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Loyola Marymount University
University Honors
Program

Explorations of Liminality and Intersectionality in Tabletop Games: Using Games to Create Bridges and Engage Players – Aspect System and Campaign

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements of the University Honors Program
of Loyola Marymount University

by

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Sue Scheibler

Explorations of Liminality and Intersectionality in Tabletop Games

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6 May 2020

Abstract

In fantasy role-playing games (RPGs), especially tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs), participants are required to collaborate to create not only fantasy personas in the shape of characters, but also the world and space that makes up the game itself. Participants therefore create a sense of both time and space that exist outside of basic reality. The created space and time—referred to as a world or a story—exists as a liminal space that participants and characters use as a tool to both exist and explore. While the participants exist physically in the real world, the game space allows them to go beyond it. Participants can explore their characters, the world, themselves, and other participants' personas and worlds. Through these game spaces, participants are only able to produce what they know, consciously or subconsciously. Through play, they expose, explore, and evolve their understandings of gender, race, sexuality, ability and disability, interpretations of play, reality, fiction, and games overall. This project aims to explore the liminality and engagement possible in creating and using a TTRPG system. It will explore the meaning of liminality in gaming and creating, as well as the meaning of reality and fiction. To do this, I will create a game system meant to be used for TTRPGs and test the system with a group of individuals already accustomed to using similar systems. As there are distinct differences between in-person play and long-distance play, I will also be documenting those differences.

Key Words: engagism, role-play, gaming, neurodivergence

Introduction:

In his paper, "Liminality in Media Studies: From Everyday Life to Media Events", Mihai Cohen explores the concept of liminality in media studies. He states that "liminality has become an ideal vehicle for defining both media production and media consumption, best fit to represent the symbolic interruption of daily life and the opportunity for detachment, reflection, and challenging social structures that media consumption entails."¹ Liminal spaces are constructed spaces outside of standard measures of time and space. When people engage in reading books, watching movies and TV, and playing games of any kind, including video games and board games, they "engage in an activity placed *between* structural-cultural systems"² such as standard time and social norms. This project focuses on the ways that game spaces, specifically table-top role-playing games take advantage of their liminality to explore categories of difference.

Fantasy role-playing games, especially tabletop games, require participants to collaborate with one another in order to create not only fantasy personas in the shape of characters, but also the world and space that makes up the game itself. Through play, the game unfolds as story. Participants, therefore, create a sense of both time and space that exist outside of the "real world", populate it with characters, and define it through story. In this way, it's safe to say that the created space-time-story-world-game exists as a liminal space in which participants, as characters in relationship to one another, the game world, and their own existence in the "real world" (the world outside the game) live, move, and have their being. Participants can explore their created characters, the world within the game, outside of it, and within themselves, as well as the characters and personas of the other players. Their freedom to explore and exist is limited by the selves they

¹ Coman, Mihai. *Liminality in Media Studies: From Everyday Life to Media Events*. www.academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/38850209/Liminality_in_Media_Studies_From_Everyday_Life_to_Media_Events_1. Accessed 8 Nov. 2019. Pp. 95.

² Coman, pp. 96.

bring into the game; that is, their experience and knowledge, whether it is conscious or subconscious. In this way, through play, they expose, explore, and evolve their understanding of gender, race, sexuality, ability and disability, their interpretations of play, interpretations of reality, interpretations of fiction, and interpretations of games overall.

Background

Unlike role-playing video games, Tabletop Role-Playing Games, or TTRPGs, do not use set coded scenarios or computers to create a simulation of the game. Rather, they rely on the material--pens, paper, a rulebook--and the immaterial--the imagination of the players as well as the game master who has created the specific adventure that will define the liminal space. Because the game must be played in coordination with other people, all things about the game, including scale and time, become things that the players and the game master control.

Tabletop games laid the foundation for modern role-playing video games and created the story-driven model for which many games are known today. TTRPGs, while allowing for a return to communal storytelling, grant players more control over the world and rules overall. Unlike video games, where the limitations are set by the game mechanics, the limitations set for TTRPGs are largely set by imagination and what the group finds agreeable. There is greater opportunity to explore and engage with ideas than could be programmed into a commercial game's code.

Because of this difference in control, TTRPG players have the opportunity to engage with a wider scale of ideas and liminal events. Committing to a TTRPG campaign, or long-term story, already has some aspects of liminality and requires the participants of the campaign to schedule out regular time for both preparation as well as execution of the story. The campaigns themselves allow for the ability to communicate and receive certain messages, as well as explore and expand

on those messages, and “create dramatically loaded content with the power to interpret the world.”³

This makes playing in a campaign a small-scale liminal event as well as a large-scale liminal event. Small-scale liminality is defined as the organizing principle, the ritual, or the thing that structures time. This is the commitment to the event. Campaigns deal in large-scale liminality and are transformative; in that, through the time space carved out using the ritualistic scheduling, they are able to engage with fictional productions of large-scale liminal events. Large-scale liminal events interrupt the flow of standard time and are comparable to accidents or revolutions because of their transformative nature. The transformative property “is the source of a state of liminality.”³ These large-scale transformative events exist as breaks in time or flow because they are unexpected. However, in a campaign, events such as revolutions and accidents can happen in a much more controlled setting while still coming as a surprise. Such is the nature of narrative.

Through the use of small-scale organized time, a roleplaying campaign can allow participants to explore and organize the large-scale events on an intimate mechanical level and players can have full control over those mechanisms. With this form of engagement, the “formerly unthinkable solutions” become plausible simply because the individuals are allowed to engage with them in an environment the players structure themselves. In essence, the players make the rules and make the time; time serves the narrative that the players create; the narrative is used as a tool for players to understand events that are not spoken of at length in mass media because of their lack of commercial value. These games are therefore, when fully engaged with, proper learning tools as well as sources of entertainment formed completely by the perceptions and thoughts belonging to the participants. Given that, the space in which they take place does not exist entirely

³ Ibid.

⁴ Comad, pp. 99.

⁵ Comad, pp. 100.

in the real world, but rather in the liminal space that these players create while they play and engage with the game together. The transformative part of the game's liminality lies in the way engaging with the game changes the players on emotional and mental levels.

Question/problem

Most table-top games are designed from a normative position, excluding neurodiverse, non-gender-conforming, non-white individuals, amongst other populations. The question with which this project engages is: is it possible to design a tabletop roleplaying-game that uses the potential of liminal spaces to reach out and connect non-normative populations with each other?

This project explores the way participants interact with the fictional world and the real world, as well as how they--the participants, the fiction, and the reality--affect each other. Its focus is specifically on table-top role-playing games (TTRPGs). While the game that has been developed as the project's space-time-story-game world is the focus of the project, my analysis is shaped by research into liminality, game studies, and the interface of fiction, non-fiction, and play.

"Engagism" and "engagist" interactive storytelling are terms used by John Scott Tynes in his article, "Prismatic Play: Games as Windows on the Real World" in 2007 to describe "works that embrace the modern world around us instead of rejecting it for a fantastic otherworld."⁶ Specifically, he states that games must act as tools for engagement with real world problems as opposed to acting as mere tools for escapism. Engagism by its very definition implies that it inspires change and encourages personal growth or insight into the world from which the game cannot truly escape. Nothing can actually be taken out of its context. I intend to study a very specific game campaign premise that I am creating that engages issues of racism and poverty in late-stage capitalism through the lens of cyberpunk gameplay. The game will be based on the

⁶ Tynes, John Scott. "Prismatic Play: Games as Windows on the Real World." *Wyrd Con Companion Book*, 21 Dec. 2012, pp. 20-26.

world that I created and published in the story, *Listener*.

Cyberpunk is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “A subgenre of science fiction typified by a bleak, high-tech setting in which a lawless subculture exists within an oppressive society dominated by computer technology.”⁷ The genre is said to originate as early as the 60s and 70s, though the term comes from somewhere in the 80s. Much of the focus in cyberpunk works popular today focus on the sexuality and bleak aesthetic of the proposed future, as well as ideas about transhumanism. Taking inspiration from a campaign I have previously participated in titled the “N0vember session,” the campaign I am making focuses on people that physically struggle with unchecked capitalism, disability, and racism, amongst other things. There will be a distinctly internal perspective taken in the game that links the intersections between body, mind, and environment intimately and forces the players to engage with hard questions about what it means to survive in a world that treats non-profitable entities as expendable--and asks if that should be our reality as we rush forward into our deteriorating real-world future.

Much of the work done studying the performance of real life has to do with Live Action Role Play, or LARPing. However, I would like to pose that a great deal of the performance of the real leaks into the TTRPG realm as well simply because one cannot truly escape context. They must process and engage with context because that context is what creates the self through which all else is interfaced. Björn-Ole Kamm and Julia Becker discuss the ways in which LARP allows players to negotiate race, gender, and other aspects of life that are otherwise set in real-world spaces. LARP, much like any other committed game campaign, can span years of progression, and their progressions as individuals change the way they structure and play the game as a social group.⁸

⁷ “Cyberpunk, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. *Oxford English Dictionary*, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/240848>. Accessed 21 Nov. 2019.

⁸ Kamm, B. O., and J. Becker. “Live-Action Role-Play or the Performance of Realities.” *Simulation and Gaming in the Network Society*, edited by Toshiyuki Kaneda et al., Springer Singapore, 2016, pp. 37.

These negotiations are made as well in TTRPG worlds, but are done with more allowance towards abstraction, as the physical body is not included in the actual works done by the characters. For this reason, TTRPGs allow for a negotiation of something LARP has no room for--physical and mental ability.

Dia Lacina's 2017 *Vice* article, "It Takes More Than A 'Tolerance' Mechanic to Make an Anti-Colonial RPG" discusses a personal account of playing TTRPGs and feeling the sting of racism in the mechanics of the world.⁹ There are ways to deal with discrimination in games, but often times, forms of discrimination are hard-baked into the games themselves because the game creators cannot escape the discriminatory context in which they make their games. For the purposes of this project, which is creative and technical in nature, I would like to track the reasons certain mechanics in the game are included or changed specifically to test which biases exist and come out unwittingly during the process of creating a game that has parts of realism and fantasy working together in tandem to create a world.

In the article "Transmedial Worlds - Rethinking Cyberworld Design" by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca the authors discuss the ways in which fantasy worlds from franchises that were not games can transition and become worlds for games. The idea of a "transmedial world," which is one that is a fictional world from which stories and characters can spring from and "actualized or derived across a variety of media forms,"¹⁰ is useful in the sense that it can also be used to link the use of real world material and mythos in the creation of a fictional world to the idea of creating an avatar of the self in a fictional world. In this sense, the self becomes a character that can be actualized and projected into multiple media forms--in the case of this project, a game and a

⁹ Lacina, Dia. "It Takes More Than a 'Tolerance' Mechanic to Make an Anti-Colonial RPG." *Vice*, 13 Nov. 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/a37a34/it-takes-more-than-a-tolerance-mechanic-to-make-an-anti-colonial-rpg.

¹⁰ Klastrup, Lisbeth & Tosca, S.. (2004). Transmedial worlds - Rethinking cyberworld design. 409 - 416. 10.1109/CW.2004.67.

rulebook.

Taking this idea along with the idea of an engagist narrative world and game, the players are meant to engage with Jung's concept of active imagination subtly through RP. As pointed out in Sara Lynne Bowman's article on the topic, "[a]ctive imagination is generally a solitary and internal process," while RP involves an active separation of the self from the objective game, as well as involves the participation of other players--generally at least one, two, or three more people.¹¹ Active imagination as the learning of self through engaging archetypes in solitary activity is said to be "more confrontational" than roleplay is, but I would like to pose that engagist roleplay, by its nature, is confrontational and must be to induce change. The challenge, then, is to create a game system that reflects that. Gameplay and narrative with games must work closely together to create a cohesive experience, especially if the game is meant to operate using an engagist framework. This project aims to create a tool through which self, circumstance, and others can be understood better. It must also still be fun.

Methods

I sought to design a TTRPG system that embraces neurodiversity, amongst other forms of diversity, and connect them with each other. As a disclaimer for the project, all participants involved with this project know each other personally to some degree. We are all creative partners. Additionally, the Palestinian-British participant is my romantic partner. They have been involved creatively with the game itself and are circumstantially involved with the project. This project will not focus on them or my relationship with them, but their participation in the creation of the game is necessary, as they provide moving parts for the world and story proper.

¹¹ Bowman, Sarah Lynne. "Active Imagination, Individuation, and Role-Playing Narratives." *Tríade: Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Mídia*, June 2017. www.academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/39536092/Active_Imagination_Individuation_and_Role-playing_Narratives.

The participants involved with this project were a group of "diverse" individuals. All individuals involved immediately with this project would be considered nonbinary, and their assigned genders at birth will not be disclosed at this time. Most of us are Americans, though there is one British individual, hailing from London. Two of the participants are White Americans, one is Jewish-Mexican American, one is Palestinian-British. I am East Asian-American. We are within the age ranges of twenty to twenty four years of age. Though most of us could be considered middle class, there is some variation between us about what that means. Some of us are closer to working class, and some of us are closer to upper-middle to middle-class. We are each of different mental and physical ability as well, though all of us have ADHD or some variant, and have other neurodivergences.

We are considered individuals that would need to be included in something to make that thing "diverse," though, one might say that as we are all together composing this specific group, our group may be construed as somewhat imbalanced and lacking diversity. Namely, we lack any active cisgender, heterosexual, white, neurotypical men in the group at this time.

The project's initial brainstorming and organizing took place from December 13, 2019 to December 22, 2019 in Sacramento. We sat together and created the foundations for a game system and discussed the language that should be used to build the system so it would be inclusive. Several basic game worlds were created at the time, and all were recorded, though not all of them will be released with the game booklet. There were no more than five players participating at any given time, including the primary game master, and we all participated in the games together in the same room to simulate normal gameplay. Because of time constraints for everyone involved as well as illness, interviews were conducted over Discord or in real time and documented either in voice recordings or in Discord. Issues of race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class came up naturally because the project's premise assumed a dialogue about these things at the start. Thusly,

all participants kept those things in mind during production and discussion.

As of draft 21 of the project, the Aspect game system is playable and polished, while the campaign is more a sample than something that can be used for more than three sessions. Due to time constraints and physical constraints imposed by the COVID-19 panic of 2020, further progress involving physical copies and data pertaining to the project are unavailable. Testing the system had to be postponed for similar reasons, but personal tests yielded good results. The game's customizable nature makes it flexible and easy to modify according to accessibility. Overall, the system's creation as well as the campaign's took well over the amount of time I anticipated and likely had a production cost much higher than I thought it would. Past the stages of conceptualization, I worked almost completely alone on the Aspect system and its campaign, writing all the material following this portion of the paper on my own with a few beta readers' help. The project, by its nature, must continue to be revised so that it can be expanded and improved with new language and innovations moving forward. It is likely however that, moving forward, new creative partners will be brought on and old ones may leave for interest-based reasons.

As commercial games find their way into a more casual position in society, player-driven, creative content becomes scarce. It becomes harder, additionally, to find content that is not created to generate monetary profit. But art and learning have intrinsic value outside of the money they can potentially make. They have societal value, social value, and ontological value. Serious games are made for purposes outside of mere profit generation. This project hopes to create a product that can add social engagement and deep thought to the realm of serious games and put those ideas into player hands. However, it requires that I understand biases before the game finds its way into the world. People create media, and media creates people. It is my responsibility, therefore, to ensure I create responsibly, accessibly, and diversely. That is why this project is necessary.

Conclusion

This project attempted to take the idea that all gamers are cisgender, white, heterosexual, able bodied, neurotypical men and address the reality that all people game, and all people are affected by gaming through the simple act of engaging with games. Games create liminal spaces that are creative, recreational, and social in nature, and players engage directly with the content within the games they play. This means that they are inherently transformed by the games they choose to engage with. In the future, I hope that this project can continue on and provide a means through which individuals can come together and build bridges through dialogue and communication. The game itself is made to encourage people to engage with people outside their perspective or usual sphere of influence, as opposed to stay within their bubble.

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The ASPECT System (Draft 1.21)

Initial concepts by: Alyna Kim, Harper Atkins, Rye DiRenzo, Sierra DeBlonk, Zaki Bibi
Thank you to Alyna Kim's mentor for this project, Dr. Sue Scheibler!

Thank you for your help in the initial conceptualizations for this system!

Draft 1.21 was written by Alyna Kim, last updated 05 May 2020.

The ASPECT system is a **roleplay-heavy, highly customizable** tabletop roleplaying game system initially conceptualized to bring engagement with the real world into the game space while still being entertaining. It is as much a learning tool as it is a tool for fun and play. The rules below detail how to use the system's mechanics for gameplay, much of which revolves around the creation of the avatar for use during the game. Much of gameplay also involves active discussion and participation between engaged and invested players.

The hope is that, using this system, you can play with multiple scenarios in multiple settings with various characters. You and your party, a group of participants, can explore many topics and ideas through play.

Alternatively, you can ignore all that and just do whatever you want to. As long as you're working with your friends and engaging with them, the system achieves its goal. The ASPECT system is very homebrew friendly. Along with the general game mechanics, you will find details on how to create your own modifications to the game. Parts of the game actually require you to get creative in this way anyway.

We hope you and your party will enjoy the time spent playing this game!

The Game Proper

Much of the system's details can be explained in the **Character Creation** section, just because this game is built around the idea that some roleplayers will want to play games built around their characters and character arcs. Instead of being numbers and stats heavy, this game system is built in such a way as to provide the players easy ways to

1. Create homebrew
2. Create their own stories and universes with the game system as a no frills base
3. Create a more seamless mode of scene creation for a story

This is because people are more than ability, and the game is meant to train you in roleplay outside of numbers. The goal of the Aspect system is to urge players to call on aspects of themselves to have a conversation through characters and fictional worlds. The stats are there as a starting point, but optimal play means going beyond them using creative means much of the time.

As a rule, Narrators should reward good roleplay and in-character interactions. However, stats and traits, written down for the convenience of both roleplayer and Narrator, are the fast way for those not narratively-inclined to participate in in-depth roleplay with those who *are* more inclined to speak or type in-character. As will be explained later, **traits** should be made detailed so the roleplayer need not spend too long figuring out what their character would say if the roleplayer is not ready or cannot come up with such a response to the given situation.

Character Creation

Levels are one, two, or three, and are for character creation only. They use 30-40-50 points for base stats, depending on level, plus 4 points for luck, depending on the level you want to start at. Level 1 is equivalent to DND Level 1, level 2 is a character halfway through a campaign, and level 3 is a character at the end of a campaign.

Traits at character creation:

- **Concept:** Basic premise of your character; ie: a thief with a heart of gold and also a tooth of gold
- **Motive:** Their core drive that compels them to do what they do. This can be written as an infinitive—"to stop a killer from killing again," "to **avenge** the death of my parents". This is what your character **wants**.
- **Trade:** Your job/occupation
- **Tragedy:** Who or what hurt you? Was your home stolen from you? Were you brutalized? Did you drop your ice cream once in the fifth grade and never get over it? It all counts
- **Wound:** What is the lie you tell yourself? ie: "I tell myself that I'll never be good enough" or "The only way that I'll never be hurt again is if I hurt everyone else first"
- **Aspiration:** You're here for a reason. What is that? What do you strive for? If your life was a story, where is the author trying to lead you? This differs from the motivation because your character **probably does not know what it is** in character. This is what your character **needs**.
- **3 more traits**

You can also have things called **Divergences**, which will be explained further below.

During Character Creation, you also can decide to have **powers** or not if the setting calls for it. **Powers** here can be equated to magic in some settings or superpowers in others.

If you want powers you get 9-12-15 points to distribute to the three power stats.

At GM discretion, you can distribute some of your base stat points to your powers, essentially sacrificing stats for powers.

If you *don't* want powers then you get 3-4-5 extra traits. Alternately, you can opt to have four traits, two stunts, or one stunt and two traits, at level 1.

You can also transfer traits to points for base stats, at a rate of two points per trait given up.

Conversion table

Object	Stat Point Cost
Additional Power Stat Point	1
Trait	2
Stunt	4

By the logic above, it therefore costs 2 traits to make a stunt, and one stunt can be converted into two traits or four stat points.

Stats Explained

Pronouns: they/them, she/her, he/him, xe/xem; used to define how you can refer to the character in character and out of character

Race: refers to physical characteristics identifiable within a group. can be (within a fantasy setting) as in the above, *night elf, wood elf, tauren, human*, etc; *refers more to the outside looking in*

Ethnicity: refers to cultural and social characteristics identifiable within a group. Can be *Winterspring night elf, Vvardenfell wood elf, highmountain tauren, Japanese Human, Dutch Human, Gilnean Undead*; *refers more to relation within a group*

Skill: Dexterity / Agility: applies to nimbleness; specifically physical skills

Might: Your physical strength / brute force

Means: How much money do you have or how easy is it for you to get something that costs money; comes from the phrase, "I have the means to do it"; material wealth and access to wealth

Charm: Social navigation; ability to manipulate a conversation; how good are you at talking or performing?

Presence: You're walking down the street. How likely am I to notice you, or feel the gravitas of your existence just by being near you?

Connections: How many people do you know, how easy is it for you to say "oh I know a guy"

Education: Learned skill; how educated are you? How much access have you had to education in trades or in academia?

Intuition: Logic AND/OR emotional intelligence. Define which one you're better in if they aren't equal to you.

Willpower: Mental / Emotional strength. Your DETERMINATION.

Luck: Does the universe like you today?

Your **Health**, **Repute**, and **Psyche** are calculated as follows:

- Health = (Skill + Might + Means)
- Repute = (Charm + Presence + Connections)
- Psyche = (Education + Intuition + Willpower)

Traits, Stunts, and Divergences

Traits

Traits are principally descriptive, apply to a broad range of scenarios, and add or subtract only one die from your given roll in a situation unless a situation inspires the GM to add or subtract more.

Trait Examples

- Full of Magnanimous Bullsh*t
- [Soandso] Personally Hates Me
- Multiple untreated concussions resulting in long term brain damage
- Like a Cockroach in the Sense That They Are Small, Fast, and Afraid of the Light
- Don't Come Close To Me I Can Hear You A Block Away
- Just a Farmer
- I Vibe with Most Things
- "Teacher"
- "What haven't they done once?"
- Kind but assertive presence
- I Smile Because I Hate You 8)
- Being a little sh*t
- Very small amounts of facial hair
- Seemingly Innocent
- (motive) Find Meaning In Something
- Always Down For a Good Time
- Literally A Doll
- Drive: that's....a good question. Can you get back to them in a year?
- Baby (Self-Diagnosed)
- Has Taken A Self Defense Class Once
- SPECIALTY: Lulling you into a false sense of security
- (Moderate) Claustrophobia
- AGE: 45 (looks to be ~25)
- Socially Aware™
- "Yes, I sound like I swallowed gravel, what of it?" - on morgan's deep voice
- help save [place] (or bring more qualified help)
- TERMINAL MISSING AND LOVING AND ADORING MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER DISEASE
- "I'm not a klepto, that means you steal things you can afford"
- "I love my mom"
- Won't Be Wronged Twice
- "I just like to keep busy"
- "BURDENS: Ash exists and knows her"
- "I calculate my risks, but I'm bad at math."
- Always Has An Alibi
- Creates Safe Spaces
- PROFESSION: Get The Hell Offa My Property

- Frequently mistaken for a child
- I know how to do martial arts and I know how to do them on you

Stunts

Stunts are *also* descriptive, but can only be used in specific scenarios under certain conditions, and they have specific costs and effects. They can do things that compare to powers, and they can give greater bonuses than traits, but they can't be used unless those specific conditions are met.

For instance, the trait, "I am small and fit into most places," applies to many scenarios, not just in the context of hiding. It means that the character is diminutive and can squeeze past people in crowds or be more difficult to hit in a combat scenario at long range. However, it also means that they might have difficulty reaching tall things or things that require some stretching. In either scenario, the character gets +/- 1 die.

This trait can be made into a stunt, however.

When attempting an escape from a tight situation, if there is a small space available that can fit someone the size of a child, I can fit into this space without needing to roll. Alternatively, I can hide in that space, and have +3 to a stealth roll.

In this situation, you really can't use this stunt in any context outside of escaping a conflict or hiding from one. However, you get a much larger bonus in those cases than you would a single trait.

Divergences

Divergences are the things your character lives with that make their life divergent from the established or stated "norm" or advertised "average." Things like missing a body part, being autistic, or living with depression can all be described as having divergences. Most times, these things may make life more difficult because the world is not built for people who are not able-bodied or neurotypical—otherwise known as people who do not live with disabilities or mental illnesses. However, because these people live with these divergences, they also tend to have a way of living with them that gives them a different angle for solving a problem or finding a solution that other people may not think of.

Divergences should be well-researched and well-thought through. They shouldn't be tacked onto a character just because you want some flavor text. In fact, your character may not need to have these defined at all or put on the sheet if they aren't aware of it or you aren't. Sometimes, people don't want to advertise the things that they live with, and this is fine. This part of the system is one that need not be shown to other players except through roleplay if the players and GM so desire. Either way, if you intend to either give your character (as a player) divergences, or give someone else's character (as a player or as a GM) divergences, you need to communicate that and discuss it.

Backstory

Within the backstory section of your character sheet, include things like your character's **inciting incident**, or **tragedy**, as well as their current **great aspiration**, or **destiny**. Then, give your character a **wound**, or a lie they tell themselves about the world, their capabilities, or themselves—an *insecurity*. These things can help you and your party put together a cohesive story driven by your characters' character arcs. You can discuss these things amongst yourselves to get a sense of how to weave all your characters' motivations and personalities together, or you can keep it a secret. It's easier on your

Narrator or GM if you all discuss these things together, but it's understood that metagaming can be a worrisome issue.

Effects - Personal Items

Your **effects** are the items that make up your standard inventory. At character creation, you have **3 (three) effects**, plus your **means**. Your effects should mean something to you and speak to things that are important to your character.

Creating Effects

Effects can be anything from weapons to vehicles to pets to places of residence and can be as small as a beer-bottle shiv to an entire workshop. However, these things are obviously not worth the same. At character creation, you have **3 effects + your means**. Each effect has a cost based on its power, size, price, usefulness, or some other way of determining its value. A house is worth far more effects than a beer-bottle shiv. Below are some sample tables.

Sample Effects	Effect Value
Improvised or small weapons, common clothing, a small gun, basic armor, magical foci, a cellphone, a train pass, common magic fuel, a dog or cat	1
Standard weapons, backpack (which can hold more effects), larger gun, police-grade armor, sword, motorcycle, uncommon magic fuel or item, a horse	2
Car or van, apartment, military-grade gun, military-grade armor, rare artifact, a small dragon, a pass with high-level security clearance	3

And so on.

Weapons and armor increase dice pools as follows. Because weapons affect dice pools and damage is not calculated and is instead interpreted during a battle narrative (see the **Combat** section), weapons and armor only add dice to the dice pool rolled (likely skill or might).

Sample Weapon	Sample Armor	Effect on Dice Pool
Dagger (Example Range: Touch)	Light Armor (Leather)	+1
Sword (Example Range: Touch)	Medium Armor (Layered Cloth)	+2
Longbow (Example Range: Long)	Heavy Armor (Plate)	+3 (Tanking a blunt hit), -1 (dodging)

Samples for Effects:

Say your character has an average 3 Means. That means that their Effects Value pool is 3 + 3, totalling 6. They can have a cellphone (1 EV), backpack (2 EV), a train pass (1 EV), food (1 EV), and a pocket knife (1 EV). These are 5 Effects, but their total Effect Value is 6.

Range

In essence, you can use basic logic for this. Most swords are generally between 3 and 6 feet long, with 6 feet being absurd and really only reserved for very specific kinds of blades made for specialized purposes OR for characters that are proportionally enormous. Weight and ingenuity factor into the changeable nature of the range of a weapon. You can, if you so desire, fling your sword. You would be without a sword, but if you hit your opponent, you really did do some damage to them at range! Thusly, the ranges mentioned in the above tables are all suggestions, not necessarily concrete stats.

More Guidelines

The GM and players can collaborate making items outside of the items mentioned in a setting book. The GM and players outline what the item does, its significance if there is any, and its cost. If an item is just for flavor, it can be included in a player's Inventory or Effects section of their character sheet without needing to cost anything. An example of this might be a necklace that the character holds close to their heart, but does nothing else aside from bring them great emotional comfort.

Weapons should be classified according to what kind of damage they do and how large they are, as well as how expensive they are to purchase and maintain, or difficult to obtain and maintain. Armor should be classified similarly. If armor restricts movement or is bulky, this should also be noted.

Injuries

Injuries happen. Damage is on a scale of 1-5 unless the hit is critical or instantly kills the person. The damage dealt is judgement based, meaning the GM decides how much damage is dealt based on RP and how well a person rolls. Health is subtracted largely in combat, though damage can be inflicted through environmental factors. The Injuries tab on the document is used to keep track of what injuries you have and how you can address them.

Repute and Psyche are largely subtracted during RP, and lead to things like being shunned and having a mental breakdown. What that means is usually dependant on scenario and on character.

1. Judgement based
2. Health is subtracted largely in combat
3. Repute and psyche are subtracted largely during RP

Powers

Powers are a bit of an odd system, in that they vary from setting to setting. Powers are divided up into three stats: **Power**, **Control**, and **Resonance**.

Power refers to the sheer strength or force of your magic. How hot of a fireball can you generate? How hard can you push someone away from you with the psychic might you possess?

Control refers to your skill or handle on your powers. Can you pick a lock with your mind? Can you control exactly who burns in a fire you created?

Resonance refers to your connection with your powers. Say your power comes from the strength of your bond with a spirit. How close are you to the spirit that grants you powers? Are you distant, and your spirit really only grants you minor power, or are you intimately known to each other, and thusly, the spirit grants you access to an incredible library of magic?

Resonance affects both **power** and **control**. With a resonance of 1, your character might only be able to do very minor things. However, with a Power of 9 and a control of 9, your character can likely perform feats with this limited scale of magic that people with lesser control and power but much higher resonance (likely up to 4 or 5) cannot perform. With high control, their feats are likely more deliberate than the feats of someone with high resonance. Someone with high resonance but little control or power might be saved by their powers without having any control over how or why they were saved. Thusly, their powers might have **unforeseen consequences**.

Powers function, just like stats, on a scale of 0 to 9.

Powers:

Name	Power	Control	Resonance
Magic	2	9	9

At character creation, the players have **9-12-15** points to allot, depending on what level they want to start the game on. In certain magic systems, you may have more than 1 starting power. The rules can vary setting-to-setting, but generally speaking, the way to go about this at character creation is as follows:

1. Choose a base **resonance** and take this out of your point total. The resonance applies to each power you have, but only takes from your point total that one time.
2. Choose a power and state its **power**. Subtract this from your point total.
3. Choose a power and state its **control**. Subtract this from your point total.
 - a. Steps 2 and 3 should use the rest of your point pool.
4. At GM discretion, put a 1 (no experience) in the blank spaces or a 3 (average power level).

Usually, a character specializes in one power, and is therefore better at it than others. You can argue for different resonances if you want, but generally speaking, a person's resonance for magic overall remains the same across the board of their powerset unless stated otherwise in the setting guide.

Gameplay

Rolls

Rolling is based on a pool of d10 dice. The mechanics are divided into levels of success or failure based on things called the **Limits** and the **Thresholds** set by the GM when a roll is called.

Limit

The **Limit** is the number, 1-9, that a player must roll over to succeed. This indicates the difficulty an individual character would have with doing a certain activity, and is therefore specific to the character doing the action. In the case of the same action taken by different characters, the limit will be different for different characters doing the action.

- 1 is incredibly easy, like opening an unlocked door, or walking a path you have walked 1000 times before
- 7 is very difficult, like unlocking a door while drunk
- 9 is almost impossibly difficult, like picking a lock despite never being trained for it, finding your way through a city you don't know blindfolded

Threshold

The **Threshold** is the number of dice a player must roll over the established **Limit**. This represents the difficulty of a task in general. The **Threshold** stays the same for the activity across the party unless a stunt, trait, or power states otherwise, or a stat is 0. Stats of 0 have thresholds of 1 unless the character *can only fail*. Most times, those things will **modify the Limit, not the Threshold**.

- 1 is incredibly easy, again like opening a door
- 2-5 is standard; you can mess up the activity sometimes if you're unlucky, but generally can do the thing
- 6-9 is basically impossible for most people. You'd need to be lucky to get the thing done at all.

Format: Threshold over Limit

Examples

Unlocking a door while drunk is, for example, 2 over 7, you have to get two dice (fairly simple) to roll a 7 or above (relatively difficult).

Example rolls:

1. 0 1 2 4 5 6 7 (Dice pool: 7)
a. Result: fail (one die at 7 or above)
2. 0 2 2 8 9 7 (Dice pool: 6)
a. Result: Pass - Standard (three dice 7 or above; mostly higher numbers)
3. 9 9 9 7 5 (Dice pool: 5)
a. Result: Pass - Good (four dice 7 or above; mostly 9s, only one 5)
4. 0 1 0 2 3 (Dice pool: 5)
a. Result: Critical Success (two 00s = critical success)
5. 7 (Dice pool: 1, stat = 0)
a. Result: Pass - Struggle, Conditional pass only (stats of 0 roll one die and their threshold is always 1)

Levels of Success

If you are asked for 3 over 5 and you get 6 over 5, then that's a massive success, and you accomplish the task with aplomb. If you are asked for 3 over 5 and get 3 over 5, that's still a success but less spectacular. You may have struggled to just barely do it. In the same circumstance, when asked for 3 over 5, if you got 4 over 5, you are able to do the task casually, but nothing spectacular happens either.

Levels of failure operate in a similar fashion, with your failure to do the task ranging from being a mild disappointment with a learning experience to being utterly catastrophic.

Critical Success and Critical Failure: Lady Luck Makes You or Breaks You

When rolling physical d10 dice, you have the chance to roll two 10s. On a standard d10, the dice is not labeled 1-10, but rather 0-9, with the 0 indicating a 10. In this system, rolling two 10s, therefore, means you roll 00, or an ∞ infinity sign. In this system, a 00 is a critical success. Two ones, otherwise known as snake eyes, function as a critical failure.

In a critical success, your character manages to pull off their action with unparalleled finesse. If this character was not experienced in the thing they were attempting and it would be out of character for them to do this well on the task, then it could be comical or miraculous that they made it through! It could even lead to a character breakthrough, and the GM may find reason to give the character a temporary trait as a result.

By contrast, a critical failure means that your character failed in such an incredible way the result can only be described as a disaster at *best*. It just blows up in their face. The character may be set back in a pretty significant way, and the GM may, again, find reason to give the character a temporary trait as a result.

Because of the nature of dice pools, however, you can roll 00 and 11 at the same time. This is called a Critical Mix. Our advice for this? **Just go nuts.** This is a fiasco and it's fun. Alternatively, you can simply select a Crit Success or Fail at your discretion for the narrative, but keep in mind that the results should be *fun for all of you*.

In summary:

Critical Success: rolling exactly two zeros in a roll, exactly like nat 20

Critical Failure: rolling exactly two ones in a roll, exactly like nat 1

Crit Mix: rolling both a 00 and 11. Make it a crit success, make it a crit fail, make it a mild success, make it a mild fail, make it a critical success and a critical fail at the same time, just do what you want. Go Wild.

Checkpoints

Checkpoints are either GM-created breaks or natural breaks in the progression of the game. Players use these breaks to adjust their characters according to the events of the game thus far. Minor checkpoints, which might manifest in the form of a brief rest between scene transitions (ie: a train ride to or from a key location, the space between a key conversation and a new scene or conversation), can be used to modify your traits temporarily. The GM can also give players temporary traits during minor checkpoints. These traits are temporary unless the GM and player agree to keep them.

Minor:

- Modifying traits
 - Temporary decisions made for trait applications or functions in the context of the session
- Modifying powers
 - Temporary buffs or debuffs to the stats
- GM gifted traits
 - Temporary
 - Situational
 - An injury, a new vibe, an impression your character made on another, etc
 - May be made permanent

Major:

- Adding traits independently
- Modifying traits
 - Adding a change to the state of your trait that is carried with the character into future sessions
- Modifying powers

- Adding a change to the state of your powers that is carried with the character into future sessions
- Adding/moving points

Combat

Combat is discussion-based. The veil between combat and standard RP isn't explicit because there is no battle instance. Turn order exists insofar as it exists usually: all action comes in response to another person's actions. The first person who reacts out of character reacts in character as well.

If you have something to say but it's hard to word, let the GM know and they can pause the game for you. Try not to use this too often, though, because other people involved will want to participate in the instance as well.

If three turns pass without others participating in the battle (turns defined as a back and forth dialogue between one player and the GM), it is the GM's responsibility to check in with other players. Keep track of the turns that pass on a sheet of paper, a note app, or some other way to ensure that all players are included in the battle scene.

During battle, a player can say something as simple as, "I attack x," or "I defend against y," and roll for it. Because of the narrative nature of the game, that leaves the narrative legwork up to the GM, not the players, who may not know how to describe exactly how they want to attack, defend, dodge, or otherwise in a given situation. It is, however, preferable that the players say more fleshed out things or describe their actions in their own ways. In this way, combat can become a discussion. You don't want to bog down the scenario with too much discussion however, so try to be decisive about the moves you make.

Narrator Rules: Making the Game Work

You might think that you know how to run your game better than the rules say you should. You may be right. These rules are guidelines created to help you tell a story with your players, who should be your friends or family, and so are meant to help you tell that story together. If these rules don't make sense for you or for your players, or you think that you can do something better, you can do those things instead. If you want to add something to the rules, then you can do that too. The idea that the GM can gift temporary traits to players at checkpoints is, for instance, a suggestion. You, the GM, don't need to do it. However, if you decide to do or not do it, you need to tell your players. As for players, if they want it, they need to say so. You can still say no if it's too much to handle.

The most important part of running the game, though, is communicating properly with your players. You can and should say no to them. You also should hear them out. Either way, keep communications open, try to be patient, and make sure dialogues are a two-way street. Your job as a GM really has two imperatives.

1. Help them have fun.
2. Have fun yourself.

Making the Game Fun – Rewarding Your Players

Gameplay is generally made fun through the use of rewards systems. Success in this game in particular is bet on a dice pool, so there's already an aspect of gambling—luck and chance. This on its

own can be rewarding, but as the Game Master, you dictate exactly why certain actions are or are not rewarding.

1. Good sportsmanship or consideration for others should be rewarded.
 - a. Part of your job as a GM leaves you to act, in a sense, like a moderator between your players. It's good to promote kindness between people as you play, because games like these are essentially social, and the game will be more fun if everyone is good to each other.
2. Good RP can be rewarded. These include:
 - a. Smart solutions to problems
 - i. Physical
 - ii. Social
 - b. In-character dialogues
 - c. Putting together session secrets on their own
3. Completing a battle after a long struggle

This game is fictional. The idea of the entire system is to encourage engagement. If you want your players to engage, you as the GM are going to want to balance the message with the fun aspects of the game. To do this you have to balance the struggles with catharsis. This isn't something I can teach you here, because it requires you to talk to your players and see what they want and need. Sometimes, you will see your players in their characters, or you'll think you do.

Because in-character can never be truly separated from out-of-character, there will be things that hurt both the character or the player or move both the player and the character. In this case also, it's good to talk to your players often. It's good for your players to talk with each other, too. It doesn't mean you can't keep secrets and reveals from them, but keep in mind that no one—including you—is a mind reader.

Having Fun Yourself – Managing a Campaign

It can be a lot to expect someone to GM a game. It takes time to prep, your players often will do things you don't anticipate, and people tend to ignore the things you planned. In large part, it's because sometimes, if you build things in a complex fashion and in a detailed manner, people can get sidetracked by the shiniest object. They aren't trying to detract from your enjoyment of the game, nor are they trying to throw everything out of balance. Rather, most players find the idea of playing what they want appealing and freeing, and most players want to explore the world you made and so might go out of their way to do so however they want to.

The best things to do to manage your own stress is set boundaries and communication channels with your players and encourage them to talk to each other as well. Additionally, you are allowed to say no to your players and you should tell yourself that as much as you tell them that. You're also allowed to say yes to things you think might be cool or fun. If you find yourself struggling to keep up with the pace of the project, take breaks and tell people why. GMing and playing the game require a certain amount of mindfulness just because the basis of tabletop gaming is social play. Bear in mind that you're not a solo hero and you shouldn't have to be.

Additionally, as much as these rules exist to guide you, they're also made to be broken at your leisure. The game plots exist to engage you and your players, but if you want to shift away from them or make

your own story, go ahead. We all learn and have fun at our own pace. Loosen up and get communicating. You'll find your path.

Sample Character Sheet

Name:

Height:

Age:

Pronouns:

Race:

Ethnicity:

Weight:

Stats

Stats						Total	Current
PHYSICAL	Skill		Might		Means	HEALTH	
SOCIAL	Charm		Presence		Connections	REPUTE	
MENTAL	Education		Intuition		Willpower	PSYCHE	
OTHER	Luck						

Concept:

Motive:

Trade:

Tragedy:

Wound:

Aspiration:

Divergences:

Traits and Stunts:

Effects:

Item	Description

Powers:

Name	Power	Control	Resonance

Injuries:

Injury	Severity

Backstory:

Weapon of choice:

Armor/Disguise:

Sample Character Sheet: Skquall 'Squids' Benjamins (Level 1)

Name: Skquall 'Squids' Benjamins

Height: 4'10"

Age: 23

Pronouns: they/them

Race: Asian

Ethnicity: Korean

Weight: 92

Stats

Stats							Total	Current
PHYSICAL	Skill	4	Might	3	Means	3	HEALTH	10
SOCIAL	Charm	3	Presence	3	Connections	3	REPUTE	9
MENTAL	Education	4	Intuition	4	Willpower	3	PSYCHE	11
OTHER	Luck	4						

Concept: Your local weird mechanic that makes PVC Pipe bows

Motive: To make the best PVC pipe bow in the world and maybe make a new machine

Trade: Mechanic, YouTuber

Tragedy: When I was young, people made fun of my LARPing habit and how much time I spent making prop weapons and armor out of scraps.

Wound: If I'm not funny, no one will like me. I'd rather be funny and not be taken seriously than be alone.

Aspiration: Gain the confidence to take both myself and my craft seriously without getting stuck up about it and find friends that I can be myself with. Also, I want to make a mecha.

Divergences: ADHD

Traits and Stunts:

<p>Stunt: Replication. Given the materials (A Means roll + relevant traits + 1), I can replicate a weapon or armor set described to me with impressive accuracy. These materials are mundane, and the weapon or armor set described to me are equal to 1 Effect. I can only do this once in a while. What that means is up to the GM.</p>
<p>I am resourceful and good at finding what I need, when I need it.</p>
<p>I can be paid in food and I wouldn't complain about it if I didn't have to also pay for housing.</p>
<p>I am good-humored and people usually like me on instinct.</p>
<p> </p>
<p> </p>

Effects: 6 EV

Item	EV	Description
Toolbox	2	Holds all my tools. I can roll means to determine what's in

		it.
Cellphone	1	Mostly full of games and pictures of my cat, Lucy.
My Cat, Lucy	1	She keeps the pests out of my house!

Powers:

Name	Power	Control	Resonance
Technomancy: I can control technology!	2	3	4

Injuries:

Injury	Severity

Backstory: I used to do lots of LARP when I was a kid. Then, my friends moved away when we all hit middle school, and I went through some teasing and bullying. After high school, while I was learning how to be a mechanic, I discovered I could control and communicate with technology. I am still learning the ins and outs of this power now.

Weapon of choice: A comically huge wrench

Armor/Disguise: Baggy cargo shorts and an inside-out t-shirt

Danny's Game: Project Radiohead

This game was conceptualized by Alyna Kim, with feedback from Harper Atkins, Zaki Bibi, and Trevyr Willey. It is a work in progress, and while it's playable in its current state *with Alyna Kim as the Game Master*, the material here may not work entirely for others.

You're invited to attend a man named Doctor Daniel Bird (Danny to his friends)'s funeral after he was assassinated under mysterious circumstances. You might be his childhood friend, you might be a coworker, you could be his ex-lover, but either way, you know you were close with him. Or, you thought you were.

In reality, Dr. Bird has something he'd like to request of you. He needs you and the other people attending his shockingly small funeral to finish the project he died trying to complete. He promises that it'll be for the good of everyone in the world, and there's big money waiting for you if you succeed.

This is the cyberpunk game that I said I would be making to release alongside the system titled the **Aspect** system. The Aspect system is an rp-heavy, relatively stats-light, highly customizable d10 tabletop rpg system.

The game is set in the same universe as Alyn Kim's story, Listener, about 500-600 years after the end of the planned series. As a consequence, the campaign uses some of the lore and the magic systems and world physics and politics present in the Listener world story. However, you don't need to read all of Listener for this game to be playable.

Relevant lore will be found in this document.

This game was created with the intent to be played by a **17+ audience**, and can also be described as a **TV-MA, R, or Rated M** game. However, the contents of the game can be edited and censored at GM discretion to move the rating down to **T**.

Number of Players: At most 5

Session Length: Anywhere between 2 and 4 hours, with the number of sessions numbering likely 3+, one per week.

Because the structure of the campaign is based on the structure of Heist games, players should (ideally) fill roles similar to the following:

- Socially-savvy person
- Tech-savvy person
- Gang-savvy person
- Corporate-savvy person
- Security savvy-person
- Revolution savvy-person
- A Person Who Is Savvy With Throwing Hands (this could be all of you)
- These Are All Suggestions

None of you have to get along at first but for the sake of the game as well as Danny's purposes and wishes, I will not be splitting the party. Early game decisions to switch characters are fine. We can do RP out of session in chats set to the side to establish who characters are and how they're connected to what. The most important detail I will be asking to discuss with you is how you might be associated with Dr. Daniel Bird, as this is essential to the start of the campaign.

Setting

Petrikor in the Year 616

Ardorvel — a city on the west coast of the original continent that the Sovereign colonized 1600 years ago. The city is the size of a 200,000 km² (77220 mi²) state, but is broken up into corporate-run territories based on the dominant manufacturing sector in the area. Populations are similarly identified by race, gender, and company affiliation. The government exists insofar as laws and legislation also exist, but the city's sectors are largely governed by policy over law as far as interpersonal conduct is concerned. Law is based largely on corporate necessity, protecting copyright and property as well as defining "property."

The government is owned by the corporates and serves as a means to make the people feel heard even if they aren't, truly. Unions and union activity have long since been banned within the city, meaning all sectors of the city

proper are also union-less. Police exist, but they come from one company that owns other security sectors as well. They are formally called Corporate Security, but are more often called corpsec for short.

Everyone in the city classified as a legal worker or living person has a Corporate ID, shortened to CID or ID. If you didn't have one before, you obtain one once you start working somewhere. Your ID is attached to your face, which is observed from any security point in the city—and there are numerous ones throughout the city. Your voice is also identifiable. Your health, your work, your education, and your crime records are all attached to your ID, which is attached to your voice and your face. Fingerprinting is also still common practice. Facial scanning is corpsec's favorite way to identify people, and anyone should be ready for a casual scan at any time. Eye scanners and other forms of bio scanners are in production as well because of the prevalence of face masks.

Each building in Ardorvel has a total of 500 buildings, ground to top, with the wealthiest living at the top and the poorest living on the Ground. Power grids are tiered, as are the sewage systems, so divisions between classes are clear and palpable. Space and clean water are at a premium, as they are in any place. You do something wrong, you're sent to a work camp. The price for theft is more labor – unpaid, unrewarded, and completely alienated from the laborer.

Of course the world has crime and gangs and police plots running rampant. That's to be expected in a large city. However, magic does still exist here. The most mysterious places are the places that still have magic, or claim to have it. Some kinds of magic, like astropathy, exist among the average people in Ardorvel and can be used to get people better jobs. However, more obscure magic, such as artificing, remains questionable to the majority of people. Artificers, when they are found, are quickly whisked away to the Art sector, rarely to be heard from again. There's more on all of this below.

Life for the average person

The average person probably lives in a small apartment with a roommate and gets up at whatever time of day about an hour to two and a half hours before their shift, depending on their commute time. It could be that at a particularly busy hour, they should get up earlier (3-4 hours before their shift). Likely, they could get leftovers or a meal bar from the shared kitchen they have with their neighbors or get some kind of fast food from the Konbi, a convenience store chain, on their floor as they walk or take the tram to their workplace. If they work in another sector different from the one they live in, then they likely take one of the magnet trains out to that sector.

Say you're the kind of person that likes to shower in the mornings. You probably do not have a shower readily available to you, but your residential area does have communal showers. You'll want to get up early enough to either get ahead of the rush or to wait in line for a while.

Family Life

Family life varies sector to sector. You really can't stop people from having kids or from wanting to have them, nor can you stop people from being irresponsible. Most sectors have basic sex education during compulsory education, explained a little more below, but access varies. Family housing gives you access to slightly more space at a slightly discounted rate, supposedly, but especially if your company owns your sector, you can opt to have your rent docked from your pay and you don't really know the concrete details of anything. A package deal in Newtown allows officially married couples to have apartments next to each other at a discounted rate if they have at least a 1:1 kid to parent ratio. Therefore, a family of four can share two apartments, each with a back room and a front room, and share a kitchen that connects them. There is an option that has a bathroom connecting the apartments instead that generally is only available to families as well. Spaces like that usually do not come with an actual kitchen, but there are outlets and appliances that you can buy that can substitute a kitchen if you are so inclined. Most sectors are neither here nor there about your decision to have children. In the year of our Lord 616, the average family has between two and four kids, though the average person between the ages 25 and 40 is having fewer children than they have in previous generations. Additionally, these statistics do not apply to all sectors.

GM Note: Kohumae immigration has slowed to a trickle and the Art district encourages people to have as many kids as they can, incentivizing it with better housing and access to commodities via scrip that makes scrip received for childrearing worth about twice to three times as much as a standard credit. They include childcare too. This is a huge deal. People don't just give this out. Carnelian is starting to be able to clone entire people and make test tube and designer babies, making it entirely possible to supposedly just clone mages. It has yet to be seen if this is successful at all. Carnelian researchers are willing to pay relatively well

for egg samples, though people undergoing hysterectomies sometimes simply have whatever eggs they have snatched without pay and pawned through under the table means to research teams in Carnelian.

The problem with this is that the clones and test tube babies do have *souls*, so they can have *magic*. Their souls are just unique, and therefore there's no perfect guarantee of magic.

Life in the City

Money is largely paid in credits directly to your bank account, which is attached to your ID so long as you were born in any legitimate way and are technically a legally functioning citizen or worker of the state. That is to say, if you have a job at all, you have a Corporate ID. The exception is if you're some kind of completely anonymous entity from birth until now who's only ever done under the table work and will only ever do under the table work. You can also be classified as legally dead, which has similar repercussions, but it means there's really no way to pay you outside of cold cash—usually reserved for lowlifes.

Credit and cash are both centralized. The Central Aluwen Banking company monitors and deals with credits and their worth and circulation. They also deal with the conversions of company scrip to credits and back again. Credits are worth more than scrip and scrip means nothing to a company that issues a different variety, but when you move or change jobs, sometimes it's worth it to try to convert.

When I mention fresh food later on in this document, I say that, and you can probably think that it looks fresh, but you really have no way of knowing if that's what it is. You probably *have* seen a plant, specifically weeds like dandelions and the like, before, but as a society, people are consuming a lot of soy and a lot of nutrient-supplement food products that taste like something and are shaped to look like something and cook like something as opposed to truly fresh food. You encounter the most actually fresh food once you hit floors 375 and over. Canned and dried food is common on the lowest floors and no one tries to make it look like anything specific. You get more things with the labels, "Beef-flavored dried jerky" and so on down that far.

Social Structure

We speak Standard, which is just English for the sake of gameplay.

The Kohumae people come from the country of Ravaunai, but still call themselves Kohumae, causing some amount of social confusion. On occasion people will refer to their homeland as Kohuland or to the people as Ravaunaians because that makes sense to them, but the technical terms remain the same. The country of Ravaunai exists across the continent from Ardorvel. They are under what can be considered to be an uneasy peace in the year 616. Previous historical relationships between Ardorvel and Ravaunai are shrouded in historical mystery for the younger generations, though the older generations may in fact remember some details. Kohumae, as with 600 years ago, are recognized by their pointed ears.

Other surrounding nations include the nation of Erinn, Yond, Warda, and Shendoh, all of which have their own languages and populations, though they all also tend to speak Standard. The citizens of Erinn, Yond, Warda, and Shendoh are people descended from Ohrak living in the area after the Great War. They each also have an uneasy peace with Ardorvel, instead being much more friendly with the neighboring country of Ravaunai. In the background, there are fears of a war possibly breaking out between Ardorvel and the other countries, though these worries may yet be unfounded. Each country has its own accent.

Kohumae accents tend to have round vowels and miss certain consonants, or they shorten words like "I'm" to "M" and "going to" to "gonna" and "it's" to "S". Whole concepts can be missed in Standard that are explicit in Kohumae, so it's common for a native Kohumae speaker to end up under or over explaining concepts depending on how aware of the differences between the languages they are. Erinn and Yond have similar accents, differing mostly in the fact that Erinn folk speak in circles more than people from Yond. Erinn folk do, however, speak faster and with much shorter syllables. Erinn folk, because of their verb tenses, are more likely to speak like this: "It is better to be having friends than to be having enemies, is it not?" But a Yondian might say, "It's good to be havin' friends than enemies," skipping the "to be" because it was established previously in the sentence. Wardans roll their Rs and speak more from their throats and noses than the others, and Shendohans tend to speak most similarly to the Kohumae, though also pushed back towards their throat. Wardans tend to have more of an accent than a different understanding of grammar. Shendohans are also inclined to shorten their words the way Kohumae are.

Almost all people in Ardorvel are descended from a Patrician or Ohrak from the past to the point that the distinction is mostly irrelevant. However, Ardorvel historically did not have much of a Kohumae population, as the majority of Kohumae living there from the time before the Great War and the time after were either sterile or visitors and not citizens who remained there. By contrast, Erinn, Yond, Warda, and Shendoh all have populations descended from Kohumae groups, with Shendoh and Warda having the highest population.

This is relevant because Kohumae or people considered to be Kohumae immigrants largely come from Warda, Shendoh, or Ravaunai, but regardless of origin, are all funneled into the Art sector. Because of high tensions and mistreatment in Ardorvel, obviously Kohumae immigration into the city has stalled or been stalling for the past fifty years unless there is no history of magic in the family and such is provable. This means that a rather unique sort of Kohumae-in-Ardorvel culture has come up in the city as kids grow up and have kids themselves, though it has mostly been stuck to the Art district.

There are also tendencies in other districts for historically Kohumae families to cover up their heritage upon entering the city, as it is relatively easy to claim Ohrak ancestry instead so long as you do not display the trademarks of Artificing magic. It requires you to clip and shape the tips of your ears or cover them.

Infrastructure

We speak Standard, which is just English for the sake of gameplay. People know how to read and write, as well as do basic math up to long division. The only people that speak two languages in general are the Kohumae and those related to them. Standard sign language, which exists, is different from Kohumae sign language, though there is crossover because they have the same roots from ages past.

Schooling is somewhat mandatory up to age 12, at which point, you're kind of supposed to start working. The typical 11-12 year old tends to get factory work or work acting as a gofer. They can also do things like man stores and keep track of inventory, in large part moving articles from here to there because as much as making a robot do it might seem more efficient, we don't have units in places where people can break them. You're supposed to start looking for work around age 11, but can start building up your portfolio of work round 10. Any younger, and there's the idea that you start to get under foot or in the way, and you don't tend to get work as a kid that age unless you look older.

Schools are often quick to assign you to a certain section once your personality and inclinations to specific subjects is assessed. Showing aptitude early is important in that sense for getting you a good education, albeit highly specialized, and for getting you into higher education (ages 13 and up). Once you get further along in those higher education programs, they further sort you into groups based on your displayed interests and use.

On occasion you can graduate compulsory school and immediately start a full-time career in an essential field because of lucky chance. This is most often the case with Undertakers in the Ash sector and maintenance workers throughout the city.

There are also private programs for people who can pay for private trade school that carry you through years 5 to 18, generally, or older if the program is extremely intensive.

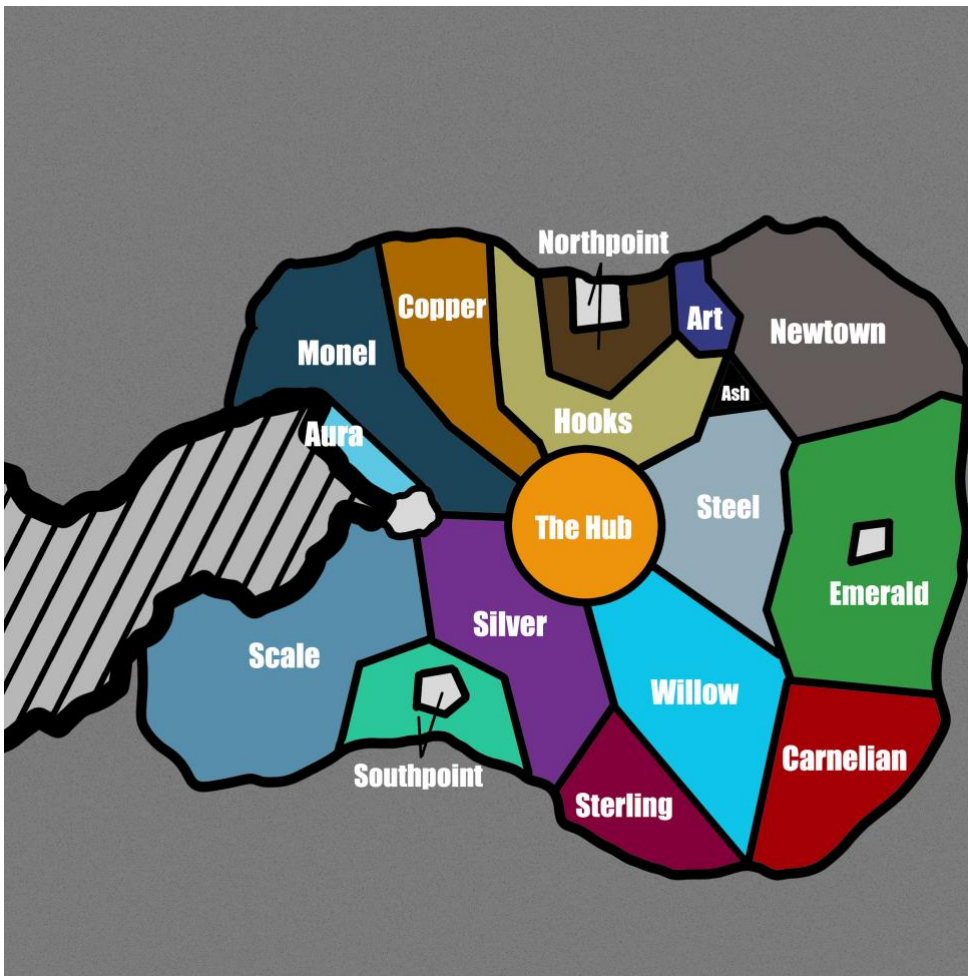
As an example, a doctor might show promise at age 9 and be sorted into higher science and reading (or math, etc) courses and then continue along through multiple sciences until they're sorted into biology and then medical programs. Schooling then proceeds until they're in their 20s, usually up to 25 unless they're a genius, essentially, or they're rich and have access to Artifacts with that skill knowledge.

Most people travel using trams or trains. The trains to the Hub and other sectors can reach speeds of up to 400 MPH, and usually also transport goods on different lines. Trams are much slower and are meant to take you from place to place within your sector. The Willow sector has the fastest trams. There are also self-driving taxis and buses on roads, though cars are significantly less common. If you're especially willing to be in debt or you're rich, you can possibly purchase a single car. This is extremely uncommon.

Corporations

Corporations own everything and everyone as far as anyone is concerned, and their operations largely happen at floors 400 and above. Corporate sectors divide the city into sections shown below:

- Aura: hydropower
- Monel: Batteries/electronics/appliances manufacturing
- Copper: Computers/computer creation
- Hooks: raw materials processing
- Northpoint: Mining
- Art: Artificing factories
- Ash: Death
- Newtown: (pronounced newton) Cheap housing
- Emerald: Farming
- Steel: weapons, appliances, automotives, and toys manufacturing
- Carnelian: Biotech research
- Willow: actually eclectic boogaloo. It's basically new york city
- Sterling: entertainment
- Silver: Movie making/social media
- Southpoint: mining 2, geothermal power
- Scale: Fishing



Brayre Corporation owns Emerald and Scale, as well as parts of Carnelian. They control the water and water treatment facilities as well.

City Sectors

The city is divided into various sectors, corporate owned and run. Territory disputes happen on occasion, but for the most part, deals are made, contracts are sealed, people are moved, and it all happens largely without input from the populace. Each sector operates like its own town, with its own economy and workforce focused on a specific aspect or type of production.

Aura

The Aura district, whose land is owned by Aura Corporation, leads the city's hydropower industry. Upper tier workers here research hydropower and marine life with researchers in Scale. Lower and mid-tier workers here operate the hydropower lines to ensure that the generators work effectively. Monel and Copper get a lot of their power from Aura, while most of the other sectors get their power from their own generators floor to floor.

Monel

Batteries and electronics manufacturing happens here. Because of this, they manufacture most of the city's appliances here as well. Business, idea production, and data largely happens on floors 400-500, and the floors below are a combination of housing, industry, and stores for commodities and food. Vegetables and the like are most expensive here, but seafood is at some of the lowest prices in the city next to prices in Scale. Much of work here is based on small-scale electronics research and focuses largely on manufacturing of products in abundance. Human workers frequently maintain machines processing goods and operate said machines in factories. Warehouse workers, as in every district, work to keep supplies moving where machines are deemed inefficient. Game consoles are frequently conceptualized in Copper, made in Monel, shipped to The Hub, and distributed from there. You can also get clothes manufactured here, but fibers mostly come from Emerald and Carnelian, and the bulk of clothing manufacture happens on the edges of Steel and Willow, and the entirety of Newtown.

Copper

The Copper sector is all about computer science, research, and programming. It has a reputation of being one of the cleanest and nicest sectors in the entire city, top to bottom, and it's mostly true. Much of the sector's apartments are spacious compared to the others, have consistent power and Wi-Fi, decent plumbing, sunlamps, access to commodities, and climate control. Programmers and engineers tend to work at the top and retire closer to the middle tiers for residency. Schools and the like are on the floor tiers below, and housing for retired Silver stars tends to be lower. The bottom tiers are largely power grids kept under high security and the workers that manage the area. One might say the sector is structured like one large mall or tech start up. Some of the wealthiest live here. They also have one of the largest Paragon Corporation hubs here near the top of the stack.

Hooks and Northpoint

The Hooks, by contrast, is much rougher. The entire sector is dedicated to the raw processing of materials mined from Northpoint and so is all about production and distribution. Work is constantly available but has largely to do with manual labor and physical exertion, especially on lower floor tiers wherein machines can't be trusted to stay unbroken. The Hooks sector is built into the face of a mountain that used to be part of an active volcano 616 years ago, but after the events of the Great War, much like many other places on the continent, tectonic activity changed. Presently, it's still a rich mineral deposit. Supposedly, they're not running out of anything here but who knows if that's true at this point. Hooks work is largely to do with, again, turning raw goods into things that can be used in places like Copper, Monel, and Steel, where a lot of actual goods production happens. While Northpoint is technically the center for mining, Hooks can still on occasion have open mining positions available for work. In contrast with much of the rest of the city, housing tends to be on upper floors and clusters specifically in the elevated central regions of the sector because spaces closer to the mountains are mines. Living closer to the mines is technically cheaper but worse for your health. Space here is often cramped. It's more likely that your showers and bath spaces are communal with locks than it is that you have your own personal shower. Such spaces are generally left to floors 400-500, where the people who run the city reside. Supposedly, Northpoint and Hooks support some of the largest "unskilled labor" populations in the city. You get a lot of canned goods and dried food here, but fresh food from Emerald is cheaper here than in places like Aura and Copper. To put it in context, though, it probably feels more expensive to someone in Hooks to buy five apples than it does for someone in Copper to buy a dozen.

Art

The Art sector, sometimes derogatorily called the Mists, is the Kohumae population center of the city. The sector's main export is Artifacts made in mass production from materials imported from Hooks. Most people stay in housing rooming with several others, as in a dorm room, on lower floor tiers. Towards the middle, people can have apartments to themselves. Closer to the top are largely research sectors for combination artificing and astropathy powers. These also contain the largest apartments. Anima, the corporation that owns all the Artificing plants, also owns all the land in the Art sector. If you aren't an Artificer but you're related to one and you live here, you likely are shackled here. Schooling is here and jobs are available here that aren't Artificing jobs. You can most easily become

a part of store personnel here, and this is one of the only sectors of the city that is guaranteed to have mostly humans in all the stores, top to bottom, in management. You can also get a job making certain consumable artisanal goods, like bar soap, for sale at gift shops. The Art sector is almost like a ChinaTown, in that it's the most culturally "Kohumae" of anywhere in the city and retains some semblance of the identity, but very few people who aren't directly Kohumae know much about that culture or about how Artifacts are made. However, a lot of starving artists do end up here if they get pushed out of Newtown and can't find a job in Silver. It's often crowded here or seems so in living quarters because it's technically a small space containing a lot of people.

Ash

The Ash sector is the sector where dead people go to be cremated. Nameless graves are myriad amongst the lowest floors, where rows and rows of unnamed or unclaimed bodies are stored in urns that stack neatly floor to ceiling to be observed. Most people are cremated, though upper floors are more likely to hold uncremated bodies and have fancy burials for people who put in specific burial requests and can afford to do so. Undertaking is a family job unless someone random shows up and has promise, in which case, Undertakers' apprentices are taught on the job and live and work in Ash. Few people live in the Ash sector willingly, and disrupting the ashes and bodies in the Ash sector is very taboo. There are very few stores and very little room for them past last-second mourning materials and a shop or two every ten floors to supply basic needs like personal care and food products. Undertakers are not paid well but frequently have housing supplied for their work and very few people monitor them outside of common monitoring practices by all companies. Security is more present on the top floors because of the nature of burials there, but most Paragons dislike working the station because it is, in a manner, creepy.

Newtown

The once very hopefully named Newtown sector lacks a lot of hope. Newtown was one of the newer additions to the city at one point, hence the name, but it has since lost its shine. You go here to die or you go here and know your career is dying. Newtown's main export is cloth and clothing, and almost all the clothes in the city are manufactured in Newtown, especially on lower levels. Housing in Newtown is mostly tiny apartments and shared rooms between people, again similar to dorms, and is cheaper than in other places, making it sometimes the wisest choice to live even if it has a reputation for being dangerous. Conditions aren't great, and are fairly similar to the conditions in Hooks and Northpoint, with the one exception of having slightly cleaner water because of their distance from the metal manufacturing plants. You might say that the factories here offset the difference, however. Newtown has the second highest Kohumae population base in the city next to Art because Newtown is very close to the Art sector and all Kohumae that are identified coming into the city are funneled into the Art or Newtown sectors, depending on available space. You don't get a lot of fresh food here, close to the top or at the bottom, and there are stereotypes about how people in Newtown probably do things like eat rats. It looks dirty here because the pollution makes everything in the city look dirty just for standing around. Other districts have bots or janitors to take care of that. Newtown's general staff count is lower and things stay broken for longer here than in other sectors. There are, essentially, more people living here for the cheap rent and less people working here to make it pretty.

GM Note: Newtown is horrible, which is why they're very close-knit within their floor tiers. You often work with the person next to you and you have to see them struggle every day next to you. Then you go home, and you can hear them struggle through your floors and walls. Sometimes it breeds resentment, because we're all just trying to get by, but sometimes it breeds community for the same reason. Newtown has soup kitchens and outlets with people that let homeless into their showers and bathrooms scattered all over it. In large part, it's the janitorial and floor tier maintenance staff that have to haul the most butt to keep everything still up and running because being homeless here is stressful and leads to people using whatever they have as an outlet for powerlessness. People that let them into their showers know that they might be giving up that shower for the entire day because this is the first shower those people have had in weeks. Soup kitchens are always full and run the risk of being shut down at any moment by Paragon forces called in because landlords notice the activity on their floor. Citations don't stop people from trying, though, and it's becoming increasingly obvious throughout the entire city that debt means nothing when it's all you've seen connected with money.

Steel

Steel is the top manufacturer of weapons in the city, and also manufactures toys using cloth exports from Newtown. They also manufacture automotives, trains, and city construction components. It's a lot of heavy industry here, similar to the Hooks. Your housing is similar to Newtown but with slightly larger rooms and more readily available showers, even if they're public like they are in most other places. You aren't allowed to keep pets generally speaking if you live here, and Steel's guidelines are the strictest regarding that. They have an astonishing rat problem on the

lower floors. A lot of noise pollution exists here and quality of life is generally considered pretty low. But also, that's everywhere. They have the highest quality canned goods here.

Emerald

Emerald is owned by Brayre Corporation and is in charge of all the city's agriculture. It's also in charge of genetically modified food products. Housing here is comparable to the housing relative to it in other sectors, though the general standard for housing is similar to Newtown's nicer housing. The best you get here is a small apartment that you share with a roommate, and a kitchen you likely share with your neighbor. Work is largely to do with monitoring the plants and the machines that plant and harvest them. On the upper floors, researchers conduct various projects, presumably to improve things like yield, taste, nutrient content, and aesthetic. Despite working on the food, you don't get first pick of it here, and food quality here is about on par with that in any other sector.

Carnelian

Carnelian is owned partially by Brayre and partially by Acro Corp. Carnelian deals in biotech and biotech research, with all of the new prosthetics research, drugs and medicine research, and organ cloning for donations research being conducted here. If you pay attention, you know that this is where your meat also comes from, though the average individual likely hasn't had real meat before. Food here is about on par with that in any other sector. Housing here is marginally better than in that of Emerald, but the population is also lower in general, with most of the jobs available to the general populace being attached to packaging and shipping, as well as the standard maintenance of machines. Floors 375 and up are devoted to different levels of research and sampling, and 350 and up also have variable high-end medical facilities space.

Willow

Willow is what Newtown hoped to be—a diverse city within a city. No specific company owns Willow in total, and there isn't a standard "job" for any given individual. Or, there *is*, because there's supposedly something for everyone here. You have the most street vending without disruption here that isn't linked specifically to any gang or company. Housing is high-end and spacious at the top—a real show of decadence—and cramped, dirty, and uncomfortable at the bottom. You can taste the best and the worst of the city here literally and figuratively since it's connected to the most sector on any given side. Several companies, like Acro, Aura, and Brayre company have their company bases here. At the same time, supposed revolutionaries frequently end up protesting here throughout recent history before being swiftly put down. Willow takes up a lot of space and no one can actually agree on who should own all of it. Thusly, no one does. It's a tricky place to be.

Sterling

Sterling is the Red Light district of the city. Certainly, every city sector has one in a sense, but this is a known business hub. Paragons really have no authority here. Or, they do, they're just active participants in the violence and debauchery that takes place. You get the cheapest drugs here, as well as the most sketchy substances and people. It's considered to be rife with crime, and you don't want to *live* here if you can help it. You also have more "legitimate" entertainment, such as gambling and exotic dancing. High end clubs dot the borders between Silver and Sterling, and grittier clubs are everywhere else. Alcohol is also brewed here. You have a lot of weapons manufacturers selling here and a lot of people making good use of their weapons here. Mercs and assassins can usually be found doing business here for cheaper than if you found them in, say, Willow, Silver, or Steel, but have more polish than a hired gun you could get in Newtown. You deal a lot in cash here unless you're just here to play, in which case you can get played pretty bad. You can get pretty good food here if you know where to look, but do you really, *really* want to know where to look?

GM Note: If you lived in Sterling, you know that there are also entire networks of good people that make living in Sterling completely livable and sometimes nicer than other places, just because the community is good. Much as prostitution and abuse can run rampant here, there are communities that exist to protect adults and children alike. Most of them exist close to the bottom floors and gangs leave them alone because gang members usually owe them debts that can't be repaid. Still, community clout and gang grudges are often at odds, and if one group steps over a clearly established line, they both know which side has the most firepower.

Silver

Movies, movie stars, video games, e-sports teams, and stage acting all happen here. You have a lot of big names, big houses, and big money running all over the place in very precarious ways. If you're an artist of any kind, you likely make your fortune here and end up moving here when you do. It's a fast-paced world built on gambling and bluffing, much like the rest of the city is. However, Silver is especially known in the business world for being that way because it has no other exports outside of intellectual property for stories and franchises. When there's a lull in creativity, people in the city tend to get antsy. The pace is rigorous here to prevent that. At the lowest levels, you have live comedians starting out, street magicians, and other forms of live entertainment that can't work particularly well under Sterling's expectations of behavior and intensity. Scale and technological requirements increase as you climb tiers and floors. Silver has some of the highest rent in the city, next to Copper. Interns often live close to the bottom and climb every day to get to their jobs, or live in Sterling.

Southpoint

Southpoint is also a mining district, though they also conduct geothermal power research and medical research attached to magic and its properties connected to metals. Southpoint also manufactures jewelry, though not Artifact jewelry, which is produced in Art. Southpoint is known more for precious metals, and the sector isn't allowed to look as gritty as Northpoint is because of its proximity to Silver. However, the farther from Silver one gets, the crummier the housing, pay, and quality of life. Work here largely is divided amongst mining, maintenance, and research, though Southpoint also serves as a residential area for people that need to live outside of Silver for rent purposes.

Scale

Scale deals in fish and processing fish and sea-related things, like saltwater treatment and marine biology. There are many fish farms here and research on the sea and sea life happens on various floors. This is the sector closest to sea level and has the least disparity in regards to tier based hierarchies because of the nature of the research, which requires them to be close to the sea. Water power also happens here. Some processing of fine jewelry is also available in this sector because of its proximity to Southpoint, and eastern Scale is used primarily not for fishing, but for processing those metals. Central Scale is largely for packaging and preserving the fish for export to other parts of the city, so once you get away from the coast, the tier hierarchy returns to a more standard model compared to the rest of the city. Upper central Scale, however, is used to do things like breed luxury pets and the like. Scale is owned largely by Acro and Brayre, though some parts are owned by Aura as well.

Gangs

Gangs are largely corporate sponsored to some capacity, mostly in terms of who arms them and gives them any form of healthcare and place of gathering, though not all of them are. There are at least two in each major sector of the city except the district focusing mainly on food and food exportation.

Gangs tend to monitor activity in similar ways to Paragon officers, though they also sometimes form aspects of the city's infrastructure in exchange for control over management and exportation of goods and labor in an area. They also do more heinous things. Frequently, your landlord is part of a gang and has the means to call either Paragon or a gang on you if you don't pay rent or you're not following policy. It depends on how buddy-buddy your branch of Paragon is with the local gangs.

Gangs often function on a "I do something for you, you do something for me" kind of basis, and their operations can range from getting them things to favors of a nasty sort to complacency in violent crime to outright murder. Repayment ranges similarly. They also make up the security foundations for many loan companies.

Networks

Obviously, the city is falling apart at the seams. When you have no infrastructure, the bottom falls out first and the rest of everything follows suit eventually. Does that mean that everyone who isn't completely able bodied and minded are left in the dust? Is every single Kohumae hunted down and put in Art? Do the poor all die constantly in squalor? No. It happens, and it shouldn't, but it doesn't happen every time.

In the year 616 what you have instead are people picking up where the government and the corporations refuse to do so. These are your Networks. Places like SteelStrings make names for themselves not through large corporate connections but through underground and subculture connections forged through the communities that exist. There

are hundreds to thousands of networks that function independently and together to actually keep this city running. The gangs are one of the biggest detriments to them, because they operate similarly on the surface, but are armed and funded by corporations to break up and discourage Networks.

You might find some Networks are funded by rogue company entities under aliases. You might find that it's just a community of moms, dads, uncles, aunts, grandmas on their last legs, veterans that have been scorned, hackers that never made it in the corporate world by choice or by breakdown. It's a diverse group of people working in the same pool, though not always together. That's how you survive here.

Street docs, for example, form a medical network and safety net for a lot of the people in the city on floors 200 and below, who are often uninsured and not wealthy enough to afford Artifacts, medicine, or hospital stays. In Sterling, there are housing and childcare networks to keep children safe from potential dangers on the streets such as gangs and pimps. Some networks wear masks and openly protect groups of vulnerable people while teaching them strategies to keep them safe from Paragon officers that are looking for a fight. There are even libraries, if you know where to look.

Anonymity and Security



Those who think that legality has the final say in any given situation have no grasp of power or a lack of it. While it is the case that the corporate government banned totally anonymous online communications in the late 520s, no one can really prevent hackers and others from creating means of anonymous infiltration and communications. Firewalls are readily available, though some are flimsy and just another way for a corp or corpsec to gain access to what could be considered your private files if you still believe in online privacy.

In meatspace, camera-based surveillance was commonplace by the year 490, and facial recognition software was becoming more common by the year 515—around the same time anonymous messaging was coming under scrutiny. Along the Kohumae

coastline, facial masking was already popular because the region has a history of volcanic activity. However, the practice spread to the West coast as well as surveillance on the populace tightened. By the year 530, there was no reasonable way to ban face masks because of rising signs of pollution—signs that even the corps could not deny. Even in the present year 616, covering your face is common practice.

Artificers and people with access to artifacts that can accept storage of attributes are able to collect self and presence in their artifacts and can pass in front of cameras without need for facial covering. Data sent by people collecting those attributes tends to corrupt or go missing after short periods of time, especially during saving and copying processes.



INDUSTRIES

- Energy
- Water - Owned by Brayre co.
- Agriculture - Owned by Brayre co.
- Manufacturing
 - Weapons - Main company: Aurelius; subsidiaries: Hawkins Arms, ELITE, 501 Arsenal, Wulf, Blackhawk
 - Example of models:
 - Sovereign G-12: Aurelius; heavy duty assault rifle
 - Comet: Hawkins; a line of lightweight handguns
 - Kordin: Wulf; a line of heavy duty handguns
 - Peacekeeper: 501 Arsenal; a taser
 - Kestral: Blackhawk; a line of sniper and hunting rifles

- Appliances - Ralion Corporation, Sundial
 - Phones
 - Home
 - School
 - work/industrial
- Internet and telecommunications - Horizon Communications
- Medical science - Facility Healthcare Partners and Others; partnered with Biotech (see below)
- Engineering - Various
 - We have reached the stars, we use radio, we use satellite technology
- Biotech - Brayre, Ralion, Horizon, Facility, NexSoft...
 - Includes medicine, drugs, healthcare.
 - Corporate
 - Sleek, official, new...
 - Special wiring and combined tech and magic produce prosthetics that can feel and touch like your original body part did, or how you wish a body part did
 - Street
 - You can get old tech and outmoded, rarely replaceable and repairable 'ware out here
- Computers - Nexus Software (Nexsoft), Aura Inc (Not to be mistaken for the water powered district, though Aura owns Aura), Hrastwood Corporation
 - At least 2 creating
 - Hardware
 - Software
- Entertainment - Silver district; you know more names than you know companies; companies are the most personified here than anywhere else
 - Film
 - TV
 - Streaming
 - Video Games - Blue Light (Blizzard), Redseed, Pipeline Games (think Steam), Crescent Circuit (CC)
 - Includes virtual pets, MMOs, E-Sports (legitimate sport)
 - Board Games (digital)
 - Music
 - Books (text-based entertainment)
 - Virtual tourism
- Sterling Entertainment - The Red Light District (largely unincorporated but land is owned by companies in Silver and other places such as Acro)
 - Clubs/Nightclubs
 - Exotic dancing
 - Prostitution of various kinds though some are still actively frowned upon even if they're technically not illegal
 - Drugs (recreational but sold illegally you know for the drama? Just kidding they're cut with things that make you come back, which is similar to the way that corporate drugs are cut it is just cheaper)
- Magic
 - Artifacts - Owned by Anima Corporation
 - Artifact factories are relatively common in the district owned by that company
 - All known artificers are encouraged to move there and work there
 - There are other jobs, but much of the economy is centered around the factories and you have to commute a ways to get jobs outside of the artificing industry
 - Artifacts are the same price as over the counter medication and stimulants in small doses (25 charges)
 - All others are Effect Value 2+ and are more expensive
 - Fuel for astropathy - Mined in North and Southpoints, owned largely by Anima and Acro
- Luxury - Based in Scale for the most part
 - Pets - Brayre Co.
 - Artisanal Goods - Art District and other places of dubious legitimacy, imports from other countries like Ravaunai, slowed trade and minimal supply
 - Art - Silver
 - Musical instruments - Scale

- Jewelry - Scale, wedding rites vary in different areas, but metal rings and bracelets made from platinum are expensive, symbolic of an eternal or lasting marriage, and made in Scale and Southpoint. Eternity Co., subsidiary of Acro.
- Toys - Various
 - Stuffed toys, action figures, etc
- Distribution of products - Acro Inc
 - Think Amazon
 - Self-driving vehicles and some non-self-driving vehicles
 - Also own the greater search engine
- Data - much of which is owned by the Amazon company
 - Data entry, stocks
 - Much of it is computerized but some of it isn't per the fact that computers aren't perfect even now in terms of working with these algorithms
 - Much of the jobs in this business are, however, to do with maintaining servers and the algorithms
- Security - Owned largely by the larger Paragon Corporation
 - Surveillance and physical enforcement
 - Corporate Security (CorpSec): Paragon
 - Derogatively called "parasites"
 - Private Investigation
 - Licensed individuals are given a mark on their IDs with Paragon approval to practice
 - Home Security
 - WatchDog
 - Everyday security (video and CCTV, etc)
 - Vanguard
 - Location monitoring, child monitoring
- Old tech - Shack, SquidInc, Steel Strings
 - Still sold, maintained, pawned, and used, but not necessarily for cheap or for expensive. It depends on where you're buying your parts, from whom, and for why
 - A lot of stuff exists because it simply doesn't decay and wasn't recycled or reused
 - Almost always found low down and in obscure places. Kept afloat by local patronage and lack of care for their existence
- Social media - owned technically by the Amazon company but managed by different CEOs and boards
 - Chirp (Twitter)
 - React (Reddit)
 - VidTube (you know)
 - Facepad (Facebook)
 - Flasc (tumblr)
 - Tyndr (You Know.)
 - Calling Card
- Transportation - Owned largely by one company associated with fossil fuels, each a part of a different subsidiary
 - Largely public—trains and rails, mostly
 - Cars are rare usually
 - Some taxi service, self-driving
 - Some buses, self-driving
- Religion
 - Religion isn't necessarily racial all the time, but certain traditions have racial tendencies
 - Kohumae are generally followers of the Old Religion, or the "Shuao au Pachihuen," shortened to "Shua'au" which roughly translates to "path of the Mists" and "of the Mists," respectively. They practice precepts based on what constitutes a "good life," and healthy debate and evolution of the core concepts are more important to them than historical claims of perfect accuracy
 - Believes the world to have its own spirit and soul
 - The Church of the Eternal Sovereign is a church that worships the Sovereign and believes that, after the first War, he resurrected and carried on through the Great War promoting self-sufficiency, individuality, and righteousness
 - More popular offshoot states that the Sovereign was a prophet and herald for the true god, who has yet to show himself but often shows himself through signs of miracle and struggle to encourage self-sufficiency
 - Frequently portrays suffering as a noble cause

- Is more prone to discussing concepts of honor and justice, though justice was more popular in discussion about 40 years ago
- The Church of the Inheritor is a church that worships the God in Three, the Spirit, the Mother, the Warrior, who was said to have killed the Sovereign, a false god, and elevated the world to its true form. Promotes community, free love, asceticism, self-sufficiency, and mandatory self-defense training. Unpopular with the above SotES and framed as a kind of New Age Pagan Cult
- Beyond: people who believe in a greater universal Beyond. Rules light and worship-light with very few concrete tenants, this faith is considered faith for the faithless or, less rudely, faith for the spiritual. You are allowed to find your own path within it, and its tenants are very similar to those in Shua'au. It's hard to say historically if it came before or after that faith.

Magic: Power in the Stars, Power in the Soul

Astropathy

Races: Any

Mechanics: Fuel-based




Fuel Type: Food (if your character has eaten recently, they gain the Fed and Fueled trait and have about 5 minutes of fuel to use during the in-game day.), See chart.




When a character eats and metabolizes their specific metal fuel, they gain about five (5) minutes x their Control rating's worth of time using their power and suffer the Metalhead trait. Using metal as a fuel causes a severe migraine, subtracting -1 from all perception rolls for all except the Fire-eye astropaths, who receive -2 on top of their power bonuses due to their enhanced senses and, therefore, enhanced sense of illness.

When a character eats and metabolizes their food-based fuel, however, they gain about ten (10) minutes x their Control rating's worth of time using their power and gain the Fed and Fueled trait on top of it.

When using Astropathy, your character breathes out mist.

Categorized by element

<p>Fire: Burning vs smothering Fire-eye: Enhances senses involving interactions with the physical world - <i>Capionam (shiro-shibuichi)</i> (Burn)</p> <p>Furnace: Consumes reserves of stardust in both the user and a perceivable target; usually leaves you both feeling hungry-<i>Silver</i> (Smother)</p> <p>Embers: Dulls pain entirely, but does not prevent or heal wounds - <i>Sterling (esterlin)</i> (Smother)</p> <p>All fire powers can also be powered by peppers, mulberry, thyme, and stoneware.</p> <p>Effect of using the power: Body temperature rises when metabolizing</p> <p>Name for users: Fire-eaters</p> 	<p>Water: Drowning vs nourishing Rivertongues: 1) when using the power, your own emotional state becomes heightened 2) using the emotions present in yourself, you can drown out the same emotion in someone else or grow that emotion in someone else 3) when you drown out the emotion in someone else, you have to take on that emotion (therefore, it increases your sense of that emotion). In other words, you drain a person of that emotion and take it on for yourself. 4) when you grow that emotion in someone else, you lose that feeling in yourself or sacrifice it. Therefore, the other person technically drains you, or you give that to someone else so that they can feel it as well. 5) the emotional effects don't carry over after your fuel burns out, meaning you eventually do return to emotional baseline after your powers burn out 6) however, the power can still be emotionally draining, and frequently is - Copper (Drowning/Nourishing; an either-or thing)</p> <p>Medium (as in, Spirit Medium): Enhances sense involving the spiritual world - Bronze (Nourishing)</p> <p>Dampener: Dampening senses (single target or all within a radius) - Monel (nickel copper alloy) (Drowning)</p> <p>All water powers can also be powered by Corn, Willow, Mint, and Lusterware.</p> <p>Effect of using the power: Body temperature drops when metabolizing</p> <p>Name for users: Goldsmith</p> 	<p>Wood: Temporality (reflection; sense) Rootreader: Reveal the user's potential pasts - Electrum</p> <p>Ringreader: Reveal another person's past-Rose Gold (<i>Wardium</i>)</p> <p>Sporespreader: The power to project your thoughts and perceptions onto others - Gold</p> <p>All wood powers can also be powered by Cocoa, Oak, Saffron, Bone china.</p> <p>Effect of using power: Area dependent on individual becomes rough like bark</p> <p>Name for users: Boughs</p> 
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<p>Earth: Building vs breaking Rockbreaker: Enhances physical strength/durability, heals wounds - <i>Fionnum (white metal) (Building)</i></p> <p>Stoneheart: Provides complete resistance to manipulation via water powers - <i>Pewter (Building/Breaking; depends on your thought process)</i></p> <p>Slatestalker: Obscures all bonds in the area; used to counter Steel-sight; does not affect Bronze-sense. - <i>Tin (Breaking)</i></p> <p>All earth powers can also be powered by Potatoes, Beech, Rosemary, and Redware.</p> <p>Effect of using the power: Skin becomes like stone</p> <p>Name for users: Stoneskins</p> 	<p>Air: Force vs inertia Stormeye: Tension-based magic; in steel: increase your hold on bonds around you in a certain radius. In doing so, you can release your hold or tighten your hold on various things to send them flying or reel them in closer. This does not affect people or Artifacts generally, unless they (the people/artifact) want it to. It can still affect their clothes. - <i>Steel (Force/Inertia)</i></p> <p>Windshield: Once an object with a bond enters an invisible field surrounding the user (up to 50 feet in radius, generally smaller), objects lose all bonds, ceasing all momentum. This is in the event of a breach in the field. Otherwise, this just forms an invisible shield around the person. All projectiles, not just ones released via steel astropathy, can be deflected. For instance, you can run into an iron field and bounce off it like a dog running into a screen door. It doesn't affect people or Artifacts generally, unless they (the people/artifact) want it to. It can still affect their clothes. - <i>Iron (Inertia)</i></p> <p>Galesense: Enhancing other people's senses (Single target or all people within radius) - <i>Antitaenite (iron-nickel) (Force)</i></p> <p>All air powers can also be powered by Beans, Bamboo, Garlic and Celadon.</p> <p>Effect of using the power: Exhale a greater amount of mist; silver in color</p> <p>Name for users: Breezewalkers</p> 	<p>Metal: Temporality (action; force) Star-seer: Reveal the user's potential futures - <i>Titanium</i></p> <p>Attuner: Reveal another person's future - <i>Tiuan (Titanium-gold)</i></p> <p>Empath: The power to experience others' perceptions and thoughts - <i>Nitinol (Nickel-titanium)</i></p> <p>All metal powers can also be powered by Coffee, Maple, Star Anise, and Hard-paste porcelain</p> <p>Effect of using power: Area dependent on individual becomes smooth and cold like metal</p> <p>Name for users: Metalhearts</p> 
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Artificing

Races: Kohumae and Kohumae descendants

Mechanics: Touch based, internal power

What is an artifact? An Artifact is an object made out of a specific material that has been bonded with and whose identity has become intertwined with the Artificer's own. Artifacts are called Artifacts because they must be processed in some way before they can be used as Artifacts. Say someone's family has passed a silver ring down through the generations and it has become one of the biggest symbols of the family. That ring is an Artifact, and any Artificer in the family likely would be able to collect, or put their attributes, into the ring and draw upon that collected attribute later.

Another example is a cotton blanket that someone might have had all their life. The Artificer could collect their heat, speed, and breath inside this Artifact because the Artificer and Artifact have grown up together.

A clan that held a great Oak tree as sacred and tended to it all their lives for generations could similarly use the tree as an Artifact because the tree has been tended to for so long and is a part of that clan's history and sense of Self.

Collecting: An Artificer can put parts of themselves into an Artifact. This is called "collecting yourself," named after the slang used to describe someone meditating and processing their negative feelings. These attributes, divided up by material in the chart below, are called your "collection," and can be "drawn" upon later. The longer someone keeps their attributes stored in their Artifact, the stronger those attributes become.







Drawing: An Artificer can call up the attributes they stored before and use them now in a concentrated blast of power or as a means to increase their current capabilities in some small way.

For game purposes, attributes are measured by charges. Charges can

- 1.) Add +1 to your dice pool up to ten (10) x Control rating
- 2.) Enhance the declared attribute in-character during an interaction
- 3.) **At 5 or more charges drawn**, lower your Limit or your Threshold on a roll by 1
- 4.) **At 10 or more charges drawn**, lower both your Limit and your Threshold by 1

The size of the Artifact does not limit the number of charges your Artifact can hold. Charges are measured in minutes and minutes spent collecting. Artifacts have their own Resonance rating that dictates how important that item is to your character and, therefore, how closely bonded the Artificer is to the Artifact.

Categorized by wood

	Body		Mind		Soul	
Internal	<i>Iron (Source)</i>	Heat	<i>Monel (Artist)</i>	Creativity	<i>Electrum (Scoundrel)</i>	Luck
	<i>Steel (Sprinter)</i>	Physical Speed (reaction time, muscle memory, creation of muscle memory)	<i>Bronze (Teacher)</i>	Memory (can include muscle memory)	<i>Rose Gold (Wardaium) (Healer)</i>	Health (diseases, poisons, sickness, wounds)
	<i>Antitaenite (Iron/Nickel) (Whisper)</i>	Breath	<i>Copper (Thinker)</i>	Mental Speed (as in conclusions)	<i>Gold (Ageless)</i>	Age
	<i>Mulberry, Stoneware, Cotton</i>	 All Internal Body Powers	<i>Willow, Lusterware, Flax</i>	 All Internal Mind Powers	<i>Oak, Bone china, Wool</i>	 All Internal Soul Powers
External	<i>Fionnum (white metal) (Bull)</i>	Fortitude (durability, muscle mass, endurance; may increase speed, but will not increase it as much as speed will)	<i>Silver (Scout)</i>	Senses	<i>Nitinol (Ascetic)</i>	Self
	<i>Pewter (Cornerstone)</i>	Weight	<i>Capionam (shiro-shibuchi) (Dynamo)</i>	Will	<i>Titanium (Aspect)</i>	Bonds
	<i>Tin (Amp)</i>	Sound (collect to silence, expend to amplify)	<i>Sterling (esterlin) (Sentinel)</i>	Mental Energy (as in wakefulness, perception, awareness)	<i>Tiaun (Titanium Gold) (Bigshot)</i>	Presence
	<i>Beech, Redware, Hemp</i>	 All External Body Powers	<i>Bamboo, Celadon, Silk</i>	 All External Mind Powers	<i>Maple, Hard-paste porcelain, Catgut/Leather</i>	 All External Soul Powers

Running the Game

Campaign Goals – Short Campaign

The object of the short campaign is to get the players to work together as a team and bargain with their encounters to get the objects they need before they hand their items off to their contact.

Danny gives the players a note explaining the following things:

Hey friends,

Sorry to be meeting up with you all again under these kinds of circumstances. You know how it is in this bitch of a world, sometimes you just get got. Probably, I was murdered. Sucks. I wouldn't spend much time worrying about who did me in. I'd be much more concerned about what. But then, maybe that's what killed me.

You guys probably don't know each other yet, but I'm hoping you will soon. I have something to request of you all. Think of it as me pulling one last favor.

I have a friend here in Ash (I presume if I'm dead, you're meeting me there) named Mr. Tidings. Likely, he gave you this letter. Meet up with him a little after the funerary pleasantries – he has all the details about what I'm going to ask you to do. Here's a snippet, though, just for disclosure:

I was working on a big project, very hush-hush, and I want you all to complete it. It was top-secret and something you wouldn't have known about unless you were way up top, but it'll help everyone if you complete it. I swear on my grave.

I'll need you to get me a flash drive, old type, and hand it off to my contact in Sterling. Tidings'll have your details, as I said.

You might've noticed the lighter. Do yourselves a favor and light up every message I leave you. Don't want you guys in the same trouble I apparently ended up in.

Hopefully I DON'T see you on the other side!

Danny

At Danny's funeral, his mother doesn't show up. The funeral is a 4:00 pm. By 4:44 pm, Haku (see below) gives the players the note above. The players move to Mr. Tidings' office after they react to the note and investigate.

Tidings will tell them that it's his job to take care of them during their mission to help Danny. He will give them a note reporting on the following according to the role each character plays.

Your Techie player should have the connections to obtain the flash drive from the Old Tech Network, SteelStrings. The NPC that can address this need is Squids (see below). You will be heading to the Newtown and Hooks sectors for this.

Your Doctor player should know Danny to some extent and has the clout needed to get the flash drive to Danny's contact, Harriet Turne (see below) in Carnelian and Sterling, and has connections to the wider doctor or street doctor communities.

Your muscle characters are connected to Danny largely as hired guns or as friends that sometimes did favors for him. They serve as your best defense against potential nasty situations – and situations will get nasty.

The players have time to prepare, as this is where your first session can end.

The next session, your players will head to Newtown to get the flash drive. Mr. Tidings will supply them with a train pass to get them all there. The train is crawling with corpsec, but as none of you have done anything wrong in the session yet, this isn't a problem. This serves to show that the corpsec is everywhere and you should be careful on what can be considered the private public property.

They will meet with Squids, an old tech collector and seller that specializes in recording devices and old pipes. Squids will want you to get them more PVC pipes and a heat gun instead of paying them for the goods, so you'll have to explore the nearby areas to find another dealer in the market.

Have the players roll to find these people and places. Most dealers will want to have credits over goods, but you can play around with this if you want. Your flash drive will cost a random amount between 500 and 1000 credits, which

you should all be able to pay through the heat gun and the various valid pipes. Your players can also haggle for the price of those other objects using intimidation or other means. Using violence will close off future interactions with this Network if the players intend to play the larger game.

Returning to Squids, you exchange their pipes and heat gun for the flash drive. However, in leaving, you hear glass shattering and a struggle. Someone has opted to attack Squids and rob their shop, it seems! You can opt to run or aid Squids.

Either way, running doesn't help. Three goons will corner you and demand the flash drive you purchased. You will have to beat the goons to get away. Keep your faces covered and try not to kill or be killed to maximize the benefits of this fight. Killing people will make Mr. Tidings scold the group but still be relieved they're alright. Killing will also put your group on a watch list in Newtown, making it harder to navigate the streets.

Next, you have to deliver the flash drive to Harriet Turne in Sterling. Mr. Tidings will give you your location coordinates and send you there. Haku takes them there in the hearse as free, private transportation. There are many jobs to be done for the Ash district in Sterling, so this is good cover. She parks a ways away from the location and your group can head out to find Harriet.

As you move, you hear a gunshot coming from your coordinates. Moving too slowly will cause the party to lose Harriet, though her ID is still usable and she has messages on her open phone showing that she was going to meet her own contact in another district.

If the party gets there fast enough (what fast enough means is up to you), Harriet can be found wounded and in need of medical attention. Her assailant, someone who didn't take anything from her and instead simply tried to kill her, has taken off into the alley. Pursuing her assailant is a possibility, but the players will be unable to find the assailant and are much more likely to get shot themselves at this point in the game.

Staying with Harriet, however, will enable you to patch her up. She will pay you a small fee to get her where she needs to be in Carnelian to deliver the flash drive.

Haku has, somehow, found a body in the time you've been gone. You load up and head back to Ash.

From Ash, Mr. Tidings provides train fare to the next location, where you are stopped by CorpSec.

If you have Harriet, you can bypass CorpSec entirely because she has clearance and says you work with her. If you have an official or street doctor on your team, you can do similar. Without either of those, however, CorpSec may still stop you and fight you. If you have Harriet's ID, you can intimidate or negotiate your way through the situation and avoid fighting CorpSec as well – tread lightly with this option.

Once you get the flash drive to the location, you can turn it in and receive your payment as promised. This is where the game ends in the short campaign. Proceeding further means going into the Big Campaign.

Campaign Goals – Big Campaign

The idea is that the campaign is ultimately not meant to give moral judgements to one end or the other, and not even to really set “ends”. There should be multiple ways to play a story. There are two main points of plot interest and intrigue – the drama involved with deciding whether or not the party will commit to Danny’s idea and cause a major political assassination, and the actual importance of the engagement with **Networks**.

The campaign’s engagement point is **Networks**. It’s through Networks that the players are meant to engage with the idea of Mutual Aid through community-created operations. As Danny sends the players to new areas in search for the things he wants, the players also run into these networks of people that offer aid to others through their organizations. Danny’s main failing is that he was not connected often with other networks though he himself technically provides the players with the framework to start one.

Because the campaign leading up to the discovery of Danny’s plot is all about you learning about the world, bottom to top, and how it functions while you carry out the last of Danny’s needs for his little project, an important idea is to almost get the players to forget Danny as they become more involved with the world outside themselves.

Upon leaving, a part of the building goes up in flames and explodes. Alarms go off, corpsec comes to investigate, and a struggle ensues. The players should address this.

The place is crawling with corpsec looking for people to grab. You can opt to help as many people as possible or escape with Harriet and head back to Ash. Either way, you’ll need to roleplay getting in and out of the building; utilize luck, might, and skill rolls.

Returning to Ash, you find it busier than usual. Mr. Tidings tells you to stay inside the office with Haku while he goes out to deal with the coming trouble.

It becomes clear that Danny’s Project isn’t over, and in fact has been put back a while thanks to this development. A mysterious donor who worked with Danny is willing to pay you more to continue your service.

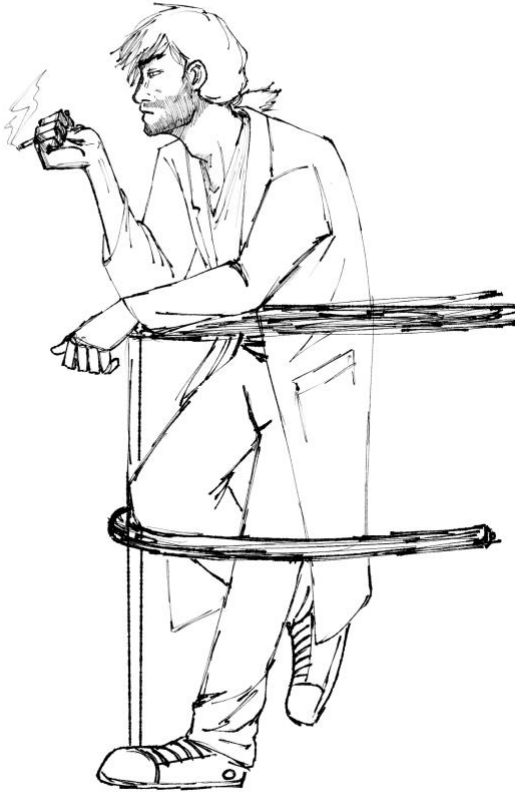
What remains of the story then breaks off into either player’s choice of questline or GM’s choice of questline. Ultimately, however, Danny’s Game is something very different from what the players may have been expecting.

Danny’s Project is actually a large-scale attempt to disrupt the city’s structure by taking out the entire CEO class in one shot using his project, Project Radiohead. Danny promised the city’s leadership that he could make them immortal and all-controlling through use of transhumanist technology in a society that uses technology for everything. However, Danny does not believe that transhumanism is actually possible yet. Instead, the satellite’s servers for the project are defunct, polished-up pieces of junk, and the rooms set to “import consciousness from the brain” are nothing more than chambers meant to euthanize those that enter.

The troubles that follow you as you go through various areas in the city don’t come just from the city’s leadership but also from people who are trying to stop Danny from committing to his plot.

Characters

Dr. Daniel Bird



Danny was a neuroscientist, robotics engineer, and programmer that was put in charge of a transhumanist project along with a team of astrophysicists and other associated individuals. He had a rough background – his story was nothing short of a hallmark picture miracle – and in spite of it, he went from suffering in the lowest parts of society to living the high life and associating with the people living in the highest echelons of society.

The big secret is that his "transhumanist project," a project meant to transfer consciousness from the body to remote servers on a satellite orbiting the planet, isn't actually a transhumanist project at all. It's a way to mass kill all the most privileged people (the only people that would have access to this process) in one go.

It's something Danny would come to call his "bloodless revolution." His public persona was a well-meaning but a little reckless and wild sort of guy. His story is one of someone who started at the bottom but made his way to the top through hard work and determination. A real bootstraps story, even if he'd never say that himself. He knew people, therefore, at the very bottom and at the very top—supposedly. He spearheaded big projects for the people on floor 500 and was supposedly at the forefront of technology.

He's charismatic and charming and his general persona was that of someone pretty laid back and open to new ideas. He spoke about wanting to get more people and more kinds of people into the sciences. He was also known to like "old classic punk music," and wasn't

particularly trendy by nature, but this was part of his charm. Even though he "left his life of squalor," he always ended up looking a little grungy.

He's 5'10," dirty blond to the point that his hair is more brown than blond, hazel eyed, rarely clean-shaven. He has a nose that's been broken several times and it shows. He's the type to have one hand in his pocket and the other one smoking a cigarette. Never did like vaping.

He had a private life, various lovers, lots of friends, all of whom knew different things about him at different times. He was never particularly interested or understanding of the magic on the planet, though. He knew about them and knew how they worked but he didn't associate much with the magic industry. Never commented much on it, though he used magic products fairly frequently.

Mr. Tidings

Turig Tidings, the Undertaker

Name: Turig Allen Tidings

Height: 6'2"

Age: 63

Pronouns: He/him

Race: Ardorvelian

Ethnicity: Warvish, Ardorvelian

Stats

Stats						Total	Current
PHYSICAL	Skill	6	Might	2	Means	4	HEALTH 12
SOCIAL	Charm	3	Presence	2	Connections	5	REPUTE 10
MENTAL	Education	6	Intuition	5	Willpower	5	PSYCHE 16
OTHER	Luck	3					



Concept: Your friendly neighborhood undertaker...if by friendly you mean grumpy

Motive: To work his job as little as possible

Trade: Undertaking

Tragedy: I have witnessed the deaths of revolutions and revolutionaries and I have watched each one of them burn to ash in my own work space. I have lost so many friends only to watch this place get worse.

Wound: I will not see this city change before I die. I can never love again.

Aspiration: To help the player characters survive their journey in changing the city.

Divergences: Depression

Traits and Stunts:

You wouldn't hit an old man, would you? Despite my height, I look very...diminished.
I am far-sighted and have trouble reading.
I like to act grumpy both to hide my sensitive interior and to mess with people.
I enjoy earnest people's company most.
I have extensive knowledge of people, their bodies, and their brains, and I use this both to scare people and to intrigue them.
Stunt: Presence of Authority. When commanding authority from people in a room, I can roll my Education or Skill stat if I'm in my home territory in Ash or doing something that's in my field of expertise.

Effects: 7 EV

Item	EV	Description
Hearse	3	Used to transport bodies - alive and dead
Reusable Train Pass	1	Used to transport regular bodies--ahem, people.
Body Prep Kit	2	For business. You know what kind, I trust.
Undertaker's Suit	1	A combination true suit and jumpsuit. The job is messy, but we're required to look nice.

Powers:

Name	Power	Control	Resonance

Injuries:

Injury	Severity

Backstory: My friends have always been revolutionaries and people interested in the greater good. I went into Undertaking because it's one of the jobs that will never be taken out of the city and will always be needed, so it was stable income to fund their ventures. One by one, I watched my friends pass away, hunted by gangs and corpsec. I became jaded and bitter with how many of them I had to put away.

Danny came to me just as bitter and angry as I was one day, years ago, while he paid respects to the ashes of the fallen. I told him that it wasn't worth it to grouse about change here. He said he was determined to use his position to change the world. We kept contact for years afterwards.

One year, he brought me my current apprentice, an Artificer girl named after a hero from her people's legends that hears voices and songs in everything. He just left her with me. In my own way, I see her as my redemption. I want to help her, but I don't know how best to do so. Danny advised that I keep her out of trouble and teach her my trade.

Of course, he came to me in a box one day. Gunshot wound to the back of the head, an easy assassination, definitely not a suicide. My apprentice helped me fix him up for the funeral. Now, I help his motley crew of friends fulfill his final wish. I don't know what it is, but I have faith that Danny died for something fundamentally good. I want desperately to believe that I'm right about that.

Weapon of choice: A scalpel.

Armor/Disguise: The Undertaker's Suit

A grumpy old mortician with a dark, stiff sense of humor and meticulously neat aesthetic. His office becomes the group base during Danny's mission. However, his gruff personality and sterile exterior hide a man that has seen many a brave individual fall to ash in his hands. Determined to put away the city's flaws before he has to put away another friend, Mr. Tidings keeps the party safe from harm behind the scenes as best as he can, and would die before he allowed any one of them to do so.

“Haku” (Sori of the Kohumae)



Name: Haku, Sori

Height: 5’0”

Age: 21

Pronouns: she/her, they/them

Race: Kohumae ← This is a racial distinction in-world as well as an ethnicity

Ethnicity: Kohumae (3rd Gen)

Weight: 96 lb

Stats

Stats								Total	Current
PHYSICAL	Skill	7	Might	4	Means	1	HEALTH	12	
SOCIAL	Charm	4	Presence	2	Connections	2	REPUTE	8	
MENTAL	Education	3	Intuition	6	Willpower	6	PSYCHE	15	
OTHER	Luck	4							

Concept: An anxious, depressed escaped plant artificer that now does under the table work for the Undertaker

Motive: To protect friends and family and to survive on my own terms while also making meaningful change

Trade: The Undertaker’s Apprentice, Rogue

Tragedy: I have been used as a slave and commodity because of my powers for most of my life. Though I was able to escape from the Art Sector, my mother was unable to. I know that she must still be alive.

Wound: I believe that I am nothing if I am not useful, even though I don’t believe that about others. I do not love myself, and see myself as a burden, bordering on subhuman, and I am lonely despite how badly I want to love.

Aspiration: To learn to love myself and love others with grace and empathy, as well as embrace the power I have been blessed with so I can change the world meaningfully. I will be accountable to the people that I serve, and I will find fulfillment not in my usefulness but in the way that I am able to enact hope, change, and love in my life.

Divergences: ADHD, Autism, Depression, Anxiety

Traits and Stunts: 3 traits, 1 stunt ← Cost for stunt: 4 stat points

I know how to escape from most tight situations and am highly agile.
Pain motivates me to press onward and helps me focus on one thing at a time.
I am easily mistaken for a teenager.
Stunt: Death’s Inheritor. When rolling to scavenge for materials and items in a run-down place, the trash, or on a corpse, or when rolling to mercy kill someone, I roll Skill, not means or might, and gain +1 to my pool.

Effects: 4 EV total

Item	EV	Description
Steel/Rose Gold Necklace	2	A family heirloom passed down from person to person, created to be an artifact that holds not only the stored attributes of the wearer, but the bonds and memories of previous wearers. Its crescent-shaped charm holds greater spiritual weight despite how light it actually is.
A small bunch of nails and screws	1	Makeshift artifacts, specific to Haku and very important to her. Steel.
Low-tech watch	1	For telling time – a gift from Mr. Tidings.

Powers:

Name	Power	Control	Resonance
Listener	N/A	N/A	5
Sprinter	3	5	5
Scout	1	1	5
Steelstepping	1	1	5

Injuries:

Injury	Severity

Backstory: I am connected to Daniel Bird by the fact he found me before I could commit suicide in the Ash Sector. He brought me deeper into the Ash Sector and we had a long talk. I refused to go with him back to his place of residence. Instead, Mr. Tidings found me looking at the ashes and offered me a job there despite my heritage. I have been working here ever since.

I was born somewhere in Newtown, but my parents were forced to relocate to Art when they were discovered to be Kohumae. They were put in the plant system, as was I, and my mothers were separated. My mother, Uakea, who had the same Artificing powers as I had, fought hard to get out of the plant system and find a different job to little avail. We resorted eventually to violence and subtlety to meet our ends.

When I was younger, I struggled with severe self-worth issues and social awkwardness. It drove me to take it out on myself in physical ways, which my mother tried to stop. I got better after I told her what was wrong. But come my teenage years, I was more moody and distant, and tried to find fulfillment in things outside of our given cause. I wanted to be with people instead of isolated from them. My desperation for connection outside of my mother drove me into the arms of a bad man – a man by the name of Roark Price.

Our relationship wasn't always actively physically harmful to me, but it was inherently unequal and unhealthy – abusive by all accounts – because of our age difference and differences in maturity. It turned sour and violent rather quickly. After I caught him cheating, I left and didn't look back.

Skip forward several years, and you find my mother and I at our final confrontation with Paragon police. We had almost made it out of Art and into Hooks, but Paragon caught us at the border. They shot my mother and aimed at me, and my mother told me to run, leaving me with only the clothes on my back, her last words of love, and the heirloom necklace that's been passed down through our family for generations. In the past, we could sense when people we loved passed away – feel the bonds snapping when it happened. But now, because of the way the city is built, we can't know unless we're in the same room together. I knew what I saw, but I couldn't be sure she was gone.

I found means to leave the Art sector and made my way through the border between Newtown and Art, but I was chased back to Art anyway. I ended up in Ash eventually. It seemed hopeless, and I didn't know if my mother was still alive. I planned to end it all, but Daniel Bird stopped me. I wasn't grateful at the time, and he didn't ask me to be. Regardless, I remember him well, and I wondered what became of him after our meeting, as I didn't know who he was at the time, or how important he would be. Mr. Tidings found me scrounging around the archives later, looking for my mother, who I never found in his care. He told me that the records had not found anyone by her name recently in the archives, and so she must not be interred yet. That gave me hope. He offered me a job while I made plans to go back to Art and search later. He said that this work was better than the alternative – work back in Art at an Artificing plant.

My task was to give the current party directions to Mr. Tidings and to allow them into his base of operations. I am aware that Mr. Tidings is a man that has seen many protestors, union workers, and revolutionaries pass. Seeing Daniel interred did not rub him well. Nevertheless, while he is reluctant to send the party out on these new journeys, I don't think he expects them to become revolutionaries. I, on the other hand, can only hope for them to grow in this regard. I can't liberate my people if I can't have someone's help first, and they're the best hope I've got.

When playing my character, I am largely avoidant of conflict unless it directly affects people I care about – most likely, the party. I follow directions I'm given in literal and direct fashion unless it's obvious that I should be allowed to improvise *when I'm given detailed instructions*. When it comes to instinct and vague instructions, I can improvise highly clever if rather elaborate schemes and plans and I can execute them on my own. If the players plan to make a trip into Art, I'm bound to follow, or attempt to do so, once I'm close enough to the

party. I am capable of taking down people much larger than I am, but I would rather not. I am unintimidated by size and appearance, though guns scare me.

Weapon of choice: Bare hands, improvised weapons

Armor/Disguise: The combination suit and janitor's outfit common for Ash sector undertakers, pale blue hoodie

Haku is a quiet girl that works with Mr. Tidings, the mortician. While she appears to be vulnerable and more into herself and the ashes around her than anything else, she hides a certain power.

Haku's name is actually Sori of the Kohumae. She is the only one in her family that was able to escape the Art sector and establish herself outside of it. Her story entails that the players enter the Art district, rescue her parents, and build the foundations for their own network whose purpose is to aid escaping plant artificers. Sori's first mother, Uakea, is still trapped in the Art district. However, her second mother, Wynona, is working in the Carnelian district, trying to clean up after Danny tried to assassinate her for getting too close to his project. Finding her grants the players insight into Danny's true plan.

Sori's storyline is a distinct deviation from the rest of the story, and should only be taken if in fact the players are

- 1.) Attached to the character
- 2.) Ready to engage with the world outside of Danny's Game

Her storyline is essentially "late game content," but she is meant to be introduced from the start and is supposed to take care of the players alongside Mr. Tidings.

Completing Haku's story engages the players in a sector-wide worker's revolution involving the most magic in the game so far (per the nature of the Artificers). One option is pushing for unionization, but police violence would be a frequent problem. The other is outright revolution, which would entail a huge climactic conflict between the owners of the Art sector and the Artificers themselves.

(Begins the "Artificers" Network)

These are samples of networks and plots you can pursue, and because you can come up with your own content, I encourage you to take the materials listed here and add your own ideas to create your own story. As with all the Aspect system, you, the GM and the players, can chuck all this out and do what you want. This serves merely as a "for instance" example.