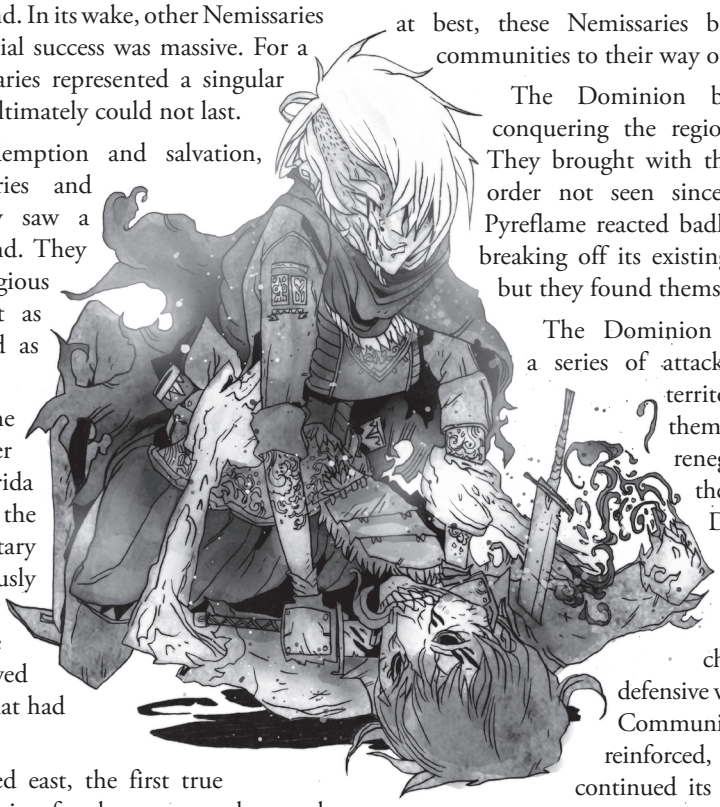
She proclaimed that centuries of violence and death and abuse of the word of God had brought about the scourge of the Brood. Furthermore, she taught that the Brood was quite literally our manifest sins come to haunt us, and that only through overcoming them, physically and in spirit, could mankind be reborn.

Once she had given her message to her first followers, she lit a bonfire and immolated herself in its fires. It's said that she spoke calmly even as the flames consumed her. She said that mankind was like the flame that burns a corpse. In the end, only ash remains of flesh and bone, but that ash scattered brings fresh life, free from the sins of the old. Taking the message of their martyred leader with them, the followers proclaimed the Pyreflame Crusade and through it they were determined that the Brood would be unmade, and mankind restored to their rightful place in God's eyes.

Damnation

The Pyreflame spread rapidly. Its followers, given hope, moved to rebuild and expand. In its wake, other Nemissaries joined them and their initial success was massive. For a time at least, the Nemissaries represented a singular good; a viewpoint which ultimately could not last.

Where many saw redemption and salvation, many of the Nemissaries and free communities simply saw a manipulative woman's hand. They saw nothing more than religious fanatics and looters, just as likely to damn the world as save it.



At the same time, in the south of the country, another power was rising. Florida had managed to survive the Fall nearly intact, its military personnel holding tenuously onto their positions, until eventually the emergence of the Nemissaries allowed them to retake some of what had been lost.

As the Pyreflame pushed east, the first true resistance came. Nemissaries fought one another and humans paid the price. These first true conflicts were generally one-sided. The Pyreflame had numbers and resources, and their enemies were alone.

Fearing what it represented, and their own destruction, these Nemissaries called on ever-more terrible gifts to aid them in the fight. It wasn't long before they called upon the Brood itself, using their mastery to call it forth and command it, rather than simply contain it. The results were horrific. The conflict still rages to this day, though the arrival of a new power would change its nature considerably.

The Dominion

Across the sea from America, new powers had formed. In Europe, where the Fall's damage was less complete, the Nemissaries were more unified. The Dominion is the greatest of those risen powers.

Ruled by a council of Nemissaries, and with armies and resources at its command, it sought for its own reasons to turn its eyes across the sea. It was in Boston where the first great act of this power shook America.

As the Pyreflame and its dissenters feuded, the reclaimed city of Boston fell to the edge of ruin. It was at its lowest point that the Dominion began their assault. It's generally accepted that no less than twenty Nemissaries landed in what remained of Boston's airports, and set about the task of containing the Brood within the city.

Soon the Dominion had managed to establish a foothold in Boston, and though the difficulty of transferring troops across the Atlantic made reinforcements problematic at best, these Nemissaries began to convert other communities to their way of thinking.

The Dominion began the process of conquering the region surrounding Boston. They brought with them a sense of law and order not seen since before the Fall. The Pyreflame reacted badly to the fall of Boston, breaking off its existing conflicts to intervene, but they found themselves soundly repulsed.

The Dominion followed suit, staging a series of attacks into the Pyreflame's territory, but were unprepared themselves when various renegade groups launched their own attacks on the Dominion's supply lines.

Left with little choice, the Dominion re-evaluated their plan, choosing instead to fight a defensive war against the Pyreflame. Communities were walled and reinforced, and the Dominion continued its march south, setting its eyes next on the great battleground of New York.

The Return of the Mother

The Dominion forces were now fighting enemies on all sides. Between the Republic of Florida in the South, and the Pyreflame and the Dominion, they were losing ground every day. In desperation, they gathered greater and greater numbers of Broodspawn to hurl against their enemies.

The Nemissaries which commanded the Brood against their enemies had no idea what it was they were unleashing. Though they were certainly aware of the risks posed by the Broodsong, they had never faced its true intensity. Not since the time of the Reapers had so many Brood gathered. Many of these Nemissaries, unprepared for the energies unleashed, were consumed by their own hubris. Driven mad, they became little more than the beasts they commanded.

These lost Nemissaries began the transformation into the creatures now known as "Brood Mothers", and declared their intention to make all life one with the Mother. Those who survived the initial birth of these creatures whispered the name "Harbingers", fleeing as fast as they could, taking the news of this terrible new enemy with them.

Warped beyond recognition by its power, the Harbingers' minds gave focus to the chaotic Broodsong, bringing order to it for the first time since the long vanished Reapers.

The Present Day

The horror unleashed by the fighting spilled out across the East Coast. Many communities were utterly unprepared for the renewed assault of the Broodspawn. The great powers remaining were forced to cease their feud, locked once again into a struggle simply to survive.

Factions

Mankind has always been divided by conflict. Our very nature is to divide ourselves, and all the pain and loss of the Fall has done nothing to dissuade our ancient instincts.

The peoples of America are torn apart by the conflicts and the feuds of the great powers of this age, and although most are in many ways a shadow of the great nations of the world before, to the average person their power is immense, shaping their lives in almost every way possible.

The Pyreflame

Perhaps the most infamous faction, for better or for ill, the Pyreflame have changed the face of America. From outlandish origins and a tiny following, the Pyreflame has grown to be a faction capable of challenging any in the world today. Its followers run the gamut between fanatics and pragmatists, and it has accumulated vast resources in its attempts to reunite mankind under a single banner.

History

The Pyreflame began with Mara Caillow. A Nemissary and self-proclaimed Evangelist, Mara is a figure of much controversy and myth still decades after her supposed death. Little is known of the woman's origins, other than that she underwent the Second Breath sometime after the Fall, and was one of the first Nemissaries to grow into their power.

Though rumours of her early time as a Nemissary are conflicting, it's generally accepted that she underwent her Rebirth at the feet of the Shard now known as Heaven's Tear on the Canadian border. It's then believed that she wandered for some time before arriving at the ruins of Boston and communing with its notoriously silent Shard.

After this, she headed west and reports of her presence, along with a small group of others of her kind, have been found throughout that region. What is certain is that she eventually found herself in a small and poorly defended community known as Tyman's Watch in Maryland. There she confronted and defeated a tyrannical Nemissary calling himself Duterra.

What transpires next has become more fable and myth than historical fact. The Pyreflame holds that she destroyed the remains of Duterra, and afterwards unearthed a Shard from amongst the scars their battle had wrought. There she communed with this strange and otherwise unknown Shard, and after her communion was done, the Shard itself shattered. She looked at her followers, and gave her fateful speech on the nature of mankind, then lit a pyre that consumed her—which, as the Pyreflame would say, returned her to God's grace.

Little is known of her original companions, and their place in history was pushed aside by those mortals who witnessed her death and supposed ascension. They erected a monument in her honour, and set about to spread the word of the Pyreflame.

Soon enough, their message of hope and redemption spread. Those first days were, without doubt, painful. Few really wanted to believe that God still had love for his children, and those that did believe felt threatened by a new heretical faith. Their greatest support came from numerous Catholic nomad factions and Mormon groups who saw curious parallels between her stories, the Shards, and the words of the Book of Mormon.

The Pyreflame used much of its resources in the early days to do good works, helping to improve defences, reinforce barricades, and hunt the Broodspawn wherever they could. Despite initial hostility, many were eventually won over by the positive message the faction represented and the good works it brought in its wake.

Eventually, preachers, missionaries, and good works gave way to the true Crusade itself. More and more followers gathered arms and began to march on the ancient centres of power from the world before. Their struggle was a bitter one. Though they had numbers and faith on their side, they lacked training and armaments, and combating the Brood took its toll. In the face of this ever escalating challenge, the Pyreflame was forced ultimately to rely on more extreme methods to get what it wanted. Peaceful integration and restoration was largely forgotten in the face of the hardships faced. The Pyreflame began to strip communities in their search for weapons and supplies to further their Crusade.

Before long they met real resistance for the first time. The rise to power of the Pyreflame had not gone unnoticed. The other emerging factions of that time stayed aloof but many independent groups saw a monster in the Pyreflame, and not only did they refuse to give the supplies it demanded, but many began to actively stand against it. Compounding matters further, is that when the Pyreflame completed its long awaited march on New York, they found the beleaguered and desperate survivors of that city unwelcoming at best.

Rather than treating the Pyreflame as conquering heroes, the people of New York fought desperately to preserve the tiny, proud and independent community they had built. They pleaded with the Pyreflame, but its leaders would not relent. The capture of New York was simply too important to their larger goals, and their assaults began.

Their actions had almost immediate consequences. Many groups that were previously unwilling to commit raised arms against the Pyreflame, and it soon found itself besieged on all sides. Worse still, a series of suspicious 'accidents' led to the fall of Boston, and before any expedition to retake the city could be mounted, the Dominion made their appearance almost from nowhere, capturing the city and beginning to spread its own faith to the surrounding regions.

Faced with enemies in every direction, the Pyreflame was forced to retreat, drawing its forces back to its centres of power, and it made an attempt at gathering its leaders for a decision on what should be done next. Before the Pyreflame could reach a decision however, the Harbingers made their full presence known, as New York slipped back into the hands of the Brood, and a succession of furious assaults throughout the Pyreflame's territory forced them to enter a mad dash to reorganise their forces in preparation of this new threat.

Beliefs

The Pyreflame represents a fairly diverse range of religious ideologies, unified primarily by their belief in a manifest destiny for mankind. The Pyreflame draws much of its inspiration from Judeo-Christian mythology, with many of its internal factions differing in the specifics of their beliefs.

Each shares certain core tenets; the most important of which is that the religions and the works of the old world were largely an abomination in the eyes of God. The Pyreflame maintain that while God did send prophets to the Earth, various religious documents that have shaped civilisation were ultimately flawed and distorted by the ideologies of men.

Most factions accept that the Christian God is not the sole power in the cosmos; rather he represents the divine father of mankind, and thus each of us is bound to his grace and mercy. Furthermore they believe that the transformation people undergo to become Broodspawn is a physical manifestation of Original Sin. They believe that the soul is sacred but that the flesh is not, and that mankind was primarily sent to the world because God believed we were not without sin; therefore each person must attempt to live their life as a good person to prove to God that their eternal soul can join him in Heaven.

The differing sub-factions within the Pyreflame Crusade each have different interpretations of ethics and morality in regards to God's wishes. The largest single faction are the **Inheritors of the True Flame**; though they are more commonly known as the Inheritors, or The First. These believers have a fairly lenient moral standpoint. They believe primarily in the Ten Commandments, and in the idea that good is as inherent to mankind as evil, and that just as each of us carries Original Sin inside of us, we also hold the capacity for pure acts.

In their opinion a person must be responsible for all that they do and that good works are in essence an issue of common sense. Though fairly pragmatic in the face of everything that has occurred to mankind, they maintain that keeping true to being a good and honest human being in the face of all the horrors of the world is the truest form of devotion to God.

As individuals the followers of this creed tend to be the most tolerant of the Pyreflame's devotees, regarding with pity rather than anger those who refuse to follow the Pyreflame. Once roused, their anger can be a terrible thing, and this faction can be amongst the most militant when it believes that the Greater Good is at stake.

Another powerful sect of the Pyreflame are known as the **Keepers of Light**, or more commonly the Torchbearers. This group represents one of the more hard-line factions within the Pyreflame. Their origins stem primarily from converted Catholic communities along the coast, leading to a significant divergence in belief from the Pyreflame mainstream.

They take the idea of the purity of soul to far higher degrees, choosing to live by a stricter code of right and wrong than the other members of the Pyreflame. They see mankind as base and corrupt, and believe that only through triumphing over the Brood will they be purified in the eyes of God. They see all edifices of the old world to be a reminder of mankind's folly and sin, and believe that every day not spent combating the Brood is in some small way an insult before God. This faction makes some of the most militant and ardent crusaders, but likewise has produced some of the Crusade's greatest heroes.

The final major faction within the Pyreflame Crusade is the **Devoted of the Prophet**. These curious followers of the Pyreflame exalt many of the ideologies of the Mormon faith, believing that the existence of the Shards validates, in their eyes at least, much of the Book of Mormon, and take both his words and those of the Prophet Mara to heart.

Compared to the other Pyreflame sects, they tend to be extremely dedicated to theology and good works, spending a great deal of time delving into the mysteries of the Shards rather than combating the Brood directly. Their principle ideology is generally benevolent when compared to the more militant Torchbearers, but that's not to say that this particular sect enjoys an entirely wholesome reputation.

Rumours of a curious madness and obsession circulate around this sect continuously, and although its lay-members project an image of community and benevolence there is without a doubt a strong mystical tradition behind the scenes.

Aside from these great powers, numerous minor sects exist within the Pyreflame. Many find their origins in older Christian denominations absorbed by the Pyreflame.

Structure

The Pyreflame is ruled, in theory at least, by a collection of five High Cardinals. These individuals are meant to coordinate the actions of the Pyreflame as a whole and decide on matters of doctrine. In practice, the difficulty of movement and communication has forced the Pyreflame to adopt a less centralised leadership, with each of the High Cardinals representing one fifth of the Pyreflame's total forces.

Each chooses their base of operations separately and presides over a varying number of Cardinals beneath them. Each Cardinal is then in turn generally assigned an area of the country over which to preside, and further commands the loyalty of a number of senior priests – usually one to three per community. In addition to this spiritual leadership, the Pyreflame possesses a far more martial command structure under the auspices of the Templars.

There are seven Templar Orders, five of which are essentially mobile armies under the command of the High Cardinals, with the remaining two Templar Orders serving purely under their own leadership as autonomous organisations.

The five Templar Orders under the command of the High Cardinals are respectively the Orders of Ash, Remorse, Dawn, Cleansing Flame, and Storms, with the two independent Orders being Liberty and Fortitude.

Whereas the five core Orders take command from the High Cardinals under the title Lord Pious, the Order of Liberty and Fortitude exist under their respective Lord Militants.

In each case, beneath these is a robust command structure designed with independent operation in mind. Things can and do get complicated however, as each of the Orders possesses its own distinct command structure, and individuals of one Order are not generally required to take orders from the command of another.

Aside from these groups, the Pyreflame is made up of simple communities and volunteers with no formal rank or training, simply choosing to accept the faith of the Pyreflame and supply the forces of the Crusades. While these groups don't possess a political voice like those above, their importance to the supply lines of the Crusade is vital.

Relations

The Pyreflame's relationship with the other great factions is strained at best. At worst, they see them as heretics, standing in the path of mankind's redemption. At best, they see them as misguided individuals who need to be taught God's will. This has lead to no end of conflicts throughout the Pyreflame's history.

Its greatest enemy by far are the Harbingers, due to their support of the Brood, but no less troublesome are its enemies amongst the Children of Thorns and the Dominion, which as rival faiths represent a serious obstacle to the Pyreflame's goals.

Aside from these relationships, the Pyreflame has few allies, though it does possess fairly good relations with the Republic of Florida, and maintains tenuous if sometimes fraught, relations with the Breakers and the Artificers.

Nemissaries and the Pyreflame

From its very beginnings, the Pyreflame has been influenced by the actions of the Nemissaries. Even today it possesses a great many amongst its ranks. Those that do join the Crusade, though, are often less interested in its high ideals than wielding it like a weapon for their own ends. Because of this, a quiet and extremely deadly war wages unseen amongst the followers of the Pyreflame for control of its destiny.

The followers of the Throne hold that Mara Caillow was originally one of their number, and that in reality the entire Pyreflame is theirs alone to command, and an instrument through which they can bring themselves to be the masters of mankind in a reborn world.

The Architects, on the other hand, violently contest this point of view, claiming that Mara Caillow converted to their philosophy when she created the Pyreflame. They further claim that she didn't die on the pyre at all, but rather was murdered some time after at the hands of Throne agents. They claim that the Pyreflame is the ultimate example of Nemissaries guiding but not directly ruling mankind.

Uninterested in either viewpoint, those Nemissaries in service of the Circle simply wish to destroy the Pyreflame from within, hoping to direct it against the Circle's own enemies and seeing it as one more edifice of a world that died its death long ago.

For their part, the Keepers have little directly to do with the Pyreflame, barring casting an analytical eye upon the internal sect politics, and watching the Devoted of the Prophet in the hopes of learning something from these dabblers in the occult.

Figures of Note

The luminaries of the Pyreflame are many, running the gamut between devout but powerless adherents to the Crusade, and the great movers and shakers with the power to alter the course of current events. A selection of the most notable NPCs are provided below.

High Templar Anna Albright: Second in command of the Order of the Dawn, Anna has been a prodigy from a young age. Now in her thirties, she carries a reputation of stalwart duty and honour wherever she goes.

She was first catapulted to fame in the first Siege of Boston, serving with distinction as a unit commander in the fierce battles with the Brood in the early days of the Siege. Later she became known for her tireless work in protecting communities the length and breadth of the Wastelands.

Recent events have forced a wedge between Anna and the leadership of the Pyreflame. Though she follows the orders of the High Cardinal, she has resisted time and again being assigned to the conflict in New York, and has become something of a thorn in the leadership of the Pyreflame's side.

High Cardinal Lucian Bass: A stern man, fearsome even in his forties, Lucian hides a secret that would shake the Pyreflame to its foundations if discovered – Lucian is a Nemissary, and has been manipulating the High Cardinals under their noses for the better part of six years. Through his careful machinations, the Pyreflame have been shifted ever closer to disaster. Though his actions are always cloaked in the guise of a righteous cause, deep down the Cardinal's motivations are entirely selfish.

A few suspect but none yet dare make their accusations public. People who offend the High Cardinal have a bad habit of disappearing, and regardless of what people might think of him, he still has a Templar Order and the respect of the Pyreflame at his command.

In person, Lucian is a tall, imposing man with greying hair and cold eyes. He does everything in his power to always create a serene image of power, and tends to dominate any conversation of which he is a part. He is known, publically at least, for promoting a hard-line religious agenda, and has pushed time and again for the Pyreflame to act against what he sees as deviants.

The Breakers

The Cardinal's Orders

Recently, High Cardinal Bass' supporters have begun a movement to eradicate so-called 'deviant' elements from the Pyreflame, and to repeal many of its tolerant policies. They've settled on a Pyreflame trading town known as Benedict's Eve to test their new convictions, and if not stopped they plan to make a fiery example of the town's prostitution and gambling industries.

Though some might not object to their initial goals, it should be obvious that these fanatics will only grow bolder with time, and if not stopped they might baptise the Pyreflame in a whole new chapter of bloodshed.

Loved by no-one, but feared by all, the Breakers are a cold and sobering reality of life in such a broken world. They represent a power that none can afford to ignore, and fewer still can afford to offend. In such a world, the Breakers are in many ways the ultimate deal brokers, standing resolutely neutral amongst the feuds of the factions, caring only for trade and profit.

History

The Breakers began with the anarchy of the Fall and the various groups trying to eke out a living as scavengers in its aftermath. Amongst those early survivors were the remnants of military units stationed along the coast. Many of these units organised small groups and began to prosper to a limited extent in the new environment they found themselves in.

Like most in those times, the Breakers moved from place to place, staying only briefly to avoid the Brood. As time went on, the nature of these early Breakers began to differ from those that surrounded them. Equipped and armed with the remnants of military hardware, these groups took more risks, and gained greater prizes as a result. As more communities began to establish themselves and scavenging became harder, many of these groups took on new roles, choosing to brave the dangerous areas that the new communities could not reach, and trading their supplies in exchange for food and ammunition.

In the anarchy of those early days, low level conflicts were common. In some places more people were killed in fights over territory and food than by the Brood itself. It was in this highly militant environment that a series of raiders gathered together under a shared leadership. This group, generally known as the First Company, established minor trade links in the upper region of New York state, using their shared military capabilities to protect small communities against looters and raiders, thus giving the small northern holdouts a chance to establish limited farmlands.

With this success the First Company moved to the south and the east, looking to establish further safe-havens and connect with other paramilitary groups. It soon became apparent though that without direct, almost continual protection of the communities, the Broodspawn would eat away at their numbers, causing crops to fail and whole communities to disappear. Soon, the efforts to establish a supply chain became too much and these small northern communities lapsed back into nomadic groups simply to survive.

The First Company had invested too much to turn back, though. Others saw their failures as weakness, and for a time the fledgling faction teetered on the edge of collapse. It was from amongst their number that a now infamous individual rose. James Ross took command of the First Company in an efficient coup, directing the First Company in a new direction. With a small army at his heels, they moved to several of the beleaguered communities in various mountain regions outside the direct reach of the Brood. There, the Company established a permanent presence whilst groups were sent to scout the surrounding regions for survivors to help with the effort of re-establishing farmland.

It soon became apparent to the Company that volunteers were few and far between. The dangers of working in exposed fields, potentially miles from a walled community, were immense. Even with snipers and guards, casualties were a daily fact of life. Undeterred, Ross made the famous statement; *"It's amazing how a gun can change a man's mind."* From there, the First Company set about forced conscription of labourers for the farms. It was this new practice of forced conscription which earned the First Company the nickname "Breakers", and even after Ross's death, they came to regard it as a sort of badge of honour.

The Breakers prospered, as did the communities under their protection. Emboldened by their success, the Breakers set about engineering the implementation of cottage industries for ammunition and firearms, and began systematic raids into areas consumed by the Broodspawn. With their superior organisation and ever-growing arsenal, the Breakers managed to recover significant military hardware, and soon began acting as traders for food and munitions.

Faced with imminent starvation, few communities could afford to refuse what the Breakers offered, despite the connotations of slavery now associated with the organisation. Soon the concept of the forced farming spread south, and the Breakers began actively hunting for "volunteers", selling them at a profit to regions throughout the East Coast that required labour of one form or another.

The rise of the Pyreflame was the first event to truly give the Breakers pause. For a time the organisation actively considered trying to stamp out the new religion, fearing that its focus on morality and ethics would turn its wrath against them. In the end though, the Breakers decided that it was better to stand aside and avoid becoming a target for the frenzied Crusade.

To the Breakers' eternal amusement, for all the Pyreflame's focus on ethics, they still found themselves calling upon the Breakers' services. In the end the Pyreflame needed guns and food just like everyone else, and unlike some, the Pyreflame could pay.

Though the Breakers care little for the fall of Boston and the coming of the Dominion, the recent events in New York and the coming of the Harbingers has given the faction cause for concern. After having spent decades in an almost unassailable position of power, the Breakers have found themselves disturbingly vulnerable to the assaults of the Harbingers, and are struggling to react in the face of rapidly changing opposition.

Beliefs

The Breakers are fundamentally a pragmatic organisation. They have no use for religious dogma, and very little time for ethical ideology. Two things alone dominate the Breakers' beliefs; Survival, and Profit. Everything the Breakers have done is ultimately in pursuit of those two goals.

For all their sins, the Breakers don't truly see themselves as bad people. While they've had to do awful things to ensure their survival, they see the spread of slavery and their acquisition of military might as crucial to the restoration of human civilisation. For those Breakers who care to answer ethical accusations, they often point out that every major ancient civilisation was built upon the backs of slavery, and that ultimately everything just comes down to the twisting of terms. After all, for those who remember, what was an office worker but a slave in a different form? The Breakers would say that what they do is simply honest.

Aside from these ethical issues, most Breakers are simply hard working individuals with a focus on a military lifestyle. They generally try to live good lives and care for their families as much as anyone else in this world. To outsiders though, they show a different and very cold face. Hardened by a life of conflict and violence the Breakers often come across as cruel, with few ever seeing what lies beneath the surface.

Structure

Curiously enough the Breakers' command structure is not highly centralised. Despite operating in many respects like an army, the Breakers are actually fairly uncoordinated in their actions on a larger scale, and the organisation has long since broken down from the First Company of old into various independent branches using the title Breakers.

The most well known and infamous of these Breakers are the **Chainers**. These individuals are primarily responsible for the spread of the slave trade, and the forced farming initiative. Without a doubt, the Chainers are one of the

largest factions within the Breakers, and probably have the most active members in the field at any given time.

These groups tend to be organised more like large gangs than a paramilitary organisation as their tactics require little or no organised command structure. Their tactics are usually straightforward—they target lone groups of travellers, or small settlements, and force those groups to either hand individuals over to them, or pay in some other manner.

The Chainers also play the role of merchants to an extent, offering to take undesirable individuals, or unwanted children, off the hands of communities in exchange for resources. Once these individuals are in the hands of the Chainers, their fate is often sealed. They'll be marched to the nearest Chainer watch-post, or a community with a strong Breaker presence, where they will be broken and trained, and given over to the **Coin-Men** for sale.

The Coin-Men are the least militant of the Breaker's factions and one of the more common sights in any large community. Their organisation exists to protect individual traders and producers of goods, and to keep prices in communities under control. In many ways, the Coin-Men are the most welcome of all the Breaker factions, since their presence has helped to re-establish a lawful and organised system of trade, even if some of their wares are considered abhorrent.

In terms of organisation the Coin-men are more rigid than the Chainers but less organised than the other Breaker factions. Usually they possess a very defined hierarchy in a given community but have no command structure above that level, simply existing where their skills are needed.

A relatively new faction amongst the Breakers, the **Hammers** have risen quickly to prominence and might soon overtake the other factions as the largest single power in the Breakers. Their organisation is tight-knit and in many ways resembles the military origins of the Breakers most closely. These individuals specialise in the acquisition and restoration of former industrial sites from before the Fall. They've made it their mission to reacquire ancient sources of oil, metal and processed goods, and have quickly managed to make a fortune by reopening various mines along the coast.

This process is extremely dangerous and this faction's frequent raids into Brood held territory to acquire machine parts, vehicles and rarer components has meant that they have a high attrition rate. No other faction commands the sheer amount of hardware the Hammers can bring to bear, however. It's even rumoured that they have a limited number of aircraft under their control, and are capable of launching limited bombing runs upon their enemies if absolutely required.

The last and eldest of the organisations within the Breakers are the **Spears**. This proud group makes up the military backbone of the Breakers, primarily operating as mercenaries but also as armed muscle when the larger concerns of the Breakers are at stake. It was these individuals which first worked out many of the efficient methods to hunt the Broodspawn, and they have spent nearly a century developing training routines to make the best possible soldiers left in the ruins of this age.

The Spears are possibly the most feared organisation on the coast, next to the Harbingers. Their skills and training are second to none, and no-one in their right mind goes out of their way to provoke them.

Relations

The Breakers hold to a strict non-interference policy when it comes to the other factions; at least on paper anyway. In practice, though, the Breakers often side with one faction or another when it suits their interests, but they are ultimately unwilling to commit to true support of any faction. Through this policy, the Breakers have managed to retain tenuous, if cordial, links with all major factions bar the Thorns and the Harbingers.

Of the major factions, the Breakers have had the best relationship with the newly-emerged Dominion. The Dominion's cold viewpoint towards life, their willingness to hire mercenaries and to buy slaves from the Breakers makes them favoured customers, even if the Breakers are suspicious of the Dominion's military intentions.

Their relationship with the Pyreflame has always been somewhat strained, though has rarely erupted into violence. In general the Breakers just try and avoid talking about

A Sticky Situation

Whilst travelling, the characters come across the wreckage of a Breaker convoy. There they find three children, alive but malnourished. A cursory inspection will reveal that the children are most likely slaves. What follows is an impassioned plea for the players' aid. The children will state that they're from a nearby Thorn community and that they were out hunting with their father, when he was killed by the Breakers and they taken prisoner.

If pressed as to what happened to the group, they will answer that they were lucky, in a sense, to come across a band of Broodspawn and that the children hid during the fighting. If the characters agree to help, things get complicated when a group of Breakers with an affiliated Nemissary arrive, and claim that the children were bought and paid for, and that they murdered the guards to escape. The characters will then be forced to pick sides and try and untangle the dilemma before bloodshed ensues.

policy when it comes to the Pyreflame, and stick purely to the numbers. After all, a fanatic's money is just as good as anybody else's.

The Thorns have had little contact with the Breakers that didn't end in violence if for no other reason than the Breakers generate many of the slaves from amongst the nomad groups that the Thorns often protect. In addition, the Thorns seem to have something of a philosophical objection to the capitalist ideologies of the Breakers. Honestly, the Breakers are fine with that—after all, it's amazing how many problems you can solve with a gun.

Nemissaries and the Breakers

The Breakers tend to attract little loyalty from the Nemissaries. In general, the Breakers have never needed their assistance, and their tactics and policies rarely fit well with the activities of Nemissary cabals.

That's not to say that Nemissaries haven't from time to time made it their business to interfere in the Breaker's affairs, but the organisation as a whole is distinctly hostile to outside interference. In fact, more than one Nemissary has been killed by the Breakers for trying to mess with their operations. Worse still, the Breakers tend to take this sort of thing very personally, and only the most cautious Nemissaries succeed in infiltrating the organisation.

For the most part, both the Throne and the Architects tend to leave the Breakers to their own affairs, seeing them mostly as mercenaries to be used at their discretion, but not an organisation they wish to thoroughly control.

The Circle on the other hand tend to make a point of attacking the Breakers where possible because of their support for the Thorns, but even they are not massively dedicated to the issue since the Breakers have recently lessened their reliance on aggressive slaving.

For their part, the Keepers have almost nothing to do with the Breakers, seeing them in general as something to be avoided, and have little interest in their studies.

Figures of Note

The Breakers tend to be a stern lot, primarily of a military disposition. Though they tend to be friendly when it comes to business, they have a fearsome reputation which is not entirely undeserved.

Colonel Marik Hoffman: Feared throughout the East Coast, Marik is the leader of the infamous Four Talons mercenary company. Over twenty years of battle experience have given him an unparalleled command ability in battle. His forces are well trained, well equipped and highly disciplined. What's more is that they are willing to engage in operations of a nature most would consider suicidal.

If this wasn't enough, Marik's company has gained a reputation for hunting and killing Nemissaries. They've accomplished this through a dangerous level of knowledge supplied by numerous sources, all of which prefer to remain in the shadows.

Marik himself is quite deceptive in appearance, being plain-faced and, at first glance, a disarming individual. Few ever forget the man once he's spoken, however, and while he might not look it, he's a deadly combatant, skilled in both armed and unarmed combat. His true gift is for leadership and his presence alone leaves few in doubt of the man's pedigree.

Jack Burnstein: Famous throughout the East Coast, Burnstein is generally known to make some of the best weapons to be had. It's said his family have been in the Breakers almost since their inception, and have resided in the walled community of Halfway nearly as long.

Burnstein and his family are renowned manufacturers of arms and armour, producing in their workshops firearms that rival even those of the Artificers. He also has a reputation for financing expeditions and digs to recover unusual examples of pre-Fall manufacturing to help improve his designs.

Burnstein is fairly tall, and would be a handsome man if it weren't for several chemical burns on his face and shoulder. He tends to dress lightly, and wears his scars with pride as a mark of his profession, trying to maintain at all time a friendly and professional demeanour.

The Thorns

Possibly the eldest and most mysterious of the factions, the Thorns represent a diverse range of people hailing from the deep and secluded places remaining in North America. Their links to the Nemissaries are strong and they represent a resurgence of an ancient Pagan faith, worshipping gods which are all too real.

History

The history of the Thorns is an uncertain thing at best; the faction keeps its secrets close to its heart. What is known is that the Thorns emerged as a power relatively recently in the affairs of North America, but no-one doubts that their origins go back far beyond this point.

The first nomads were forced into a deadly situation. The ever-dwindling returns of scavenging and the threat posed by the Brood were forcing early nomads into a desperate struggle to survive. Some of these groups moved to take

shelter in the shadow of the feared and mysterious Shards. Most thought these groups were insane, as the Shards were known at that point to bring nothing but madness and death, but for a people with nothing but their lives to lose, the prospect of any salvation was a tempting one.

It wasn't just safety they found in the shadow of the Shards however, but rather ancient secrets whispered into the minds of the strong. They roamed across North America as isolated groups of individuals, following the wisdom laid down by the Shards. Piece by agonising piece the first Thorns were born. They learned to endure the mind twisting effects of the Shards and found ways to harness the power of Voidglass, and with it freed themselves from the ever-present threat of the Brood.

These groups gathered in the lonely places of the world, and soon came to realise that they shared many things in common. Their power and confidence was emboldened further when the prophecies whispered to them by the Shards were validated by the emergence of the Nemissaries. The favoured few who went through their Second Breath amongst the Thorns found support and assistance so rare in this world.

In the newly risen Nemissaries, the Thorns saw reflections of their gods; a primal power long forgotten, worthy of reverence and respect. They set upon the long process of growth and rebuilding, small nomad groups becoming larger tribes, gathering armaments and livestock and driving them far from the other centres of human habitation.

Bit by bit, the Thorns have prospered in isolation, but the encroachment of mankind's new civilisations has begun to threaten them. The events in New York and the rise of new great powers has for the first time forced the Thorns to take notice of the larger world. Now they turn their eyes upon the Pyreflame and the Dominion, and find themselves appalled by what they see.

Beliefs

Having learned at the feet of the Shards, the Thorns have a set of beliefs which put them at odds with many in the world of Sins. Primarily, they believe that mankind's civilisation brought the world to its current ruined state. In a similar way to the Pyreflame, they believe that the Brood are of our own making. Rather than attributing this to a single divine figure or primordial sin, they hold that the Shards themselves are directly responsible and that the Brood is a punishment levied upon us for abandoning the old gods and for distorting the natural world.

Of all the factions, their beliefs overlap most closely with the beliefs of the Nemissaries, and they hold that a collection of ancient gods watch over the world, believing that in total nine such entities watch over us. Of these entities, they believe that six have turned their eyes back to the world and that the Shards are both their gift and their punishment to us. They identify the first of these entities as The Mother; a primordial goddess that gave birth to the world and everything in it. It's this goddess that they believe mankind most offended. They see the overthrow of the ancient cults and their replacement with a single male god to be a direct insult to the Mother of Gods and Monsters.

To them, this Mother could stand the insults heaped upon her no longer, and turned her eyes back upon the world with the intention of devouring all she had made. Though the specifics differ, the Thorns generally agree that she sent the Shards to the world and through them created the Brood with the express purpose of returning every living thing to her. They believe that five of the remaining gods chose to give mankind a second chance at life, and distorted the purpose of the Shards; empowering them to reveal their secrets to those who would listen, and to bring forth the Nemissaries so that mankind might have one last chance to prove themselves worthy of the Mother's love.

Each subsection within the Thorns has different names for these five core gods. Collectively, though, these gods always take on certain familiar aspects, and bear a great resemblance to the five Creeds which the Nemissaries follow.

The first of these gods is always depicted as some kind of a king or ruler, hailing from a barren and lifeless land. Though these details differ, he is almost always depicted as having once had children or lovers, and having sent them away so that he might rule alone.

The next is normally depicted as a young woman who always keeps their face obscured behind concealing veils. She's usually seen to be a sympathetic figure, wishing to see mankind survive and helping us to keep hold of what little happiness remains in the world.

The third god is normally held to be a violent creature, seeking out battle wherever possible. It is seen as a creature of destruction and rebirth, and many of the Thorns call for its blessings in times of war.

The fourth god is normally depicted as either an old woman or a young man, obsessing over a broken item that otherwise might have granted perfect wisdom. Some go as far as to assert that the Shards were the creation of this god and were once part of a single whole, known as the Eye of Heaven, though few have any concrete answer as to what this divine construct was designed to do.

The fifth god is normally depicted as a trickster; a paradox – a wise fool laughing at the fate of the world. This entity is almost always depicted wearing a mask and is said to be the god who whispers secrets through the Shards most often.

The last three gods the Thorns speak little of, calling them sometimes The Forgotten, or The Lost. They are generally

seen as uncaring where mankind's fate is concerned, and are sometimes linked with concepts such as the Fates or the Morrighan, representing a divine trinity of impartial judgement.

In day to day life, the Thorns are not so different from the rest of the world. They utilise many of the same techniques which have been with mankind for millennia, living primarily as herders and gatherers. Though they do keep some technology, it's far rarer than with other factions, as the Thorns focus their beliefs heavily upon self-sufficiency rather than relying upon the relics of the past age. They still maintain firearms, and some cottage industries to produce munitions, but prefer in general to rely upon simpler technologies, particularly those which can be enhanced in some way by Voidglass.

Voidglass in particular has special significance to the Thorns, as almost without exception they are the only human group capable of safely harvesting it and shattering larger fragments into usable pieces. Exactly why this is possible for the Thorns is one of the faction's greatest secrets, and they treat it with the same reverence that the Pyreflame reserve for the word of God, refusing to speak to any outsider of the techniques employed.

The Thorns have never been particularly unified in theology. Though they have a universal disdain for most of the old world's religions, their own practices differ significantly between groups. Each tribe tends to revere the gods and the Shards in different ways, with the peculiar quirks of those Shards only furthering the differences between each tribe. Some treat the Shards as cold, distant protectors, whereas others offer up bloody sacrifice to appease them. The truth is that the Thorns' viewpoints are as diverse as any other faction and only their shared belief that mankind must learn to stand alone, free of the sins of our fathers, unites them.

Structure

The Thorns are a loosely organised faction, which is primarily dominated by various tribal groups with no centralised authority. Each tribe possesses its own leadership based on its size. In the largest groups, there might be numerous positions of authority, whereas in the smaller tribes usually only a single individual holds power.

In either case, the Thorns have a tendency towards collective government where community decisions are required, with the leader's role generally being to enforce decisions only in a crisis.

From a young age, children in these communities are taught to be independent and self-sufficient, relying upon their own skills where possible but also holding the community and family in great importance. The Thorns have a great disdain for slavers as their nomadic groups have routinely been the targets of the Breakers' enterprise. Though it's true the Thorns occasionally take captives, they do this more out of a sense of mercy than a need to take slaves, giving the defeated a chance to join their community rather than be left to die without their resources.

Life is hard, though, and the Thorns expect everyone to pull their weight. Anyone who doesn't apply themselves and assist the community will quickly find themselves forced to leave. This can lead to the Thorns being perceived as cold and sometimes ruthless by outsiders, particularly when it comes to the Thorns' actions towards the weak or the infirm. To the Thorns though, the death of these individuals isn't murder, but a great sacrifice and the ultimate validation of their ideology; after all, in their eyes there is no greater honour than laying down one's life for family.

In times of war, the Thorns often become more organised, gathering themselves in efficient, small raiding parties, and using small unit tactics to overcome their enemies. Most communities undertake drills of this type at least once or twice a year, and many enemies have found the capability of Thorn communities to fight deadly indeed.

In terms of economy, the Thorns trade little, with each community being a self-sufficient entity. However, when outsiders are willing to be respectful and adhere to the Thorns' rules of hospitality, they are not adverse to trade and are often willing to give rare commodities or fragments of Voidglass in exchange for sophisticated chemicals and munitions which the Thorn lack the resources to produce.

Relations

The Thorns generally don't play well with others. Their isolationist attitudes and their strange faith have not endeared them to many; indeed, they find themselves constantly at odds with the Breakers, and because of that have no neutral power broker with which to deal with the other factions.

Furthermore, the Thorns find the Pyreflame abhorrent in the most primal way, believing them to be a representation of everything which is wrong with the world, and seeing their crusade as no less than an attempt to damn mankind once and for all.

Only with the Dominion do the Thorns have anything approaching a cordial relationship. Their, at least similar, beliefs regarding the nature of the old gods means that the two factions are capable of seeing eye to eye, but a general disdain for the operating policies of the Dominion along with the civilisation it represents means that the Thorns have done nothing to improve relationships.

As for the other major power groups, the Thorns have little or no dealings, and for the most part are content to leave them to what they perceive as self-destructive ways.

Nemissaries and the Thorns

No other faction can claim as many Nemissaries in its ranks as the Thorns, and the faction finds itself almost completely dominated by the agenda of the Circle. Over the decades since this faction's emergence, the Circle have both overtly and subtly shaped its destiny. Though in recent times they've begun to lose direct control, the Thorns still serve as a useful tool for the agenda of these Nemissaries.

The other Nemissary factions often find themselves distinctly unwelcome. Though their ideologies certainly don't prevent them from dealing with the Thorns, the Circle's power here makes all outsiders wary of involvement.

A few do make their homes amongst the Thorns, and have managed in recent centuries to co-opt tribes for their own agendas, but generally only the Keepers have managed to do so and remain cordial with the Circle, as they are more interested in learning the occult lore held by the Thorns than using them as pawns in some meaningless conflict.

Figures of Note

The Thorns keep to themselves, and many heroes have lived and died quietly beyond the fringes of civilisation, but as a new age dawns and the Harbingers rise, those same heroes have been forced out of obscurity to defend their homes and their faith.

High Priestess Isla: A powerful Nemissary, Isla has memories stretching back to before the Fall. She was one of the first to raise the banner of the Circle and to involve herself in the nomad groups which would ultimately become the Thorns.

Her powers are diverse, and it's rumoured that she possesses several abilities otherwise unknown in Nemissaries of her age and power. In many ways she serves as a living example of the Thorns' faith, quite literally bringing the wrath of the gods to their enemies.

In person, she's a beautiful woman, appearing in her late 20s with only her eyes giving any indication of her true age. She tends to dress in a style that accents her curious reputation, preferring robes and bone masks over more modern convenient clothing. When angered however, she dispenses with such ceremony and draws forth a Voidglass blade known as Sciterris, transforming into a monstrous Destroyer Shape that seems to be a terrifying hybrid of human and plant.

Red Wind: Perhaps the most feared mortal on the East Coast, Lana Grey – better known simply as the Red Wind–is a hunter without equal. She and her companions have made it their personal mission to hunt down every Nemissary that stands against the Thorns and her Circle masters.

Sciterris (Skih-teh-riss)

The Blade wielded by High Priestess Isla was forged by her own hands from pure Voidglass, and contains a curious spiritual entity drawn forth from the heart of one of the Shards. If she was somehow defeated in battle, the victor could claim Sciterris as their own, and it possesses the following profile.

Damage: 3

Pool: +2

Size: Large

Qualities: Variable, Voidglass, Reach 1, Special*

* For every point of Vitality lost by a target due to this weapon, they also lose 1 Anima of the wielder's choosing. In addition, if a Mauled or greater Wound is inflicted upon the target, they lose 1 Focus.

She's known to be a master of both melee and ranged combat, along with being a tracker without peer. She and her group use a combination of sophisticated tactics and Voidglass weaponry to make a mockery of Nemissaries that assume they are above this deadly mortal huntress.

In person, Lana is imposing; tall by any standard, she cuts an impressive figure. Normally festooned with weaponry, she would always be described as an intimidating individual and takes little or no care for her appearance save where it concerns the upkeep of her weaponry.

Eric London: Now a household name in the northeast of the coast, Eric has become a banner around which many separate tribes of the Thorns have come together. He has made it his life's work to unite his people against both the dangers posed by the Harbingers and the Dominion.

He's a good man by most standards and truly believes he's doing the right thing. He feels that the Thorns are too insular and by hiding from the world they will ultimately be consumed by it. To counteract this, he's helped the varying tribes gather arms and equipment, teaching them to strike out against their enemies directly and assume a central role in the battles to come.

Eric is an impressive individual; now in his mid-thirties, he has greying hair but still retains a sense of youth and power. Tall and broad-shouldered, he is the very image of a nomad survivor, usually wearing rugged travelling clothes and never seen without his compound long-bow and Voidglass knife.

THE HIERARCH DOMINION

On American shores, the Dominion is a young power. Recently formed and energetic, it's expanded its influence across the coast and represents an enticing source of safety and order to people used to chaos and death. The only price it asks in return for these gifts is a lack of personal freedom and choice.

HISTORY

The Dominion's history doesn't begin in the United States, but rather in the Post-Fall war-torn regions of Eastern Europe, and a group of seven Nemissaries simply known now as the Hierarchs.

These individuals gathered together and trained with one another to increase their masteries of their Songs, and used their unique abilities to turn aside the Brood and to end the fighting in various regions of Eastern Europe. They declared themselves demigods in the service of ancient, long-forgotten powers, and began utilising their abilities to create safe-havens where farming and industries could be re-established.

Though their early efforts were not always successful and their progress was hampered by the activities of other warlords and Nemissaries, they eventually won out in their home regions, imposing a rigid system of government on the territories of which they'd gained control.

They utilised this new-found order to train professional troops and manufacture arms and equipment, before beginning a series of military actions to regain control of various strategically vital locations in Europe from the Brood or petty warlords.

As their actions gained greater success and notoriety, more Nemissaries began to flock to their banner, enticed by promises of divinity and a place in which to use their powers openly without fear of reprisal. With an organised military army at their disposal and growing numbers of Nemissaries organised into a feudal hierarchy under the Hierarchs' command, the Dominion's influence grew in leaps and bounds.

Little else is fully known to the people of North America. To them, the story of the Dominion resumes in importance only in recent times when a highly organised military force under the command of a group of Nemissaries landed on the American coast and proceeded to liberate Boston from the Brood after a series of disastrous events which lead to the Pyreflame losing control of the city.

These initial forces, knowing they were outnumbered massively by the forces of the Pyreflame, and that they were likely to soon come under assault, reached out to neighbouring communities and nomad groups, offering them food and shelter, asking only that they helped in the rebuilding of the city. It was also soon discovered that in addition to the military forces, the Dominion possessed considerable monetary resources and tradable goods.

They soon moved to gain the tacit support of the Breakers, gaining the services of numerous mercenary groups, and buying great numbers of slaves. To everyone's amazement, the Dominion's first act was to set free most of the individuals they had purchased, and began utilising their capabilities to establish a wall surrounding the various outlying farming regions, to create safe, secure farming zones; something that the Breakers had as of yet been unable to do.

The results were striking. A great number of refugees from the conflict in New York state and the surrounding regions flooded to the safety this new Dominion offered. As expected, the Pyreflame's attentions turned north and a Crusade was launched to retake Boston.

They quickly found themselves however further eroding their own reputation as the Dominion had manipulated them into fighting the very people they promised to liberate. At the same time, a Dominion contingent launched a series of surgical strikes on Pyreflame operations around New York, and it soon became clear that the Dominion sought to control the city for their own ends.

Only the recent re-emergence of the Harbingers and the Brood's renewed power have forced the Dominion to re-evaluate its current strategies. For the time being, they have fallen back to their walled communities and the fortress city of Boston, planning to ride out the coming storm against all opposition.

BELIEFS

The Hierarch Dominion is a philosophical, religious and political movement, blending elements of all three in an often uneasy union. The Dominion primarily believes in order and the restoration of mankind to the pre-eminent form of life on the planet, and in many ways this makes them similar to the Pyreflame. Where they differ markedly however is that they believe that Nemissaries are an evolution of mankind; a literal divine blessing bestowed upon us in our darkest hour.

Similar to the Thorns, the Hierarch Dominion holds that mankind was created by gods now long-forgotten, and that their anger brought forth the Brood to test us. Where these two factions differ is in the particular mythology and faith they subscribe to. The Dominion believe that the Magna Mater, the Mother of all Mothers, sent the Broodspawn to consume mankind for the many insults levied against Her. They then hold that the other gods rose in revolt against

the murder of their favoured children, and a war in Heaven ensued.

They believe that none of the gods escaped this crisis unscathed. Specifically, they believe that the gods were broken into fragments which fell onto the Earth, taking different shapes as befits their nature.

They hold that there were eight gods in all, and that the Mother became the Brood itself, one of the gods became the Reapers, another became the Shards, and finally the remaining five now manifest themselves as the Nemissaries. Thus, the Hierarchs believe that Nemissaries are divine entities, quite literally containing shards of godhood. It's this belief more than any other that sets them so at odds with the world's remaining factions.

Structure

The Dominion has two distinct structures of organisation. The first, encountered by most people in their day to day lives, represents the non-military and non-leadership sections of the Dominion, and it functions in many ways like a 20th Century government. The Dominion maintains numerous low-level official positions, covering a wide spectrum of civic responsibilities.

The most visible of these groups are the **Protectorate**, which represent law enforcement in Dominion settlements and towns. They are a welcome presence to many and have broad powers to help enforce law and order within communities. They also help serve as a fire service in emergencies, and can generally be considered the "on the job" civil servants of the Dominion.

The next group that most people encounter are the **Overwatch**. These are individuals concerned primarily with combating the Broodspawn and maintaining civil defence. The Overwatch functions as the Dominion's military forces, and in general they have a slightly more wholesome reputation than the Protectorate as their activities rarely bring them into conflict with ordinary people.

Finally, at least in the lower echelons of the Dominion, are the often-despised **Legistat** who make up the collection of civil servants necessary for the Dominion to function. In a world where law and order is often given at the butt of a gun, these people often come across badly to outsiders. Without the Hierarchy though, the Dominion would grind to a halt, and for better or ill, their attempts to build a sophisticated civilisation would falter.

Above these organisations, the true leadership of the Dominion is essentially feudal in nature. All power flows from the **Hierarchs**, comprised of the original Dominion Nemissaries who came to the United States.

Below them in authority, but still of great importance, are other Nemissaries in the service of the Dominion. These are often referred to as the **Demi-Hierarchs**, or amongst themselves, the **Auctora**.

The Dominion and Slavery

The Dominion's attitude towards slavery is a complex one. On the face of it, the Dominion does not formally allow the trading of slaves within its territory and makes a distinct point of not using slaves in many of the areas in which other settlements and factions often do.

However, the practical reality of the situation is somewhat different. Whilst the Dominion doesn't allow slaves, it does have "Indentured Servants". These are essentially the same as slaves, but this is only normally used as a means of punishing criminals with the length of the indenturing based on the severity of the crime. The contracts for these indentured servants are then held by the state, and may be auctioned off to private individuals.

Things get tricky when slaves are brought into Dominion territory. Technically, the Dominion refuses to recognise the legal status of a slave, meaning that if that slave can escape their master, they are technically under the protection of Dominion law and thus would be free. However, powerful or wealthy individuals can often sidestep this by stating that their slaves are in fact already an indentured servant by the laws of their community – something which the Dominion will acknowledge.

Beneath them are a series of posts held by important individuals who maintain the lesser structures of the Dominion. In Europe, these positions tend to be hereditary, or are made up of the particular favourites of the Auctora at the time. Given the Dominion's relative youth in America, nearly all of these positions are actually held based on merit, or at the very least political ability, meaning that the lower-level leadership of the Dominion is often surprisingly competent for an organisation of its complexity.

Of course, things are often complicated by the fact that the different Auctora possess differing levels of influence over the various officials within the Dominion, and the feudal nature of authority means that individuals can easily derail smooth operations to pursue their own agendas. When the Auctora act together, as happened in the retaking of Boston the Dominion can be almost unstoppable, but the Dominion often falters in the face of division amongst its highly individualistic and powerful leadership.

Relations

In terms of relationships with other factions, the Dominion does everything it can to present itself as a

reasonable and civilised group, and in general maintains fairly good relations with factions such as the Breakers, the Artificers, and the Republic of Florida.

On the flip-side of this though, the Dominion fights a bitter and seemingly endless conflict with the Pyreflame; not to mention all those groups who see a manifestation of colonial ambition in the actions of the Dominion. This means that the Dominion's relations are varied at best.

Curiously, unlike the other major developed powers in the region, the Dominion maintains a fairly cordial relationship with the Thorns, though this stems more from the philosophical ideologies of the true leaders of these factions than from the members of the factions themselves.

Nemissaries and the Dominion

Of all the factions, the Hierarch Dominion is the most rigidly controlled by the Nemissaries. Ultimately, its entire hierarchy is dominated by their presence, and it is for the most part firmly in the hands of the Throne.

Though the authority of the Thrones runs deep and pervades the institution, it isn't an absolute. A small number of Nemissaries belonging to other factions have managed to place themselves within the Dominion.

Their goals vary tremendously. Some, such as the Architects, hope to utilise the power of the Dominion to achieve their long term goals. Others, such as the Circle or even the Harbingers simply desire its absolute destruction and hope to consume it from within.

Figures of Note

The Hierarch Dominion's creation has been shaped by a small collection of notable and powerful individuals, most of whom fled from Europe within the last few decades. Beside these great powers, a great many young Nemissaries and mortal heroes find themselves the driving force behind the Dominion.

Lukas Prochazka (Soresh): Born in Czechoslovakia before the Fall, Lukas is one of the oldest Nemissaries walking the world; not just that, but he was a former cabal-mate of Ah'kesh and one of the founders of the original Dominion.

During the early days, he took the title of Soresh and worked ceaselessly to forge a new order for humanity. When he and his cabal's dreams soured and they parted ways, he held on longest to hope, but this in time turned to bitterness. When Ah'kesh made her call for her cabal to reunite, he refused to go.

The decision has haunted him ever since. Rather than preside over the end of what his family set out to do, he gathered his resources and spearheaded the creation of the Hierarch Dominion in North America. Through it, he hopes to erase the mistakes of the past and build a new future for mankind.

His appearance belies his true power. The elder Nemissary seems to be a young man, though one with very deep and cold eyes. His hair is dark and his features are sharp and bold. He has a notable Deathmark on his right shoulder and prefers to dress in stylish attire which hides this, and puts those who meet him at ease. Even with his grace and calm manner, few people who have ever met him can say they came away from the experience without a profound sense of fear or respect.

Beroth: Known only by a pseudonym taken from the Prophecy of Ah'kesh, Beroth serves as the mailed fist of the Dominion. Despite his relatively young age, this Nemissary is a terrifying combatant; he has dedicated almost every waking minute of his existence to the perfection of combat in almost all its forms. Even to those who dislike and fear him, he's seen as something of a paragon of the Sword Creed; albeit one that most admit is an overzealous one.

Physically, Beroth is a massive individual. His skin and accent tell of an African origin. His imposing disposition is not helped by the numerous scars which cover his body and his tendency to carry an oversized makeshift sword which he refers to as his "Executioner's Blade"—a title which, given his duties, is not just for show.

Alice Kennedy: An astute, clever and calculating woman, Miss Kennedy is an important lynchpin in the Dominion's bureaucracy. From humble roots, she's managed to become integral to almost every aspect of the Dominion's operations through a combination of bribery, wit and the occasional assassination. Even her Nemissary superiors have little concept of just how deep this intelligent mortal woman's schemes really go.

In appearance, Alice xould not be called traditionally attractive. In her late 40s however, she has grown into a handsome face, with a cold, stern grace, giving her an almost regal appearance.

Republic of Florida

A beacon of hope in an otherwise dark world, the Republic of Florida is a small piece of America which has survived all the trials placed before it to exist as a last beacon of the old America amidst the ruins of the world.

History

The history of this faction ultimately begins with the state of Florida and the events surrounding the Fall. Florida has always served as a key strategic location in America's

history; not just in military terms but also civilian ones. Its population was large and it was well known around the world as a holiday destination.

In the chaos leading up to the Fall, much external travel was forbidden into the state. Like everywhere else, it set itself to weather the storm as best it could. The appearance of the Brood was no less of a shock, but it was one better survived than in other places.

Florida's terrain makes it a poor choice for an infantry campaign and its massive military presence meant that the Brood struggled to gain a foothold. Though the cost was dear, various army groups in the State managed to contain the initial infection, weathering the storm better than their counterparts.

The Reapers never directly attacked Florida. The death of the President at Blacklight's hands, and the order by the remaining joint chiefs to launch strategic nuclear strikes on mainland America forged a wedge in the relations of the large military institution in Florida and the remains of America's command structure.

Sensing an imminent disaster, several of the generals in Florida – most notably Princeton Hughes, formerly of Salt Lake City, Utah – staged what amounted to a military coup. Gathering the assets they had, they ordered all military personnel to concentrate on the remaining civilian safe zones. With this done and the Brood at bay, they turned their attention to the smaller settlements.

In a series of costly but important sweeps, they managed to gather the bulk of the surviving population in these established safe zones, and worked desperately to maintain lines of communication and supplies. This tactic, though costly, proved to be a success. By maintaining strict military control, they were able to prevent the worst degradation and maintain at least a semblance of normality inside the safe zones.

As the years passed, it became clear that the rest of America had largely fallen into chaos and anarchy. Unwilling to look outwards, the military concentrated on maintaining its current position. Pondering their options, it was clear that they couldn't remain a dictatorship forever. It was General Hughes who created the solution.

He was keenly aware that an immediate return to democracy would spell disaster. In light of this, the State of Florida renamed itself formally to be the Independent Republic of Florida and a charter for a new government was drawn up.

This organisation would leave the bulk of power in the hands of the military, but as a concession to democracy and free speech, a series of local mayors and governors would be elected from the surviving settlements as each became stabilised, allowing the public a voice—at least in local affairs. This movement was ultimately a success. Through it, the Republic managed to maintain a stable government through all the long years of anarchy after the Fall.

For all its long survival, the Republic is wavering. The land it controls cannot sustain its entire population through farming alone. Worse still, its resources are diminishing. Since scavenging is no longer an option, the future of the Republic is looking bleak.

The public, for the most part, are unaware of this truth. Its military leaders and governors are devoting almost all their time at present into trying to find a solution that doesn't involve bowing to any of the other great factions of the region.

Beliefs

The Republic's outlook wouldn't seem all that alien to someone from the 20th Century. Granted, their lives are harder, but due to the support structures that surround them, they are no worse than some of the less privileged areas of the world in the time before the Fall.

Unique for a large nation on the East Coast, the people of Florida value personal freedom and liberty. That said, they only take this so far; the military is an ever-present factor of their lives and one which generations have come to accept. Everyone faces a tour of service and soldiers are a respected part of every community. Most see these people as patriots rather than oppressors, as the military in general maintains a light hand in most affairs which don't involve public safety or the destruction of the Brood.

As a consequence of these beliefs and their lifestyle, the Republic is somewhat more high-minded than its neighbours, refusing to take part in the practice of slavery in any form and maintaining many old American ideals. They cling to these with a kind of fanaticism, elevating notable dates such as Independence Day to the level of a religious festival.

Religion in the Republic is a mixed bag. Many would call themselves Christian but more than a hundred years of desperation and confusion have served to make their version of that ancient religion very different to what is practiced elsewhere. Particularly, they see the founding fathers and early presidents like saints, and often raise the ideals of America itself into scripture. This state of affairs is further confused by actual Catholic and Christian denominations which have managed to maintain their own traditions and ways within the state.

The new faiths such as those put forward by the Dominion, the Thorns and the Pyreflame have little purchase. People mistrust them, seeing them in many ways as the forerunners of modern oppression. To the people of Florida, they are the last true bastion of America; the only patriots. Everyone else, however well intentioned, are pretenders to that noble legacy.

Structure

In essence, the Republic has two organisations within it. Its military structure is surprisingly similar to America's modern military. The only major difference is that the Navy,

Air Force and Army have all been rolled into one. As a result, naming conventions sometimes differ with Army ranks being the most dominant. This structure extends all the way up to a council of five Generals which make large-scale policy decisions regarding the Republic and its activities.

Their power theoretically supersedes every other power in the Republic. In practice, their self-imposed Charter prevents them from meddling in civilian affairs, meaning the generals don't sit or preside over commonplace law. The military does intervene when it believes public or national safety is at risk, but by and large the day to day affairs of people's lives are run by the government.

The civilian government is led by a parliament made up of twenty-one regional governors, with a mayor for each of Florida's eight surviving population centres. Together with councillors drawn up from local offices, they make and institute policy throughout the region. The law, though generally harsher in terms of sentencing, has remained much the same as it was before the fall.

Justice is meted out through a network of Sheriffs' departments which serve as a go-between for the civilian government and military police. These Sheriffs serve as a judiciary and preside as judge over minor offences committed throughout the Republic.

More serious cases such as murder or arson are brought before a court and a jury is assembled to pass sentence over the accused. The whole process is surprising in that there is relatively little corruption; the system functions well for the most part, though that's generally assumed to be more to do with the tight-knit nature of communities and a general lack of violent crime, considering that exile into the wastes is the only punishment for serious crimes. As a result, few people are willing to risk everything over trivial matters.

Relations

The Republic has few friends and many enemies. Its refusal to engage in slavery has meant that its government has imposed a ban on trading with the Breakers. Although some under-the-table deals occur, this has prevented access in any meaningful way to a force which might have helped stabilise the flagging Republic.

The other great powers such as the Dominion and Pyreflame are seen as dangerous subversive groups, twisting, in their minds, what their nation stands for. For this reason the Republic refuses to deal practically with these factions, preferring isolation to the risk of these factions' ideologies spreading amongst the populace.

The Thorns also have little or nothing to do with Florida. Their power is concentrated most in the north and rarely extends far enough south to impact Florida. It's likely that if they did have a greater presence, Florida would regard them even less favourably than they do the Pyreflame or the Dominion, as almost everything the Thorns stand for is abhorrent to the Republic.

The Republic and Nemissaries

Nemissaries who find themselves in the Republic must tread carefully. Frankly it has no love for their kind. For more than a hundred years the Republic has relied upon its own military strength to defend itself, and it values the idea of accountability and patriotism very highly.

In their mind, the individualistic Nemissaries and their great power are a threat to public order and safety. Not only this, but it's a known fact that both the Pyreflame and the Dominion are highly influenced by Nemissaries. Both these factors mean that Nemissaries are in general extremely unwelcome in the Republic.

With few exceptions, no Nemissaries hold major power in the Republic. The only faction amongst them that have gained any headway are the Architects who have made it a point to very carefully and secretly protect the Republic as best they can. In fact, many Nemissaries suspect that the Republic's survival to this point is at least partially due to that.

Figures of Note

The Republic is built on the blood of Martyrs and patriots. Without the assistance of heroes both in the past and present, the Republic would have fell to its enemies or the Brood long ago.

General Tobias Kirkwall: The general made a name for himself as a soldier at a young age and rose through the ranks with a promising career. Now aged 57, he serves as one of the most powerful voices in the council of generals.

Seen by most as a hard-liner, his views are in actuality somewhat more moderate than they at first appear. In truth, he's simply a patriot who loves the Republic and doesn't wish to see it end. As a result, he's willing to consider almost any option; even betraying its ideals to see it survive.

Despite this, he maintains the image of a hard-line isolationist in order to keep the other generals onside for what he hopes is long enough to do something about the fate of the Republic.

The general is a rugged man, his skin pitched and browned from a lifetime under the sun and his eyes as hard as slate. Even in his late fifties, he strikes an imposing figure and always commands the respect of his men, rarely raising his voice yet never seeming to go unheard.

Governor Donna Primrose: To all the world, Miss Primrose is an outstanding political official in the Republic. In reality, this is all a grand illusion. Her real name is Sora Innace, and she is a Nemissary in the service of the Dominion.

Her work has carefully taken place over years. Secretly, she has been using her position to create a subversive

network of politicians on the northern border of the Republic who wish to open relations properly with the Breakers. By doing this, she hopes to divide the political system of the Republic and create a public outcry which the military will be forced to crack down upon.

In theory at least, she hopes this can be used by the Dominion to incite a general insurrection against military rule, allowing the Dominion to gut the Republic and take its resources for their own.

To maintain her deception, she's taken the form of an attractive woman in her 30s. Tall, graceful and blonde, she cuts an impressive, respectable figure, favouring suits over dresses and at all times maintaining an image of professional detachment.

In her real shape, she's a far more striking person. One of the Defiled, her skin shifts constantly and her form is uncertain; a weakness she's managed to overcome only through her Mistress's extreme mastery of the Song of Flesh.

The Patriot: No matter what the military says, the Republic is failing. There aren't enough bullets and aren't enough soldiers to protect everyone. In the remote recesses of the Republic, a rumour has spread. A female Nemissary, calling herself simply The Patriot, travels from place to place helping those in need. Asking for little or nothing in return, she's become something of a folk hero.

The military and the government both want her dead as her actions have begun to turn public opinion towards rather than against the Nemissaries. They fear that if she isn't stopped, she'll create a cult of personality that will grow into a serious problem for the Republic.

Details of the appearance of this woman change with the telling. Most agree she is of average height and has what appear to be severe burns over her body. Supposedly she carries an old style rifle but rarely uses it, preferring to nearly always forge into combat with a ramshackle Voidglass spear, presumably of her own making.

Lesser Factions

Aside from the great powers, there are a number of smaller, but still influential, factions along the East Coast.

Artificers

A mystery to most, the Artificers are a relatively recent arrival in the East Coast area. From what's been gathered they emigrated to the area over the last three years or so, and have quickly established themselves in many areas as a force to be reckoned with.

Simply put, the Artificers are an institution concerned with technology and knowledge above all else. It's this that gives them their wealth, power and protection. Certainly, the Breakers can get you a car or a weapon, but only the Artificers still possess the ability to manufacture complex electronic devices and more sophisticated weaponry.

Exactly how they do this is a point of much speculation, made even more mysterious by the organisation's propensity for wearing masks, concealing the identity of their members.

The truth is rather less flamboyant than many expect. Far from witchcraft or magic, the Artificers simply have access to a better source of knowledge than much of the world. Specifically they control the keys to the old world's satellite network, and through it, they have access to much of the accumulated knowledge of mankind.

With this, they have been able to coordinate their activities over much of the world, working to slowly trickle mankind's technology back into worldwide circulation. Why they do this is a mystery. The Artificers in America are all of the lower to middle ranks of the institution, as the entire higher leadership presides over the institution from the ruins of the orbital spire in central Africa, well beyond the reach of any of the powers of the United States.

Even the Nemissaries have had little success in infiltrating or controlling this organisation. The Artificers operate an extreme Scorched Earth policy in this regard. Any chapter found to be exposed to a Nemissary's influence will be ruthlessly exterminated by its fellows. Often the Artificers will pay no attention to the Nemissary in question, simply murdering everyone it has come into contact with.

If a Nemissary persists beyond this point, the Artificers are willing to go to extreme lengths to dissuade them. More than one inquisitive Nemissary has found that a few pieces of the old world's terrifying weaponry still exist in the hands of a few. After all, even a Nemissary can do little when a rail weapon shatters their Aenthir from a mile away.

Trader's Union

A small but growing faction, the Trader's Union exists as a rival amongst the northern regions to the power of the Breakers. It's slowly been gaining ground over the last 20 years as an institution built upon the ideas of free trade and commerce.

In practice, its goals are actually a little more complex. The Trader's Union believe that the restoration of America as it was once known isn't impossible. Founded by a Cabal of Nemissaries and their human allies, the Union want to use free trade as an excuse to spread revolutionary ideas along the coast.

They hope that by exposing people to the ideas of the past and bringing more and more communities into contact, it will be possible to bring about a full scale revolution. They aim to make the building blocks this requires and have ambitious plans for the future.

With more and more young Nemissaries flocking to their banner, the idea of a restored United States might not be as far-fetched as it sounds. After all, in the short stretch of 20 years, the Union's growth has been amazing. Already in several places it is a true contender to the Breakers' power and have managed to establish useful lines of communication between many outlying settlements.

This is no accident. Its push for expansion has been deliberately designed to coincide with the Breakers' internal strife. Those Nemissaries who founded it still guide it, and work with increasing determination to bring their enemies low and make their dreams a reality.

The Lost Children

Of all the factions of the East Coast, this is the most reviled. Considering that they are humans which choose to worship the Harbingers and the Brood, this is not surprising. To their mind, the Mother and the Broodspawn represent the next stage of life. To them, the Harbingers represent dark prophets and not murdering reavers.

In a sense, the entire institution is born of tragedy. Gathered from the survivors of Broodspawn assaults by the Harbingers, they started their existence as simple playthings for the amusement of these dark creatures. After a time, the Harbingers tired of games and realised that they could put this group to greater use.

They slaughtered all the survivors past their late teens, transforming them into Broodspawn. Altering these creatures and binding their will, they placed them as ironic guardians over their children, beginning the slow process of indoctrinating these frightened survivors into a new faith.

After years of abuse and mistreatment, these children have been taught to see the transformation into Broodspawn as a glorious ascension. The world, they are told, is the literal punishment of God, bestowed upon Adam and Eve. Only by having children and then surrendering to death and rebirth upon reaching adulthood can they be granted salvation.

This twisted doctrine amuses the Harbingers to no end. Most find a particular irony in turning the basis of Catholic dogma into something entirely unholy. To their surprise, what began as an amusing diversion has actually become a seriously effective institution. By indoctrinating captured human populations, they have been able to increase the number of Broodspawn under their control massively, all without the need for costly assaults.

The East Coast Today

The region known as the East Coast of America spans some three thousand miles, encompassing an immense array of diverse terrain; from freezing mountain ranges in the north, to tropical swamps at its southern tip. It also represents some of the most diverse examples of humankind still found in the world of Sins.

Along its length, mankind survives and sometimes even prospers, but always with a terrible cost. The price they bear in many ways is their own success, as they regard each other with envious eyes and clash to establish just who will lead mankind into a new age.

Locations

The East Coast in general is a highly diverse region. The shifting of the climate has made much of the north largely uninhabitable. Winters are incredibly severe, bringing snow and ice as far as Florida and throwing the established ecology into disarray.

One saving grace of the region in general is that the various mountain ranges marking its western edge protect it from the worst extremes of the Blight that affects mainland America. That still doesn't stop isolated pockets of radiation sickness cropping up throughout the region from time to time, but it does prevent it from degenerating into the endless deserts that make up the American interior.

Maine

Virtually nothing survives in this extreme northern state. The snow remains all year round and in the winter the region becomes uninhabitable. The storms blowing in from the sea routinely scour the coastline of life.

Despite all odds, some small communities do exist deep in the snowfields. Their battle to survive is not against the Brood but nature itself. They spend the summer in a desperate search for food and resources, retreating back into their homes to weather the worst of the winter storms that lash the region.

New Hampshire and Vermont

A heavily mountainous region, the remnants of New Hampshire and Vermont create a formidable barrier to travel further north or west. The entire area is almost uninhabited. Silent and lonely, it sits blanketed in snow all year round.

It avoids some of the worst extremes of the north, but the weather still can turn deadly at a moment's notice, the winter blanketing the region in snowfall for months at a time.

These regions might be inhabited despite all of this if it wasn't for the presence of the Brood. Unlike the extreme north, the Brood still manage to migrate and move through the area. They weather the cold better than humans do. Even with careful preparations and cold weather gear the Brood dominate any human life that ventures here entirely.

They concentrate their power around the region's frozen lakes and rivers, converting many into large hives where the Broodspawn breed their foul offspring. So pervasive is the infestation that even natural life has been stripped from the region. The forests are long gone and little or nothing but silence takes their place.

Massachusetts

One of the most important regions of the East Coast, Massachusetts stands as a bulwark against the Broodspawn of the north and west. It also serves as the power base for the Hierarch Dominion, particularly along its coast.

There, huge sections of the land have been converted into farmland. Walled, reinforced and guarded around the clock, the Dominion continues their efforts to establish dominance.

The political landscape to the west of the state is less certain. As potential farmland gives way to icy expanses, hills and then mountains, the organised settlements of the Dominion vanish and are replaced by numerous armed outposts. These areas are largely independent of any specific authority. Paying lip-service to the Dominion, they exist according to their own rules and traditions.

Perhaps the only faction that's made any real headway with these outposts is the Trader's Union. Born amongst this very region, they are one of the reasons these communities have continued to maintain their independence.

The Brood and the Breakers prove an ever-present threat in the region as despite its outward condemnation of slavery, the Dominion is always hungry for more personnel and resources.

The Brood, of course, exist in numbers wherever humans do but rarely form large hordes in this region, due mostly to the continuing patrols of the Dominion and the containment efforts of the isolated communities.

Boston: A massive reclaimed city, Boston is considered a wonder of the region. Recently conquered by the Dominion, the city has been reinforced massively. Previously its defence had been somewhat haphazard, concentrating on basic city walls and the presence of a powerful, if not silent Shard to defend it.

The Dominion have all but transformed the city. Huge sections have been bulldozed, pushed together and then melted under intense heat to form a new and imposing city wall. Miles of chain-link fences have been installed to further secure the city and its attendant farm-lands.

Even the inner city has begun extensive renovation. The Dominion have worked tirelessly to restore many of the old edifices of the city back to their former glory, all to prove their good intentions to the population.

Rhode Island

Now largely ruined and underwater, Rhode Island is an abandoned wilderness, but not one without its share of treasures. The region contains numerous Shards, all of which the Dominion covet greatly.

Their efforts are interrupted however by a strong presence of the Thorns in the region, who seem determined to prevent the Dominion from gaining access to the region's Shards.

For the most part, mortals of the region seem mystified by the conflict; little or nothing exists there that is worth having. Worse still, the encroaching coastline means the Brood are never far away, and from time to time they swarm in great numbers through the region, making any occupation costly in the extreme.

Most Nemissaries see the region very differently however. Simply put, these Shards talk. For them, it signifies a location of great spiritual importance; a place where wisdom can be gained for those willing to seek it. All the great powers amongst them wish to control this resource.

On the face of it, they cooperate, allowing young Nemissaries to enter the area unmolested to seek wisdom. In practice though the relationship is extremely frayed and expressed largely through the Dominion and the Thorn's conflict.

Connecticut

The north of this state remains an important area for humanity. The horse lands which link it with the New England region serve an important cattle grazing area for a great many nomads.

The south of the region is a very different place. Heavily forested and mountainous, it is a deadly region, lost entirely to the Harbingers. In those areas, they continue to breed the Broodspawn through the medium of their secretive Lost Children, raiding the surrounding regions almost continuously in an effort to expand their ever-growing army.

The Pyreflame and the Thorns routinely strike out against these Harbingers but the terrain tends to make them almost impossible to fully root out. The situation is made even more complicated by the extreme winters the region endures.

In these absolute depths of cold, only the Broodspawn can survive with any certainty, and for at least six months of the year any attempts to purge the region are futile.

New York State

This entire state has become a war zone in the current age. Everything about it makes it desirable. The area itself can support large expanses of farmland and has never succumbed to the Blight in any serious ways. It also has massive areas of urban infrastructure, most of which have never been picked clean, allowing even modern scavengers a treasure trove of possibilities.

The reason why these places remain is because the vast bulk of New York state was entirely lost to the Brood for decades. Only the actions of the Pyreflame Crusade allowed the region, at great cost, to be reclaimed. Now that the Crusade has lost momentum, the other great factions have virtually all turned their attention here.

The Breakers fight tooth and claw with the native Broodspawn and the other factions to secure their salvage rights, hoping that by drawing their institution's attention here, its internal strife can be abated long enough to find real solutions that don't involve a civil war.

The Dominion are not blind to the opportunity the region presents and attacked the north-eastern areas of the region, capturing large sections and beginning the construction of settlements designed to supplement the food supply of regions already under its control.

Their efforts arefrequently harassed by the Thorns who don't wish to see the region reclaimed. Granted, they wish to see it purged of the Broodspawn, but they would rather have the region return to its state as a primal forest, and certainly don't wish to see the reclamation of New York City.

The Pyreflame are arrayed against these factions. As a pivotal point of their Crusade, they are unwilling to allow the region to fall. As a result, their relatively benign nature is pushed to its limits and many of the faction's fanatics find their way into the region, replacing words and negotiations with fire and sword.

The conflicts in the region have also helped to give rise to the small faction known as The True. These fanatics take the Pyreflame's beliefs to absolute extremes and have begun the worrying trend of immolating anybody who disagrees with their approach.

Amidst this region of conflict, the real threat often goes unnoticed; the Harbingers exist here in strength and work continuously towards the fall of the region and the creation of an unstoppable legion of Broodspawn.

Most who exist here are independents, unconnected with the Lost Children and dedicated to the Mother alone. They seem particularly interested in a few select regions deep in the mountainous wilderness of the region. Here, they have gathered their Broodspawn and begun to dig. In doing so they have unearthed a number of Shards which seem to all appearances pre-date the Fall. Why they are doing this remains a mystery. Those few Harbingers that have been interrogated don't seem to know themselves why they are doing this. The only explanation they can offer is that "Mother must be Awoken".

New York City: A microcosm for the entire conflict, New York City is at war with itself. During the Fall, the area suffered the full brunt of Seraphim's assault. Vast sections of the city were returned to the sea and the area was completely overrun by the Broodspawn. Despite this, a few determined survivors hung on amidst the ruins of the city.

Now, nearly a century later, they don't welcome the Pyreflame's advance into the city, and are even less keen on the outright war which has emerged between these crusaders and the Dominion.

For the Pyreflame, the city is a cornerstone in their Crusade, and their drive to reunite humanity. The fact that their city's native inhabitants didn't particularly want to be saved doesn't factor into their view of the situation.

The Dominion for their part simply see the city as a cultural and spiritual icon of America. They believe that it needs to be captured and restored so that their great work can continue. In practice, the northern regions surrounding the city belong to the Dominion, with the south and south-westerly regions falling under the auspices of the Pyreflame.

The islands of the city, particularly Manhattan, are a confused mess. The above-ground regions have mostly been cleared of the Brood but territory shifts on a daily basis between control of the two greater factions and the natives of the city.

At present, a stalemate seems to have developed; both factions are capable of holding the surface and repelling one another, but neither has yet been capable of penetrating and rooting out the Harbingers and a particular chapter of the Lost Children existing in the network of access and subway tunnels beneath the city.

New Jersey

One of the northern most regions of the East Coast that doesn't face a potentially deadly winter, New Jersey is a strange mix of factions and powers. By default, the extreme north and north-western extents of the region belong to the Pyreflame, but thick forests and abandoned cities where the Brood hold sway prevent their expansion further south.

Here, an isolated pocket of Dominion and Artificers have managed to reclaim much of the region's old solar infrastructure and have turned it to the production of arms. Tentatively, the Breakers have a presence here also. Seeing the value in the industry the Artificers and Dominion are promoting, the Breakers have gone out of their way to protect the fledgling industries of the region.

This has created a highly charged and nervous situation. The Breakers, unwilling to take a particular side in the long and drawn out conflict between the Pyreflame and the Dominion are forced to attempt to trade and hunt the Broodspawn in the area without appearing to favour either faction.

Beyond these encampments and large settlements, the area has returned to wilderness under the control of the Broodspawn. Fortunately for the inhabitants, no major unifiers of the Broodspawn have appeared here, and they remain for the most part a random and wandering menace, often deployed as tools in the larger conflicts to the North.

Delaware

A fairly small region, Delaware is dominated by abandoned cities and the remnants of scavenger camps. Until relatively recently, it was a major area of interest for the Breakers, but after decades of continuous scavenging the area has been picked clean.

As life became more and more difficult, many nomad groups and communities began the attempt to migrate to other regions. This slow decline was brought to a head by a series of horrific tragedies.

A series of settlements fell to an isolated attack from the Brood. What started as a fairly routine slaughter turned into a horror which has swept the region. The Broodspawn now number in the thousands and are operating as a single vast horde under the authority of a Brood Mother.

Consumed as they are elsewhere, the incident has gone relatively unnoticed by the great factions. The last desperate settlements attempt to hold out, but their time is running out. When the Brood is finished with them, the Horde will sweep outwards, absorbing all the Brood in the surrounding region, and it will rapidly become a point of concern for everyone on the East Coast if not stopped soon.

Maryland

A relatively bountiful region but one where human life struggles to survive in the face of an ever re-growing presence of Broodspawn, this region has the distinction of being the birthplace of the Pyreflame. From the tiny community of Tyman's Watch on the banks of the Potomac river, the Pyreflame has spread and has managed to match the Brood in tenacity and endurance.

Their Crusade has been a costly one, and it's something of a painful irony that despite the extermination of the Brood, the region is relatively depopulated. Most of this is due to the ever present need for reinforcements in the north. The vast bulk of the population accept this with good humour, literally seeing their sacrifice as a gift to God and the rest of America.

Here and there, though, there are rumours of discontent. No faction can rule absolutely, and with the Pyreflame's best and brightest committed to the war in the north, the region is shifting ever so slowly towards revolt. If the situation doesn't change, soon the towns and cities may fall more under the authority of the Trader's Union and the Breakers than the Pyreflame.

If that happens, the Pyreflame could collapse. Doubtless, its resulting attempts to reconquer its own homelands would be a horrific and bloody affair. It's this one fact which unifies Nemissaries in the region in acting relentlessly to prevent the Dominion from exploiting a situation in which it could otherwise dominate easily.

Virginia

On the Eastern Seaboard, Virginia is one of the few states that was subject to nuclear fire during The Fall. As a result of this, coupled with the shifting of the climate, Virginia has been reduced to a vast wasteland, virtually devoid of life.

The only powers with any real presence here are the Breakers who still pick slowly through the irradiated ruins of the old world, and various nomad groups which call this region home.

Their existence here is always a tenuous one. They have to act with extreme care to avoid radiation sickness, and frequent storms can make this an impossible task. It's a testament to the resilience of humanity that anybody lives in the region at all.

The only other noteworthy feature, at least from the point of view of the great northern and southern powers, is an erratic network of highways maintained by the Breakers, which allows limited trade between the north and the south. If it weren't for this, it's likely that Florida and the other southern states would be completely cut off from the rest of the East Coast.

North Carolina

The northern areas of this region see extensive poisoning as winds from the coast blow through Virginia and deposit deadly radioactive dust into the air. These wastelands continue for miles, cutting like daggers into what would otherwise be a fertile and bountiful region.

Numerous nomad groups make their home here, despite its dangers. Large sections of the state are filled with huge and wild expanses of Old World crops such as corn and tobacco. Although reduced from decades of exploitation, these fields still make life possible in the region and facilitate a great deal of trade over the roads maintained by the Breakers.

Despite this, the region is a dangerous one. The high value of these crops makes many groups desperate to acquire them, and desperation leads to mistakes. With a less than cautious population, large concentrations of Brood emerge in the region with alarming frequency. Some of these have concentrated into small Hordes that from time to time sweep through, decimating whole communities.

In the south-west, the Thorns maintain a rare series of outposts and exert considerable and surprising influence with the local nomad groups. Their power is sorely needed as the Brood aren't the only threat to the region.

The Breakers are powerful here and their growing desperation and the relative isolation of the region has led to them using it as an area for their slaving operations with increasing frequency. As a result, the region has come to be dominated not by a conflict between mankind and the Brood, but an entirely human and ethical one, made all the more painful for the lives ruined on both sides of the divide.

South Carolina

A region rendered largely uninhabitable, not by the ravages of the Brood or humanity, but the vagaries of the changing climate, the entire area is routinely lashed by storms from the open ocean. Its bitter soil has never lent itself easily to farming and the region has given mankind little reason to stay after the Fall.

Despite this, it has its curiosities. In its extreme north-eastern regions a series of highly isolationist communities thrive. These groups, though outwardly seeming to be of the Thorns, maintain strange traditions entirely of their own centred around the worship of a series of three Shards which they call the Watchers of the Deep.

In the shadow of these obelisks, the storms of the region are abated and the area is far more habitable than it otherwise might be. These people claim that the adverse weather and painful landscape is the Shard's gift to them and that their worship actually maintains the disruptions in the region in order to keep them safe.

The Breakers that travel the region certainly have encountered these groups, and for the most part think that they are deranged. To their mind, the region's hostile conditions have nothing supernatural about it whatsoever. They ply their trade as they always have done but exist mostly in the far western areas, maintaining the tenuous lines of trade between the north and Florida.

Georgia and Florida

Next to Boston and New York, these are the most densely inhabited regions on the East Coast. Despite the large populations in these areas, life is not easy. Many of the large cities have been reclaimed—Atlanta, Miami, Orlando and many others lie under the control of the Republic of Florida. From these walled settlements, the Republic works desperately to maintain farmland and resources. The reason for their desperation is that the changing climate and the Blight has transformed the area.

Without the mountain ranges of the north, radioactive fallout and dust routinely blow across the region, necessitating a constant battle for survival. Worse still, the bulk of the ground is parched and decayed. What was once swampland has been reclaimed by the sea, and woods, forests and hills have mostly been reduced to barren desert and rock outcroppings.

With every passing year, the situation has grown worse. The autumn routinely brings storms of terrifying intensity. If it weren't for the heavily reinforced state of the cities in the region, they would have been flattened by nature's assaults.

Even with all the defences the Republic can gather, the cities have not weathered decades of this onslaught unscathed. Virtually every large building in the area has been demolished, either by the weather or human hands. Very few plants will grow under these conditions and amongst the few that will is a highly invasive vine. A pest even in the time before the Fall, it now dominates what fertile regions remain and requires constant vigilance to keep what is referred to simply as the Briar from overwhelming and destroying the remaining farmland.

The Republic's vigilant and active military have kept the numbers of Broodspawn in the region to an absolute minimum. Though they face routine attacks from the ocean, it's actually a lack of resources that threatens this region far more than Broodspawn or human assault.

Atlanta: As host for the Centre for Disease Control, Atlanta should have been an important target for the Reapers in the early days of the Fall. For whatever reason, it escaped Blacklight's notice. As the north fell, the massive military presence helped to keep the city contained.

In the end, the preservations were for naught and the CDC was overrun, but not before a great deal of critical information about the Brood was passed on. A common myth surrounding the area is that the CDC actually managed to find some form of solution to the Brood in the closing hours before its destruction, and it was this very discovery that lead to the Brood's final assault on this location. Most dismiss it as a rumour, but from time to time individuals comb through the ruins of the old CDC headquarters hoping to find some answers.

Atlanta itself has been reclaimed and serves as an important inland bulwark for the Republic of Florida. Its surrounding regions allow for a growing of a great deal of crops vital to the Republic's survival. This has led to a disproportionate number of troops being stationed in the region; partially to provide security to the farms and partially to enforce the Republic's ban on direct trading with the Breakers.

The great irony of this is that these military forces have instituted and allow for a loophole to function, where the Breaker's trade with nomad intermediaries, and then with the Republic itself. They allow this because without it, the Breakers would likely abandon the roads north and the Republic would be cut off from all outside trade.

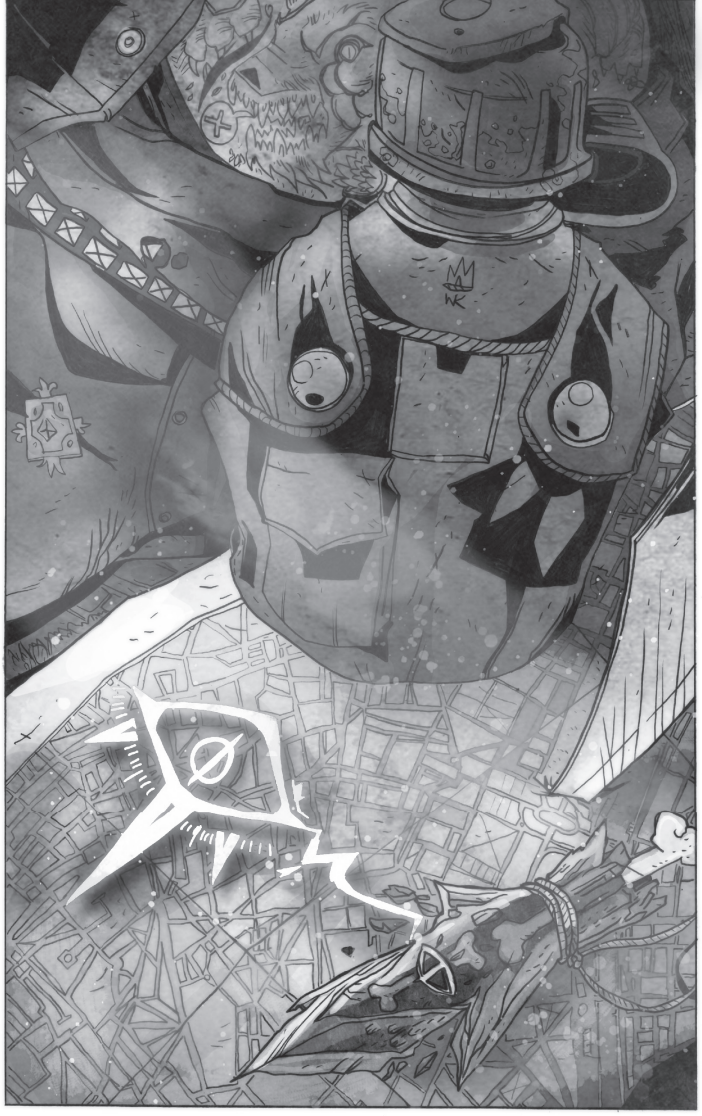
More to Come

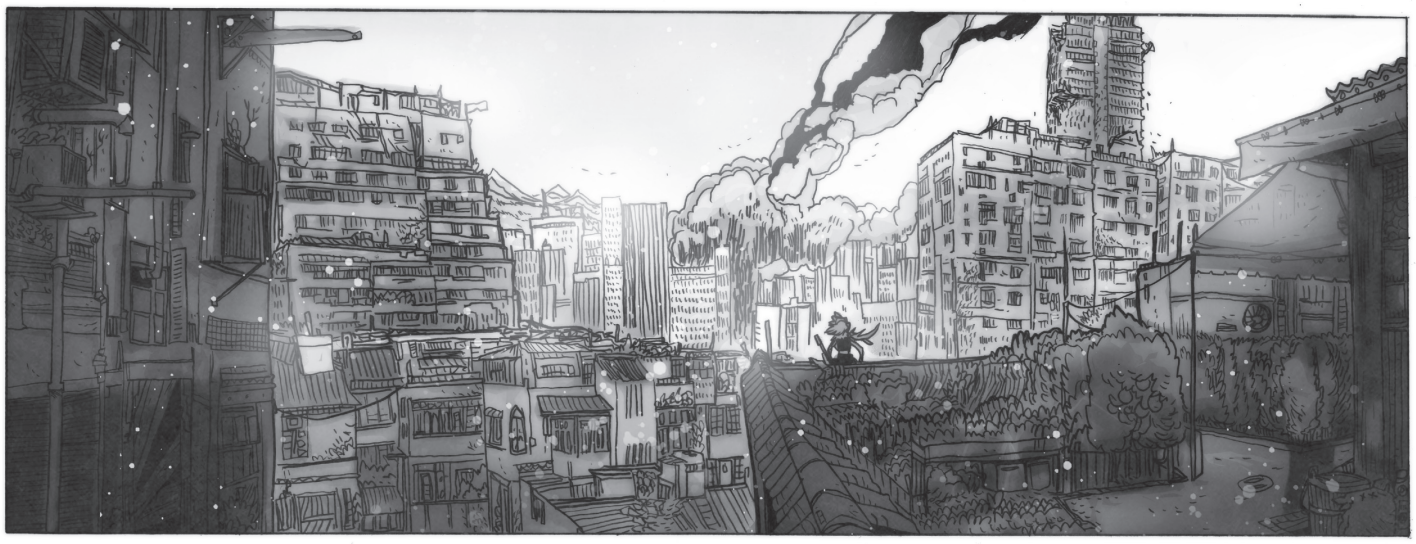
What's in this chapter isn't the final word on the setting of Sins. It's our intention to publish additional setting information for free on our website; sinsrpg.uk.

After the launch of Sins, we will be routinely adding new information; some of it small, some of it large. We intend to continue supporting the game and building upon it with a range of free supplements, play aids and adventure seeds to help breathe yet more life into the setting, giving you the best possible play experience we can.

Orlando: The civilian and political centre of the Republic, Orlando is a city under siege by nature. The erosion of its surrounding land and the fierce storms which batter the city have pushed the population nearly to breaking point. The Republic know that while maintaining the city might not be practical, it's still important as a symbol of their defiance. Both the military and civilian governments agree that if the city is allowed to fall it could begin a rot within the Republic itself, leading to it fragmenting into separate individual city states.

To help in this constant battle, the city is now surrounded by great walls and huge efforts have to be deployed year round to keep its farmlands from burning or flooding. All in all it seems a futile effort and if something doesn't change soon Orlando, and perhaps the Republic, will fall.





Chapter XIII

Letters

There are horrible people who, instead of solving a problem, tangle it up and make it harder to solve for anyone who wants to deal with it. Whoever does not know how to hit the nail on the head should be asked not to hit it at all.

–Friedrich Nietzsche

Lucian,

As per your request on the third of March, Year of Rebirth 27, I've continued an exhausting research on the primary factions. I imagine, given what you asked of me that much of this will come as no surprise. However, I think you will be pleased with the depth of information I've managed to acquire.

As we know, the Shards are very unwilling to give up their secrets, but over the course of twenty-two interviews with other Nemissaries whose existence I am aware of, I have managed to piece together the following tales.

"Four Kings[1] stand upon a precipice, their broken towers about them. Their courts laugh and their people die, all under the Ravens' eyes.

From amongst those who circle, the first lands. He berates the Kings for their folly, and takes from amongst them their crowns. He melts them down and forges himself blade and shield.

He goes forth and bests the Kings' enemies.[2] Exhausted, he puts aside his blade, and all watch as, consumed by war, the kingdom falls yet further.

A second raven lands, and he berates the first. He takes the first blade and breaks it, and he makes himself a throne of the dead. For a time all is well, and the Kings grow weaker and hide. The raven grows old and tired on his throne, and once again the darkness comes.

The third and the last raven flies far from that place. He whispers in the ears of the people, and he whispers in the ears of their enemies, and he whispers in the ears of the Kings. In the dead of night, he murders his brothers, and places himself upon the throne.

Sensing his weakness, the Kings rise from their torpor. They drive the third raven away, and they make their kingdom anew on the ashes, greater than ever before.

In the darkness, and the fires of rebirth, the three brothers watch, and laugh, for men are so much greater when driven to stand in pride."

Obviously the first tale I gathered from members of the Architect's faction. As you know they are one of the least secretive factions amongst us and most were more than happy to help with my research, as long as I didn't bring politics into the equation.

Specifically, the story noted above has been pieced together from three separate accounts, all of which were fairly precise on the details.

The next story might be of particular interest to you, my dear Lucian, as it certainly has bearing on your own agenda.

"There was once a powerful but lonely King, who watched over a rich but empty land. Eventually his loneliness grew more powerful than his desire to rule, and he wandered his empty kingdom and found nothing in its perfection to interest him, and so he wandered into the lands beyond.[3]
In that far place, he accrued triumphs and failures in equal measure, and took for himself a wife. Together, they brought life into his cold and empty kingdom. Eventually there came a time where the King felt old, and he sat aside and watched his children rule.

The kingdom prospered, but as years turned to decades, its prosperity waned; the people starved, and the kingdom crumbled, as the children made war.

1. Number of Kings varies between sources, but usually 4 or 6
2. in at least two instances, these enemies were described to me as Broodspawn, but I can't be certain whether that was the Shard's doing, or an example of personal bias
3. I'm not quite sure how an empty kingdom works, but the story seemed quite specific on this point.

The old King confronted his eldest descendant and demanded an explanation. For his trouble he was reminded that he had passed into the dead and his descendants would handle their own affairs.

The King returned to his Queen, and asked her why she had not counselled her children. She answered that she had, but the turning of ages had poisoned her words, and the living would not listen to the wishes of the dead.(4)

The King took up his sword once more and resolved to right the wrongs. He entered the Kingdom, and with great power slew its enemies. He presented their heads to his distant sons. They thanked him for all he had done, but within a year they warred with one another once again.

The King, incensed, took up his sword for a final time, and marched into what was once his own throne room, and there he confronted his sons. His wife begged him to have mercy, and the King's hand was stayed, but as he turned his back to embrace his Queen once more, his youngest son struck him in the back.

The King raised his blade in anger. One by one his sons and their armies fell. Eventually, when all was still, the King resumed his throne. His wife wept for their dead children and begged him to undo what he had done. The King answered that he would not be swayed, and that if she wished to grieve, she would do so alone.

Appalled at his coldness, she left, and the King wept tears when she was gone, but not for his fallen sons, nor his departed Queen, but for all the evils he had made by leaving his throne."
Given my various correspondents, I'm fairly certain that this story refers to the Tower. It's certainly a little more cryptic than the first, but I think it's message is just as clear. It's also worth mentioning that this story has more than one ending, and in at least one version of the story I have been told, it ends with the King murdering his wife in addition to his sons.

The next tale which I have managed to acquire proves to be more cryptic yet, and I should warn you I'm having to paraphrase a lot more than in the other two cases, since most of the people who I had to interview to garner these particular snippets of information, were intensely secretive.

There were four Daughters;(5) each the Mother, each the Maiden, each the Crone. Together they watched the Twilight. They were content.

The first Daughter came before the last mountain.(6) There, she made a garden.

The second Daughter went to the east, and there she built a house.

The third Daughter went to the south, and sat amongst the dunes.

The last Daughter wandered the skies and the heavens.

In time, each was content and went before the black stone, and placed their names before the Law.(7)

The Daughter who rested in the shadow of the Mountain hunted game. The Daughter who sat in the dunes to the south hunted with the wind and preyed upon men. The Daughter who walked

4. The details vary here on what is meant by 'The Dead'. I'm working on the assumption, as were most of those who told me this tale, that this refers to Nemissaries. That however raises some interesting questions; after all I'm fairly certain that I'm not 'dead'.
5. At least one of the sources said Furies as opposed to Daughters, and one used the terms Daughter, Mother, Spinster.
6. Most of the people I interviewed seemed to have no idea why this was relevant but every story included the description. All stated 'The Last Mountain'
7. Interestingly, I'm not sure if people were confused but I've had this described to me as both Law and Lore. At least one correspondent I spoke to seemed to think it referred to the Eternal and his gifts

the stars ate the words of scholars and bowed before none. The Daughter who built a house ate nothing.

Eventually, she grew frail. Her sisters came to her and asked her "Why? Why do you not eat, Sister?". She looked at them forlorn and said "I have forgotten how to, my Sisters."

They were stunned. How could someone forget their own nature? They looked at the walls of her home. They were beautiful, yet perverse. Again, the lonely Daughter spoke.

"I have built myself a home and a prison. Now I am safe but I have only ashes to eat and I cannot bear their taste."

Her Sisters despaired. In their sorrow they tore down the house, its bricks and stone, and scattered them to the winds. They said "Now, Sister, you are free!", but still she looked them with dull, cow eyes.

Together, they looked and knew their Sister's purpose. As one, they tore her each limb from limb and bathed themselves in her blood. They committed the Black Sin but it was good.

They said to their Sister's soul now inside each of them, "There Sister, now you shall eat."

From on high, their Father came before them. He said, "You have committed the First Sin; the blackest crime".

They turned as one; now not all, each alone, Maiden, Mother and Crone spoke. "But Father, you gave us the task; you knew what she would do. She is dead, and we are born. We are complete now for our Sin."

He said, "But the price must be paid, for the First Law is above all."

They spoke, "Our Sister paid the price, for her soul was ours when she built her prison. What we ate was but a shell."

Satisfied, their Father turned. Justice was done.

Obviously you have no doubt guessed that this tale refers to the enigmatic faction known as the Circle, and I must say it's one of the more ominous of the stories, though it doesn't quite worry me like the tale linked to my own faction.

There was a Queen once, who was lonely for she had no Name. She wandered about her followers but was seen by none. She could command the Dawn and the Stars, the Fire and the Earth, but still no one would see. Only once in each life would they notice; only once would they Awaken.

A lifetime passed and finally she decided she must know. She journeyed before the Stars and asked there, "Why do my people not see me?" and the stars were silent.

In her anger, she turned to the darkness; the space between. "Why? Why do they not see me?".

Her Shadow spoke; "Because you do not ask, Princess."

She turned in anger. "You speak to your Queen so?"

The Shadow smiled. "A Queen must have a King. You have no King. If you did, he would speak."

She gazed for the longest time. She knew to trust nothing of that place, so she said to it "You know nothing. I had a King once, and so I am Queen. I will find my own answer then."

The darkness of her Shadow smiled; "You will not like the answer if you force it so."

She said, "I am a Queen. It is right to be obeyed."

The Shadow spoke one last time before departing; "Answers do not obey the Law. He who asks is Bound."

She turned and stepped beyond worlds, beyond the space between. There, in the source of things, where men must not look[13] There, before the Light she opened her eyes.

"I command, all shall obey. Tell me, why am I not answered?"

The Light burned with the intensity of the heavens, and once again she found herself in the space between worlds. The Shadow was there once again.

"They do not answer, because you are dead, my Queen. They do not answer because you asked the question."

She smiled, bittersweet at her King. She looked at the world and realised that she would have rather had her existence of ignorance, for now she would never leave this place.

Certainly the tale I've just recounted seems to reinforce the message that curiosity killed the cat. It strikes me as odd in many ways, particularly considering that before beginning this research I had only scant memories of my own Harrowing, and have myself never been in any prolonged contact with any Shard. I must say however, that the longer I study the transcripts before me, the more I feel that I have heard these tales before.

What worries me more, is that I am almost certain, buried somewhere in my mind, there is a fifth, and while the tale of my own faction says to beware of asking too many questions, I can't shake the feeling that in this instance, not knowing may be far more dangerous.

Yours sincerely,

Jessica Myers

8. Often the story diverges here. The one common thread seems to be that she is described as soulless in each story
9. I think this refers to Devouring. Assuming these are meant to have been Nemissaries in the story, then this would mean they ate her soul
10. The phrasing is bad here but this is the best I can come up with. Most people I spoke to describe it like trying to translate a term from a foreign language that has no equivalent.
11. I think that's meant to refer to within a spiritual sense but I cannot be certain
12. This description varies between the tellers. Sometimes it says Void. What worries me is that at least once it was told to me as 'The Well'.
13. This one is a translation on my part. The actual phrases I've heard vary and tend to be unwieldy. The most complete I was told was 'The place where naught but God shall tread' but most tended to omit or skip the specific phrase.

I look at the others as they joke and chat. The nomads that surround us keep their distance from me. That's good, I don't want them to see the monster in their midst.

The camp fire burns hot and bright; it pushes back the night, but the truth is that the monsters are already here. I don't know why the others keep me around. They should have driven me away or killed me long ago.

They'd be safer without me, but then again I remember that every group needs a warrior to fight the monsters in the dark, and as far as they are concerned, it's better the devil you know. I remember the looks of disgust and horror at the way I fight and feed, but they don't complain to my face. I only wish they would. Sometimes I think I'm little more than a rabid dog that needs to be put down.

The Nomads we're travelling with are on their way to the next town, and we had to detour around a herd of those "things"... They were massive, deadly, but seemed not to care. They weren't the problem, it's the Broodspawn which follow in their wake like buzzing flies.

I remember before The Black Rain, watching the nature channel and the sight of wolves hunting haunts me. The sight of the blood as they brought their prey down and began to feed sends ragged blades of hunger through my body.

I feel the flesh shift under my skin as my Hunger stirs. The times between it trying to rise are getting smaller now, it's getting stronger while I grow more tired – so very tired.

I've seen junkies when the withdrawals kick in; the sweats, the shakes and the rest. They spoke of a burning NEED for their fix; just a little, just a touch, nothing too much, just a bite here or there, the girl over there wouldn't be missed. It would be quick and quiet, the shadow between wagons behind her would hide what I was doing from everyone else. Her terror would be intoxicating...

I stop myself as I feel my body rising, my limbs aching with the exertion of holding myself still. My Hunger chuckles as I almost lose control. "Later," it promises, "just a little longer and then I'll make the pain go away". The scents of the nomads start to sharpen. I begin to pick out the youngest and those with blood on their weapons; prey and their Shepherds.

I clench my fists until the nails draw blood. I am Will made Flesh. My personal mantra aids my resolve but it isn't enough. I can feel my defences failing as the Hunger claws at them, I feel its desire and the disgust at my weakness rises as it strengthens.

A nomad walks past me and all I can hear is the blood pumping through their succulent flesh. I imagine the sweetness on my tongue as bones are snapped and the marrow is sucked from within; the copper like a fine whiskey as the terror mixes in the blood as I rip and tear and...

Then Her hand touches my shoulder and I hear her say my name. An angry howl rushes through my mind as I force the Hunger the slumber once again.

She looks me in the eye and she asks if I'm okay. I nod and try to smile; she isn't convinced as she sits nearby keeping an eye on me. I relax, her touch my secret addiction.

She'll never know, I'm not worthy of her, I wasn't before the Rain, even less so now. She's the reason why I clawed my way back, I'd never tell her though.

But every Beauty needs their Beast...

Dear Lucian,

I've had something of a breakthrough. After my previous research, I decided to join an expedition heading north with the Breakers. I could certainly tell you quite a few interesting stories regarding just that journey, but that isn't really why I'm writing. It's because I had my first in depth encounter with a Shard.

As you know, since our last correspondence, some of the unanswered questions have been haunting me, and I decided, regardless of the outcome, to seek out one of the more communicative Shards known locally as 'The Eye of Bathira' in the southern reaches of what was once Canada.

I managed there to extract a particularly interesting piece of lore from the Shard. Of course, I didn't take this on face value, and while I trust my own sanity, I know that the nature of the Shards' communication sometimes makes a single perspective difficult to validate.

Anxious as I was to write to you then, I decided to wait and converse with several of my colleagues, and in doing so, I discovered I'm not the first to have come across this particular narrative.

"The first amongst the Eternal was born in the death of the Age of Ash. He brought ruin in his wake, and was born of the death screams of the Gods of old; and so did the Eternal one come to rule over a world of broken dreams and ruined hope.

For a time, he watched, his iron heart a tower which sustained him, but as years turned to ages, he finally felt alone.

He took the first part of himself, and shattered it upon an ancient altar; the Heart of the World. From it, he brought forth six children. Each was like him, but different, and for a time he feared that the end of all things would claim them; that they lacked his resolve. For a time though, his fears were unfounded. His children set out to master that which he could not.

The first child reached out into the Well of Creation, and drew forth the light of the dawn. He wreathed himself in it, becoming the embodiment of Creation.

The second child, envious of the first, brought forth from the light Fire, and wove it through his very nature.

The third child, wishing to be different from his siblings, brought forth water from the light, diminishing it yet further.

The fourth child watched the others, and stood like an island in the coming storm, and instinctually wreathed himself in stone.

The fifth child saw all of this, and fled, drawing the wind with her.

The sixth child, having watched the others, and watched them each diminish the light piece by piece looked upon the first child who now wept for what his siblings had done.

Seeing the pain that had been caused, the child reached not into the light, but to the place before, and brought forth Darkness so that the light would be brighter still."

This text seems specifically to deal with our origins, and while definitely cryptic, it gives a few tantalising clues into how we might have begun. There's certainly a difference of opinion with those I have spoken to, as to whether this refers to recent history or not. Several of my colleagues have pointed out to me that the death of the Age of Ash, and the emergence of these seven entities, could be attributed to the Reapers.

Of course, that horrifying prospect aside, there are also those who feel that this tale refers to a far more ancient event; possibly occurring before the onset of recorded human history. Curiously enough I also met one Nemissary who insisted that the Age of Ash refers to the fall of Rome, and implored me to seek out the Holy Land and the secrets which lie there.

I must admit, I have my misgivings about this, but I was fairly convinced that what had been recovered from the Shards up to this point was not a complete narrative, and while I would like to make the journey to the cradle of civilisation, I'm afraid that my resources preclude it.

Once again, yours Sincerely,

Jessica Myers

To Lucian,

I'm not the best writer so I'll try and keep this brief. I want to know exactly how you got Jessica out of the country. The last communication I had with her, she was babbling about something to do with the middle east, and about seven sons or some bullshit.

Look, I know that this whole research deal is important to you and her, but you have to realise I can't let her make that journey alone, so please for the love of god reply and tell me how to catch up.

Jack Bramhall

My dear Mr Bramhall,

For the record, I'll say that I don't know how your friend managed to get out of the country, and as you mentioned we have been in discussions for some time now. I suspect she solicited the aid of the Dominion to cross the sea, and you might have better luck tracking her in Boston; though do try to keep in mind, the research she's on is vital, and perhaps more vital than you or I.

I will let you in on something. I did receive one additional communication beyond the letters which you are no doubt aware of. Yesterday I got a rather garbled message delivered to me from Cairo via long range radio. It was from Jessica.

She wished to pass along that she had discovered something very important; something about the nature of the Creeds, and their relationship with the Reapers. She said that she didn't dare say in an unsecured way what she had found. Whatever it was, though, it was important, and I hope for all our sakes, when you make it to Cairo as I know you will, you find her well, Jack.

Sincerely, *Lucian*

From the Journal of Lucian Gray
January 4th, Year of Rebirth 27

After meeting with a promising young colleague of mine by the name of Jessica Myers, I have decided to reopen some old avenues of research. For my own clarity, and for the purposes of completeness, should I need to refer to this diary, I have decided to go over the movements of the Reaper known as "Blacklight" during the Fall.

I believe that Blacklight's first appearance involves an attack on a US Army base on the east coast on April 26th 2038 CE, which places it three days after the first instance involving the Broodspawn.

From what I have managed to piece together, the assault was a slaughter, with only three known survivors, one of whom did manage to give a brief transcript of events to the joint chiefs.

He describes Blacklight as a tall figure surrounded in what appeared to be a nimbus of black flame, though the soldier in question's description was less eloquent. From what was stated, Blacklight made short work of the troops and armoured fighting vehicles, primarily using physical attacks to do so, before – though I'm paraphrasing here – "playing" with the survivors. Apparently he did this for some hours before a retaliatory airstrike drew his attention.

He then seems to have moved north, up the coast, and attacked two small towns – the ruins of one I currently find myself in residence at. Blacklight then seems to have gathered a substantial force of Broodspawn, before moving towards Washington, unearthing and assaulting the Presidential bunker.

Unfortunately whilst this incident is not difficult to substantiate, there is little that can be learned of the attack itself, as there were no survivors reported from the assault, and though a few Nemissaries claim to have been there, I find their testimony suspect, since it's generally accepted that Blacklight used something akin to a nuclear weapon, which decimated much of the surrounding region.

As far as my research can tell, Blacklight then gathered a larger army about himself, and proceeded to move west, where he seemed to be building "something", according to many sources. I've managed to find a few fragmented descriptions of what it was he was making, though unfortunately, none of them agree on its exact shape. My personal opinion given what I have heard is that Blacklight was trying to construct some form of space-craft. That is however just an opinion and difficult to substantiate now.

What happened next, in contrast, is very definite.

On May 3rd, what remained of the United States government launched several nuclear strikes against the greatest concentrations of Broodspawn, and specifically against Blacklight. It's generally accepted that this was done because of the supposed death of another Reaper at the hands of a Chinese nuclear weapon. However unfortunately for all of us, Blacklight proved more resistant than his counterpart, and somehow survived the onslaught.

What happens next is very difficult to substantiate. Everything I have found seems to suggest Blacklight returned east, and that's where reports get contradictory. At least one report seems to indicate that he entered the ocean, and simply faded out of events. An even stranger report states that for whatever reason he engaged another unknown Reaper in conflict somewhere along the east coast, north of Boston. Another variation on the story claims that it was actually a group of three Nemissaries which fought Blacklight.

Obviously the latter two possibilities are very interesting, if a little difficult to believe, though a colleague of my associate Jessica, by the name Catherine Yale, reported something very interesting in this regard, which is an area north of Boston exhibiting massive battle damage, not typical of Broodspawn or the military.

Given that I have lived in the region now for some thirty years, and have never known of any major conflict in that area, I am beginning to wonder if the last two scenarios possibly have some weight to them.

Jane,

I hope you find what I've enclosed interesting. We managed extract it last night from a computer system in the ruins of the old CDC headquarters in Atlanta. We're not sure how much light it sheds on our current situation, but at the very least it's more than we knew yesterday.

May the Flame guide us,

John Albright

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public H
Centers

Nationa
9822 V
Atlanta

From: Dr Jon Clarke (JonClarke@saviour.cdc.gov)
To: Gen. G. Weathers (G.Weathers@Health.mil.gov)

Regarding your request for further information, I cannot state enough, General, that this correspondence must remain confidential. To the best of my knowledge, the Echidna strain is not, as the chiefs of staff feared, a biological weapon; at least, it cannot have been made by any nation on Earth.

I am aware that what I am about to say might sound farfetched, but given that dead people are apparently getting back up, it's probably not the strangest thing you have heard today.

Echidna does not actually seem to be an organic pathogen in the conventional sense, and owing to the lack of any appropriate descriptor, I'll refer to it as a "virus" for the time being.

From what we've managed to gather, infection rates may already be as high as 98%. This is due to the fact that the virus appears to have no visible effects until brain death occurs within a target.

It seems that the virus is an airborne pathogen, and is capable of surviving outside the body for an as yet undetermined amount of time, though this can be no less than 72 hours, given that no laboratory specimen has yet expired when exposed to atmosphere.

Once the virus enters the body, it begins an extremely aggressive attack on a subject's blood cells, the most curious phenomenon of which is that rather than destroying them outright, Echidna seems to replicate their function without harming the host. Within approximately 9 hours of contact, a subject's blood and immune system will have been entirely co-opted by the Echidna virus.

The erythrocytes, leukocytes and thrombocytes seem to have been replaced with a unique structure we are informally calling 'Exo-cells' at this point. The Exo-cells themselves are highly abnormal. Each one seems to contain an immense quantity of genetic data, and is capable of changing its structure to replace nearby damaged cells. This has the immediate effect of rendering a subject very resistant to disease, and in at least two cases – specifically Subject [26.391 Tom Harris], and Subject [36.766 Harris Ford] – active cancer seems to have gone into remission. Given the strain under which field teams are currently operating, however, this cannot be completely confirmed.

Of course these initial changes are fairly benign, and we believe them to be merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the virus will ultimately do. However, the point of more imminent concern is what happens when brain death occurs within the target.

As you know, many are already referring to these infected as 'Zombies'. We feel however that the term is exceedingly misleading, as the subjects are certainly not dead in any conventional sense. The CDC is currently using the term "Infected" to refer to this stage of infection; granted the term is hardly accurate, but at this point given the nature of Echidna, we've gone well beyond formalities.

So far we have had little opportunity to observe the infected under laboratory conditions, though we have managed to piece together some basic data. The Exo-cells in the Infected seem to begin duplicating at a massive rate, beginning a process we suspect will result in all the cells of the body being replaced in no less than 48 hours. The time requires for a body to reanimate after death seems to vary from as little as 30 seconds in the case of people dying from conditions which left the brain and structure of the body primarily intact, to several hours with those who suffered serious physical trauma.

When first risen, the Exo-cells seem to concentrate on overcoming whatever immediate damage proved fatal to the patient, restoring brain function, mobility, and vital organs in that order. It's notable that in the case of extremely damaged corpses, such as those missing 40% or more of their brain, or missing several major internal organs, they will fail to trigger this process of reanimation, and will remain completely inert.

The new Infected are in every case extremely aggressive, seeming to experience no pain, and utilising the body without many of the restraint mechanisms present in a normal individual. This gives the impression of improved speed and strength; however it should be pointed out that at this stage, the Infected body at this stage possesses neither. It's simply discarding the limits our own bodies impose upon us to prevent damage to the muscles.

As noted, the Exo-cells continue their work while the Infected is active, and if they are capable of devouring blood and flesh from people who possess the Echidna virus but have not yet transformed, they can dramatically speed this process. We approximate that if an Infected manages to consume between 100 and 150 pounds of flesh, they will have fully completed their transformation, and we guess that the Exo-cells themselves provide the equivalent of 2 pounds of flesh per hour towards this process.

As the percentage of Exo-cells within the Infected's body builds, these "creatures" exhibit a quite horrifying resilience to conventional damage. Their bodies have been observed to heal from multiple gunshot wounds within 30 seconds. In fact we have had multiple reports from field teams of barricades being overrun simply because no amount of conventional gunfire would stop these more advanced Infected. Quite frankly at this point, regarding countermeasures, the only thing we can suggest is fire, and lots of it. Off the record, General, I would begin a Scorched Earth policy now rather than later.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr J. Clarke.
Head of Countermeasures
Project Saviour

Dr J. Clarke.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Health and Administration
9822 Vimon Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30917

From: Dr Emma Whitehall (Dr Emma Whitehall@saviour.cdc.gov)
To: Gen. G. Weathers (G. Weathers@Health.mil.gov)

General, I am afraid to tell you I have been forced to assume command here, due to the death of Dr Clarke, at approximately 0600 hours this morning. As per the Pentagon's request, we have begun experiments on several captured Infected in an attempt to discover some way of stopping the spread of Echidna. The doctor was killed during one of these experiments, and I am sorry to report the doctor himself is now the only specimen we have left.

At this stage I don't have much to add. No therapy we have applied has had any effect. The Exo-cells continue to multiply, and the subjects continue to grow stronger. I am afraid it's only a matter of time before I am forced to terminate the experiments, as normal bio-hazard procedures won't prove effective for very long.

Frankly, General, at this stage, I suggest you don't treat this like a disease. The movements of these creatures; they are simply too organised. Even now, I feel like he's watching us. I cannot believe that of all people I am saying this to you, General; but I recommend that you act swiftly to eliminate the largest concentrations of Infected, because if they continue their evolution, they may be able to bypass any countermeasures we bring to bear.

It's not just our fate now, General, but quite literally the survival of the human race which is at stake. God forgive us.

Yours in hope,]

Dr E. Whitehall

Acting Head of Countermeasures
Project Saviour

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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To: Gen. G. Weathers (G. Weathers@Health.mil.gov)

From: Dr Emma Whitehall (take@saviour.cdc.gov)
To: Gen. G. Weathers (take@something.mil.gov)

For the love of God I hope you get this message. Containment has failed. This might be the last message we ever send. Everything we've tried has proved useless.

Echidna isn't a virus; it's not a disease or a pathogen. It's an entity. It wants to kill us. It won't stop. Don't assume it can't think. Don't assume strength of arms can win. We have to resort to whatever is necessary to stop this thing, and stop it now.

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THE SHARDWALKERS

There are those who have communed with the Shards deeply, and from them, learned of all that is happening in the world, all that has passed, and all that is yet to come. They are:

Jacob Sutton, Richard Rayment, Chris Eves, & Gregory Hammond.

THE REAPERS

Heralding the end of Humanity, the Reapers brought low the combined military might of the 21st Century, and plunged the world into darkness. To be compared to their ilk is to walk in the domain of gods.

Justine Knight, Sarah and Craig Mason, Morton H, Liam 'The Worm' Butler, Gauthier Deschamps, Alex 'The Relentless', & Matthew Broome.

NEMISSARIES

Reborn again to be the saviours of Humanity, few can match the dark powers of the great and terrible Nemissaries.

Joshua Clough, Ben Warren, James Nissler, Kyrie Brunton, Adam Fisher, Manolis Trahiotis, Salliee Anya, Michael Cheek, Tom De Quick, Jim 'The Destroyer' Bellmore, Chris Gunning, Maurizio Locusti, BlackDragonBob, Shakti Rajput, Duncan Usher-McGee, Edgardo A. Montes Rosa, Hayden Stewart, Sam Vogelsanger, Jonas 'Ari' Hällström, Jack 'Fenricide' Scott, SK_ DoombeaR, Alex DiMieri, Spyros Veronikis, Benjamin Bailer, Alexander and Rebecca Buell, Michael J. Moody, Joe the Freakymonkey, Giantcavecrab, Imberti Michele, D., Craig Denham, Doug Atkinson, James C. Napier IV, Jack Harvey, Thomas Clews, Paul B. Currie, Tom Burdak, Bernd Linke, Chelsea & Cody Dabbs, Wilson Hartling 'The Steel Beast', Jason Duke, Mykul Wulf, Matt Cockburn, Shane C, Servo, Shane "Red" Gordon, DecodedParadox, Amadan, Zachary Bradley, S. Alexander Gentry, PhD, Frazer, Overgauss & Sealmilk, S Naomi Scott, PJDanger, Thane & Rafe, Morgan Jones, Dustin Alcala, James Robinson, Siegfried Degueldre, Brendon Hartbarger, Claire Warner, Jo Schmo, Marcus Igarashi, Æther, Leonardo Chavez Weyand, Adam Burgess, Timothy Young, Borja Elorza, Ahad. M, Matthew "J Wall" Wallace, Sam Benke, Todd Gibel, Dr Donald A Turner, Jason Kendall, Zachary Guenther, Sean Wix, Zachary Knippel, Jan-Luca, David Harrison, Rubba, Yannis Andrey, John M. Shoestock Jr., Wilhelm Tinnin-Timm, Ben Gardiner, Dávid Csobay, Jeremy Moore, Kenneth Brewer, Richard Hickman, Michael Eder, Danika Koester, R.M. Williams II, Steven Humphries, Richard "Chezney" Fox, Kenna Katsuji, Ben Lashmar, Phillip Sacramento, Jack Wadelin, Josh Stewart, DieselHands, Victor Penon & Skae, Kaiser, Morgan Weeks, Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski, Sean P. Roberts, Trevor Proffitt, MadBeardMan, William De Caux, James Crowther, Christian "Effi" Hellinger, Ashley Dodson, Martin Greening, Dominic Beaman, René Schultze, Gary Smith (Grothgar), Christopher Laginja, Cole Sorenson, Gr3y0n3, Alex Gifford, Brandon Dempe, Frederico Giacomini, Dominic, Scott Skene, Daniel Johnson (cloud7a), Elyezer Costa, President Hereticae, Kev Osbourne, Nessie, Adam Makey, Rob Parkinson, James Ritchie, Jean-Pierre Alarie, Isolde O'Shannon, Shane McCrorie, Michael Pietrelli, Leftovers 6, Joe Cruz, Cameron Slater, Jimmy Shave, Nadia Heller, Johannes Knapp, Matthew Vigar, Błażej "Rals" Kosiński, Adam Owen, Stephen Mortimer, Kurt Blanco, Emrys Pendragon, Will, Jack Bernard, & Sean Gore.

THE HIVEMIND

Adapting to survive in whatever form, many fell to the call of the Hivemind in the early days of the Fall.

Betheny Jo Hudson, Tom Hague, Josh Sliker, Anglerfish, Tavis, Kirsten, and Ralph Hill, Zach Brown, Ross Richards, Simon Crowe, Tristan Harness, Emorick, Ingo Beyer | obskures.de, Scott Wilkshire, A.J. "Lxndr" Cherry, Cody Black, Pete Griffith, Rycuda, Ichigokuto, Matthew Yerkes, Thomas Pape, Ste Brown, Henning "Auglim" Elfwering, Christian A. Nord, Gabriel Bélanger, Arielle Redman, SK, Daniel 'Jinx' Philpin, Guillaume-Axel Bernaudeau, Paul Rivers, Todd Stephens, Hollis "Trip" Griffin III, Cesar "Kimble" David, Zumii-Bex, Ron " Phantom " Smay, Phil McGregor, Declan Feeney, Ollie Gross, Joshua Ramsey, Martin Wagner, Whitt., Øyvind Z. Berentsen, Oscar Iglesias, Sean Johnson, Jeremy Anderson, Da Beav, Don Edmonds, Jennifer Fuss, Niall O'Donnell, Paul Shawley, Toby Gilham, Monkeybutt, Jason Henwood, & Thomas Stokes.

THE CHOSEN

It is said that there are those lost souls who are claimed by strange powers, and brought back into this dying world to make a difference. They call themselves the Chosen, and they are marked for greatness in this broken world.

Lud Romano, Joshua Clark, Tom Dale, George Ramsey, Will Durant, Dan Johnson, Ashley McAnearney, Scott Waites, Anthony Pena, Lars Holgaard, Sabrina Klevenow, Tyler N. Pearce, Andrew Jones, Eoin Burke, Arfon, Liz Rayment, Ghost Berghauer, Daniel Wright, The Fox, Paul Thompson, Theodore Gordon, Tyler Hurst, Gavin Moorcroft, Clay Gardner, Ian Fyfe, Matt Hackett, Tom Bobomb, Lowell Peltier, Arnulphe de Lisieux, Matthew Knighton EroneVestis, Lars Heitmann-Ohnesorge, Matt MacGregor, Erin Victorious Regan, Chase M. Walker, Josh Cooper, Isabelle Junier, Jacob Bush, Almoni, Nick Halper, Chris Oldgeorge, B. Jake Tomko, Jeff Aldridge, David Lee Terhune, Simon Best, Fredrik Åkerblom, Russ Williams, Angelo Pileggi, Andy Kitkowski, Chris Snyder, Filthy Monkey, Jirí "Maugir" Vinklár, Lakshman Godbole, PSB, David Fedson, Ethan Trovillion, vidiian, K.F. of A.K., Moizt, Charles Summerhill, Keenan Clarke, Hugh T. Smith, OriginalJolt, Eric Husemann, Brandon & Kalenna, Peter Scott, Marek Benes, Dave Luxton, Steven Thomas, Mike Shaver, Wade Geer, Dev, Jeremy Griffith, Matt Lee, Charles Crowe, Jess Fortier, Peanut, Sentinel Soul, Darren Worthy, Mathias Green, Nick Rowe, Zach Benge - Tabletop Radio Hour, Jerry D. Grayson, Steve Harker, Douglas "Writermonk" Bramlett, Enigma No.13, Steve Hefley, W David Lewis, brazil808, Tom Russell, "RedEye" Rake, Dante Warborn, Kai Busch, unMadeGaming, Jenny & John, Feldheim_C, Patrik Andersson, Kevyn Forest, Tristan Danner, Michael Shillitoe, Mervyn Koh, Ryan Garringer, Benedikt Simon, Phill Massey, Ryan Scott, Pablo Saldaña, Betty & Ken, chapel, Nyamakalanda, Guy Hudson, Richard H. Eagle, Daniel 'Jau' Badrock, PrometheusUB, Graham Spearing, Brandon Metcalf, Michael G. Brown, S.R. Davey, Travis G.G. Anderson, Todd Biggs, Gary Furash, Carly Robertson, Krister M. Michl, J Patrick Stebbins, Erik Peotter, Chris Marleau, Gary Anastasio, Thomas Bradford, Stephen "Elraine LeBlanc", David Chronister, Pete Shaw, Daniel Draeger, Yollm, Chris Aldrich, Richard W. Sorden, Manuel Buchwald, Victor Zammit, Karsing Fung, Jason Bratley, Archeform, Olen "Dozer" Gravel, Nick Roland, Sam Dentith, Christopher Soper, Rhieanna Young, Darran Caldemeyer, Tobias Hamelmann, Andrew Girdwood, David Hayes, Bryan Whitlock, Tyrian, Steven Alvis, Ols Jonas Petter Olsson, Kurucode, James Adnitt, Riccardo Zampieri, Bastian Heinrich, Richard Christopher August, In Memory of Olwen Ferrie, Robert Karlgren, Craig Langham, Matt Underwood, Tigh Ward, Ryan King, Eric Shafer, Geoff Ball, Seo ^_^, Glenn Seiler, Padraic Kelly, Chris.T, Shane Parfitt, Luke Ray, Pablo "Hersho" Dominguez, Stew Wilson, Jonathan Hill, Drake Warren, Christina Helber, Aristotle Matthew Rozecki, Chris Foster, Hector M. Lopez, & Jesse L. Gregg.

HARBRINGERS

Those who announce themselves as Harbingers hold the power to bring about mankind's true demise, and stand to face their SINS.

Dom Crowley , Sam Booth, Rourke Bywater, Thomas Biskup, George Sharp, Paul Clarke aka Madmax2020, Domhring, Grant Carter, Douglas, Bez Bezson, Gilandilas Weidenwind, Bo Fahlberg Madsen, Snnow Wolfe, Richard Jansen-Parkes, Jakob Lennartsson, Mark N. Ziff, Korotnam, Stephen Thomson, coppet, Gregg "Pyrosorc" Parrott, Jon Butler, JohnnyVoodoo, Tim O'Connell, Amadeus, Badgers_ Revolt, Robert Carnel, Michelot Bertrand, Jonathan Bird, Caleb Coppola, Daniel Crisp, Joseph 'Lordoflimbo' Clarke, S. A. Swift, Jon Dodson, Federico "Ackseth" Tempesti, David Chervanik, Felix Velazquez, Andrew F, Lauren 'Pigeon' Phillips, A. Hindelang, Douglas Mota, Christopher R. Tannahill, Ashley Metcalfe, Benjamin Aitken, Will Wight, Matthew, Jonathan Walton, Sam "Shemamforash" West, The Dahgda, C Wilson Trull, Scott Fuller, Matt Nixon, Marco Schütz, Paul Martin Böer, Dacar Arunsone, Knitdeer, Eric Blair, Pauliina Paavola, Cindy Moore, Keiren Bradwell, Hannah Bishop, Kate Cook, Lord Nabu, Meg Middleton, Oliver Lind, Patrice Mermoud, Jerry Sköld, Jack Gulick, & Shawn Briggs.

SURVIVORS

Many have survived into the dark new of the 22nd Century, and whilst their fates are yet to be decided, their determination to carry on is no less noteworthy.

Victory Condition Gaming, Jonny Christian, Lillie Beecroft, Tyler Sampson, Gnome Archivist, Derek Lynch, Chris "Grimtooth" Colborn, Leomar, John Jensen, Karl A. Stevens, Louise Moore, Jamie Wheeler, Lex Pitfield, Lena B, Stormy and Chew, Eve Child, Brandon Vout, Ty Young, Ethan Mitchell, Kelton The Kro, Michele "Snake" Gelli, the Volo, Kristian. Paluch, Jaan Eerik Sõmermaa, Vitasoy, Celeste Reardon, Dan Fiander, Manu Marron, Arttu "SirAhma" Seppi, The Roach, Antti Luukkonen, Jimmy Ringkvist, Orko the Mystifying, Tazdrin, Darren Ytsma, Joe Craig, Mara Kyriakin, Chris Willhelm (Drop Dice), Jason B. Smith, Jake Mandel, Michael P. Charlton, Joseph "ZombieChan" Thompson, Lastgiantrobot, Silvio Herrera Gea, Marcel Hauptmann, Edouard Contesse, Daniel Jones, Aaron Pothecary, Cassandra "BlumBird" Robinson, Gozuja, Mark R. Lesniewski, Trip Space-Parasite, Andrew Bennett, Trent Yacuk, Greatyith, Matthew Edwards, Matt R., Danielle & Owen Thomas, David, NrdyN8, Paris Conte, You Don't Meet In An Inn, Bruce Curd, Jennifer Rigby, John 'johnkzin' Rudd, Zynx, John M. Portley, Michael Roebling, Vincent Arebalo, Paul Forsythe, jamie, Chris Michael Jahn, James Meredith, Paul Hayes, Duncan Galler, Mitch Fongern, Astor Sigma, Magnus 'Priamos' Korberg, Randy P. Belanger, Steve Round, Drew Doucet, Dr. Dirk Schlobinski, Crom, Earl Scott Nicholson, Christopher E. Eliasen, Freyja Brandel-Tanis, Calm Skeleton, Ina_K, Fermin Serena Hortas, Lissa Cereal, Syd, Yurii "Saodhar" Furtat, Raphael Stevens, Chris Longhurst, Peter Mazzeo, Steve, Brian Payne, Kergonan, Merry Crystal, Craig Karas, Alesia Hill, Wasin Jamroensap, Matt "9littlebees" Kay, CalebR, Ray Goldberg, Jennifer, Stephane Lorek, Anton Cox, Jordan Springer, Jude Pereira, Neal Latham, Sarah Doombringer, pinvendor, Legendary Merchant of Pins, Armando Ruano, Daniel Armstrong, MikesMind, Wesley D. Hart, Matthew Ludeman, Adam S, Jenna Stew, Thomas R., Adam Clayton, Mike Bowie, Conrad Zero, Wayne Shaw, Warren P Nelson, Laura B, Scali, Veztai, Roberto Mandrioli, Harriet Lowe, Karl Kreutzer, S, Brandon McCaslin, Marko J Sertic, John E. Garren, TheLetterB, Patrick & Samantha Harris, Dan Suptic, Tom Ladegard, Andrew Peregrine, Travis O'Sullivan, Alex Dingle, Jonathon Low, Joris Kühl, Dakkaramazariah, Andreas Erlandsson, Vivian Beasley, Ralf "Sandfox" Sandfuchs, Matthew Cicchillo, John "Millionwordman" Dodd, Omar Amador, Ethan K, Jan Cantor, Kjetil Kverndokken, Juan E. Oliverez, Alan Graham, DarthConans, Matteo Signorini, Reverance Pavane, João Pedro Colaço Botelho Rodrigues, Peter Risby, Lian, John Gaskell, Ku Hap, Katie Nicholas, Nathan Reetz, Trine & Thomas Lunde Sørensen-Hygum, Phil (PannonBeard) Hendricks, APS La Tavola Rotonda, Mister Paul Gibson, Evelina Falk, Paul Watson, NuclearManatee, Andrew Montgomery, Ryan Dukacz, Kevin Kostello, John Veltman, J Geyer, Alon Ner-Gaon, Jonathan Song, Nick Colombo, Anthony Craig Senatore, John Paul Jones, Ryan Crowe, Rorin Shires, Jarvis Mishler, Francesco "Magjus" Santoro, Chris Villegas, Rigur, Ian McFarlin, & Daniel Tucker.

BROOD

The world as we know it is gone, and the undying horde are countless. The hordes of undead are faceless and beyond count, but some particularly noteworthy individuals were lost among the masses.

Charlotte Elektra Thomas, Samuel "Doom" Fuentes, Countess Hanike von Treisce, balobam, Vrakil, KingGidora, Fábio Tupy "Metafogos", Paul & Fil Baldowski, Tom Zunder, Stop Short, Philip K. Sharp-Garcia, Cullen Gilchrist, Olivia Cottrell.

TRADER'S UNION

Long term, we recognise that the success and longevity of Sins relies on game stores and tabletop gaming retailers. Here are those stores that supported the Sins Kickstarter early, and will be some of the first places stocked with retail copies of Sins upon initial release.

Eclectic Games
0118 959 8250
5 Union St, Reading RG1 1EU

Gamerz Nexus
01702 552100
74 High St, Hadleigh, Benfleet SS7 2PB

Chaos Cards
www.chaoscards.co.uk

Source Comics & Games
+1 651-645-0386
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01792 930328
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190 Hessle Rd, Hull HU3 3BE

Spheremaster Games
http://www.sphaerenmeisters-spiele.de/en_GB

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9 St Gregory's Alley, Norwich NR2 1ER

Beanie Games
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26 Bishopton Ln, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2AA

&
Fan boy Three, D.J. Cole, Leisure Games, Proud Lion, & The Games Shop Aldershot.

Afterword

Writing this book has been a labour of love, the work of many. At its heart, it's allowed my voice to reach everyone reading this book in a way I'd never thought possible, but that voice couldn't have been sealed in ink and paper without the support of Rusti, my ghost-writer and co-author. Together, neither of us could have made this project possible without our family and friends, and the overwhelming support of our backers.

On my part, I want to thank my best friend Gavin, my stepfather and mother and my grandparents, and I'd also like to thank Jim and Paul for having faith that this project could come to its conclusion and being there to see it through to the end.

For Rusti's part, they'd like to thank their parents and friends and loved ones, for believing in them and giving their support through the years.

All said, everything comes to an end, and as you are at the end now I hope you enjoy the world and the game we've crafted. Sins was a monumental journey for us, but it wasn't a journey I took alone. It's a journey that would have never come to its end without Sam Sleney, and with that I pass the role of lead writer to Sam.

He's someone who's been instrumental in the project as a play-tester, a consultant and ultimately as a contributing writer. While I remain to help keep the mechanics of the game line consistent, it's now our privilege to pass to Sam the torch for the journey to come. I hope that Sins of our Fathers will be as successful and as fulfilling as this first chapter in what I hope is a far larger universe.

Once again, thank you to everyone, and to all of you, our best.

—Miquel Tankard
&
The SINS Team