

# RollPlay



**GM NOTEBOOK**  
**ISSUE THIRTY-FOUR**

**Text:** Adam Koebel

**Art Direction/Layout:** Daniel at LiveSpace

# 1

## **Hello Patrons!**

A big spring changeup for Far Verona - we've got a cast, a new premise and a ton of details about what the show is going to look like, as well as big changes to the setting (we're getting a new Imperial House, and by the time you read this we'll know who they are!) For Court of Swords, there's a big conceptual dungeon coming up, a delve into the weird ways between worlds that the Court of Void folks call the veins. I hope you enjoy this look at those two major topics, I've certainly enjoyed putting some thought into what they might look like. See you next month!

Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 34 of the GM's Notebook.

*Adam Koebel*  
*RollPlay GM*



# 2

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Court of Swords: Veins, and the Opportunity<br/>Vein in Particular .....</b> | <b>.6</b> |
| <b>Court of Swords: Opportunity Map .....</b>                                   | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Far Verona: Season Two Premise and Situation .....</b>                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Far Verona: Season Two // Genesys System Hack .....</b>                      | <b>22</b> |



# 3

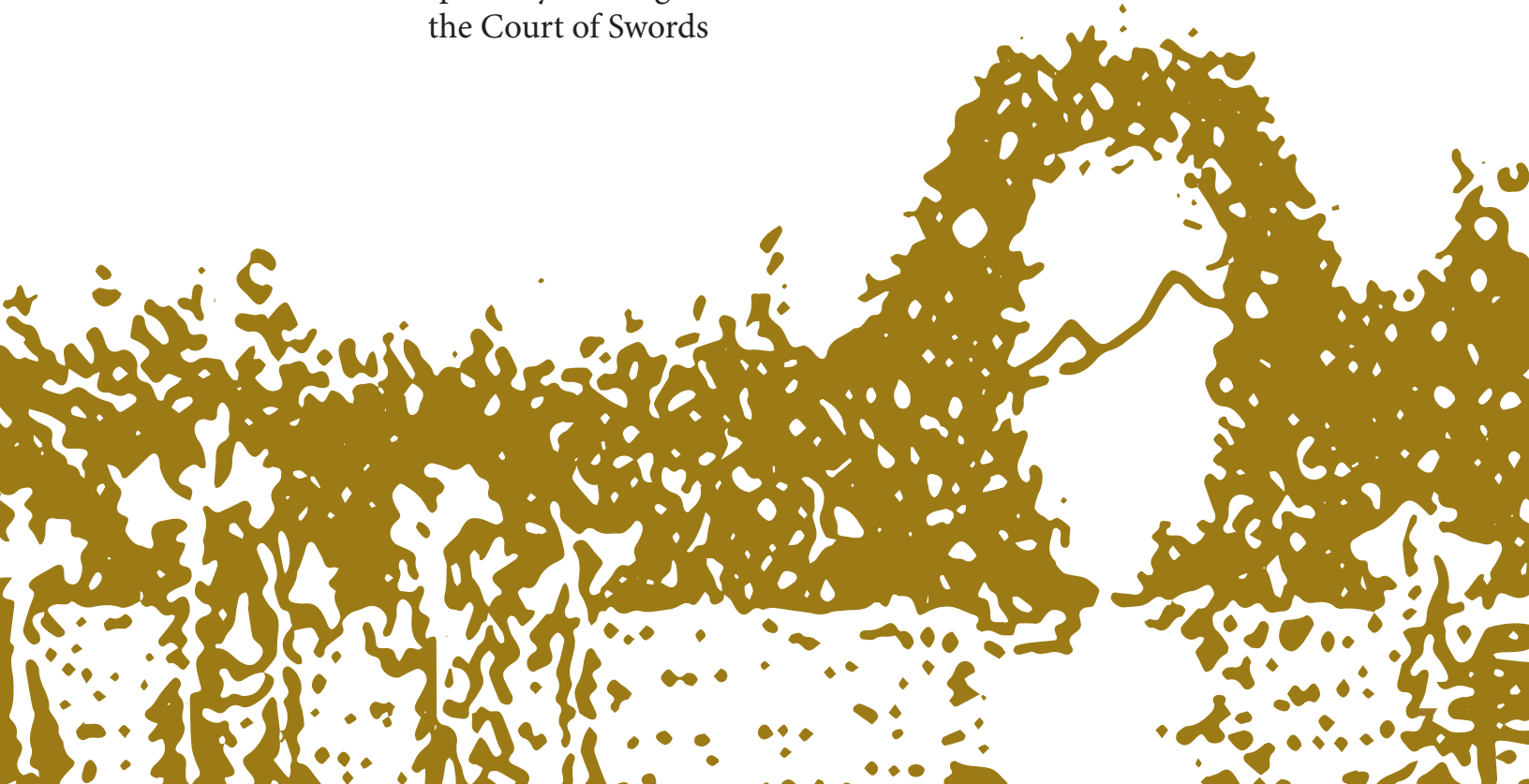
**Court of Swords:**

# **Veins, and the Opportunity Vein In Particular**



# What is a Vein?

- a tunnel between The World and the Court of the Void
  - of varying intensity, size and quality
- a lapse in the security between the Court of the Void and the World
  - caused by either unintentional phenomena (psychic trauma, evil actions, etc.)
  - cause by intentional meddling (the actions of the Mara, their servants, bad faith prayer on the part of humanity)
- a source of what the denizens of the Court of the Void call “juice” as well as artifacts and miscellanea from The World that happen to fall through the cracks
- In The Court of the Void: mystical interference, strange lights sounds and colors, sometimes a physical place or thing (a single room, a network of halls, an entire city), temporary and unpredictable
- In The World: haunted places, cursed locales, places where the dead refuse to stay that way, defiled temples, unholy space (dungeons, etc.)
  - possibly, the largest and most diffuse Vein that exists in the World is the Court of Swords



# The Opportunity Vein

- a top-down vein (big in The World, limited manifestation in the Court of the Void)
- well understood, stable, more or less “permanent”
- not under clear or obvious control (the trinity of mara in Opportunity are fighting over / sharing it)
- highly secured by a conglomerate of forces under tension

## The Opportunity Vein

- secured by hostile forces
- deep in “enemy” territory

# The Aorta Claim

- a bottom-up vein (large manifestation in the Court of the Void, limited access point in The World)
- hasn't opened yet, still in the process of being divined
- somewhere in the vicinity, stability and core nature are as-yet undefined

## Challenges:

- competition from Vein Hunters
- unknowns, potentially far away?
- unstable or more dangerous to access
- limited throughput?



# The Vein In Question

- what is it like physically? what am I describing to my players? what are they seeing, hearing and feeling?
- what is it like spiritually / magically? what rules does it break? in what ways is it unreal (and therefore horrific to the players)
- what are its dimensions - is it large, small, focused, ambient?
- how does the fountain's energy manifest through it and how might that be harvested?

## Aspect of the Vein

This Vein is aspected by Heaven and The World by way of a facet of Heaven, its design and protocols are themed to a twisted reflection of that facet and its character defined thereby.

### Core Aspect: The Tower

*Change, Cataclysm, Danger and Epiphany*

### Supporting Aspects:

PAST: the V of Coins - *Poverty, Hardship, Rejection and Sickness*

PRESENT: the IX of Wands - *Wary, Guarded, Mistreated and Persevering*

FUTURE: the VII of Cups - *Fantasies, Daydreams, Illusions and Procrastination*

## Interpretation

This is a place where whatever goes in comes out changed. It is a place of deep loss, powerful alteration, a crucible of suffering that leads to revelation. It is a furnace of thought and feeling in which we burn and are remade.

As we enter this place, we are burdened by our hardships - physically and metaphysically. Our weakness is amplified, our lack is made clear and obvious. Whatever we do not have, it is made patently real in this place.

We find here hardship and brutality, it is an unforgiving place guarded and defended, whose secrets are hidden by layers of fortification. Its treasure is buried in a vault of powerful fortitude.

If we are fated to leave, whatever we find here will be like dust in the wind. All treasure is false, all the gold and majesty we find bleeds away like a bad dream in the light of morning. Only the ephemeral may be withdrawn from this Vein.

## Personalization

This place will reflect the trauma, terror and the haunting caused by the fall of City of Brass - it will incorporate elements of that world-wound and, in fact, may well have been opened by the “unintentional phenomena” of the destruction of that glorious city.

**Wide at the Top:** the general world wounding of the loss of the city-as-concept

**Narrow at the Top:** represents a specific wound or psychic trauma related to that thing - the pain and torment of the God of the City, or the singular negative impact on a specific, smaller group or individual. Maybe the God of Cities came to The World to mourn, was lost to sadness and committed suicide, opening this knife-thin Vein.

## Manifestation of Value:

- sopophics, euphorics, various narcotic aspects of the juice (a traumatizing sort of dream-juice that grants visions and nightmares with deep, painful revelation)
- fountain energy useful particularly for illusion, deception, falsehood, disguise and other dream-purpose that may contain a seed of true vision at a cost to one's health
- objects of the world that are connected to: loss and violence on a catastrophic scale (if there was a vein that contained a Fountain-powered spiritual energy nuke that works by killing you with a dream sickness, this would be the one) without being entirely focused on the physical
- riches of sentimental value, especially of plague victims or those who were mistreated by the ones they love
- tools of divination and future-telling
- objects of defense - armor, shields, rings amulets and the like of protection
- items that grant temporary HP but nothing that heals
- things that are spiritually harmful to the mind, or that sicken the body

## Motivation to Enter:

- it is a tunnel to The World, and through it they may be able to return
- seeking knowledge, the various insights of this oracular nightmare may be of value to them, they have questions and the Vein may provide answers
- pillage the riches of the place, seeking its treasure in the form of lost artifacts or in the juice itself (the Veins, like distilleries, takes the ambient energy of the Fountain and makes it something it was not before)

## Phenomena of the Vein

- All Perception & Investigation checks are made with Advantage, and everyone has a +5 to Passive Perception (Wariness)
- Spells or Abilities that grant extra actions, or bonuses to Initiative do not function
- Rolls to resist disease and poison are made at Disadvantage
- Illusion spells are resisted at Disadvantage
- In combat, taking a Ready Action grants Advantage on whatever action is held
- Any Deception check is made at Advantage

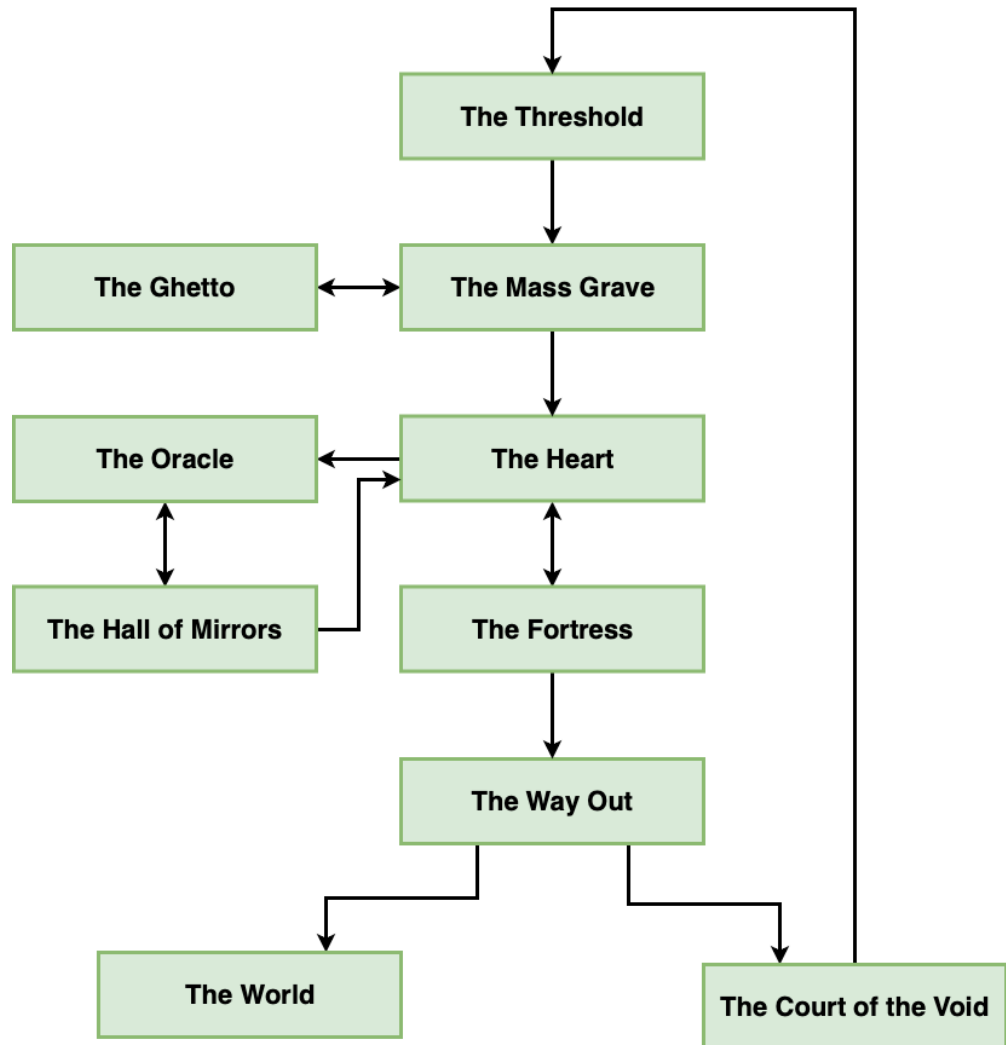
## Nodes within the Vein

- the threshold (the entrance from the Court of the Void into the Vein)
- the least flavored section of the Vein, wherein its nature is still unclear. The entrance to the mine doesn't reveal the riches or dangers within.
- Protected by the ambient danger of the Fountain's energy - it may be easy for someone not of the Court of the Void to bypass, but may represent a danger for those native to this place
- central chamber (the manifestation of the aspect write largest and strongest)
- probably a shadowy reflection of the Temple Plaza in The City of Brass, though twisted and mangled by the Vein's sick remembrance
- ancillary chambers (reflecting myriad sub-aspects of the Vein)
- the fortress (reflecting the defensive nature, the wary guardianship of the place)
- a literal fortress guarded by spirits and manifestations of defensiveness - a gate-house for the exit from this place
- a locale of sickness (a plague house, a mass grave, an abandoned morgue choked with the dead-from-illness)
- a horrific place of death and decay, necrotic energy and the undead
- a ghetto of impoverishment (reflecting poverty and hardship)
- essentially a "neighborhood" populated by impoverished pseudo-aware fountain reflections of people
- an oracular chamber (physically straining granting fever visions)
- a semi-natural grotto in which visions may be granted, tended by a manifestation ghost-thing that acts as a tollbooth keeper for the truths beyond
- a hall of mirrors (showing epiphany but also illusion, demanding the visions understand which is which)
- a maze of self-reflection and falsehood, illusory images but also feelings and manifestations
- throughout, visions and "ghosts" of guilt, loss and rejection-from-the-world of the people and concepts of the City of Brass
- the way out (the exit from the Vein into The World)
- a very literal pair of doorways back out of the Vein, guarded by the Fortress, demanding a price but granting the essence of the Vein to those who pass beyond it

# Stakes Questions

- how could it be possible for a denizen of the Court of the Void to traverse a Vein entirely and bodily and what would it be like for them in The World?
- what is the barrier between the worlds? who created it? what is its purpose?
  - why can the Mara only project through it but not traverse it directly
  - why can the Mara not simply use their power to sunder it entirely
- is that something they want?
- how do we close veins? we know that piety and prayer counter the mara, but are there specific (and more importantly functional) rituals? cleansing, exorcism, etc.
- what is required to return to The World? What specific price or cost does the Vein demand?

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# FAR VERONA

SEASON TWO //  
PREMISE AND  
SITUATION

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## WHAT SEASON TWO IS NOT:

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- × Swan Song (space hobos with a ship, wandering around doing shit)
- × Season One (imperial hierarchy, dealing with orders from on high, hunting bad guys)
- × Star Wars, Warhammer 40k, Star Trek

## WHAT IS SEASON TWO:

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- × a continuation of the narratives and some of the themes from Season One
- × connected to and influenced by the Far Verona Faction Turn
- × still kind of Dune, still a little bit Blade Runner (thematically, if not materially)
- × more Collapsing Empire than it was before (thanks to a sector-wide navigational crisis)

## PREMISE:

### PREMISE:

A group of artificial persons and their allies band together to survive and change a world that hates them. Their ultimate goal, to find safety for themselves and maybe their kind, and to live the lives all sentients deserve.

- × is it about “us” or “all of us”?
  - × inspirations - blade runner, westworld, the geth storyline from ME
  - × continuation of the Verona Mystery from Season One (continuity there)
  - × an inverse perspective from the Prudence crew
  - × do we want to survive or do we want to Magneto this shit?
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## SITUATION:

The universe hates you. Some people see you as a threat to their existence, some a threat to their very soul. Others see you as dangerous tools that have malfunctioned. Some small few see your humanity. Will you redeem yourself in their eyes or get revenge for being wronged. Whatever you do, your life is in constant danger.

### PREMISE:

The characters are a class of young nobles at a Serpens academy for Psychics, trying to get through their graduating year.

- × a little x-men
  - × a little harry potter
  - × maybe a little CW?
  - × teenage drama, romance, etc.
  - × very different from the rest of the premises
  - × still tied to factions (the PCs are all from noble houses)
  - × lets us see an aspect of the universe we haven't seen
  - × less overtly thematic for the universe, but we might get to see nobles who aren't all total fuckface jerkoffs.
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## SITUATION:

There's only so much room at the top, you're here because you're special and because you're talented, but when it all shakes out, not every Psychic is created equal. Plus, you're teenagers, so hormones and emotions and whatever. Some kind of end of the year event, competition, etc. is coming up and you wanna be the best.

### **SPACE PIRATE CAPTAIN ACHERON**

The players are the crew of a Vagrant ship, preying on merchants, nobles and other fat calves for the slaughter. In this premise, the crew discovers something secret or powerful that they should not and get caught up in a power struggle much larger than they are.

- × a little bit guardians of the galaxy
  - × could go dark or light depending on the players preference
  - × it's pretty close to Nebula Jazz and Swan Song
  - × we get to explore non-imperial characters but those who are tied to a larger family of characters - the Vagrant Fleets, House Fornax and the adoption of the Upright Vagrant
  - × advantage of everyone else being a potential ally or enemy, lots of factions to interact with, no assumed enemies or allies (grey area all around)
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# SITUATION:

Everyone in the crew has a reason they can't go legit, but that's the way the tide is going. The Captain bequeaths the First Mate (a PC) with a secret treasure map before they die, and the ship needs to decide if they can pull off one last job and slip away from the Empire forever.

## **DOWN AND OUT ON HONG LU**

A work crew on the planet Hong Lu decide they are fed up with this bullshit existence - the planet is a work camp, their lives hold little to no meaning, and between the Triads, the Loyalty Brigade and the last remaining nobility on the planet, there's no room for the little guy to succeed. Time to shake things up.

- × small fish growing up
  - × a world of danger
  - × lots of enemies, potential allies
  - × a bit of intrigue and lots of danger
  - × kind of cyberpunk (high tech lowlife)
  - × connected decently to some stuff in the FacTurn both past and future
  - × leaves the question open: what do we do after we escape?
  - × a bit heist, a bit prison break
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# SITUATION:

We can't live on this planet forever. The rich get richer and we're not gonna die poor. We need to get off this planet before it eats us alive. In the way are the foreman, the bosses, the nobles and the triads and we've got to evade or befriend all of them to survive.

## **PRISM NEWS SHIP 12:**

The players are a crew on a smalltime PRISM news ship, they're cinematographers, on-camera personalities, reporters and tech support for a run-and-gun news operation that records and sells their work to PRISM to be broadcast to the universe. They learn something above their pay grade and now everyone wants to kill them to keep the secret, or whatever.

- × Inspiration: Nightcrawler, Transmet
  - × they work for PRISM but don't owe PRISM any specific loyalty - they're freelancers who create content that they then sell
  - × they get to play at being neutral which means loyalty to themselves above everyone else
  - × fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants
  - × connected to the ongoing FacTurn but at a remove - reporting on its events
  - × a little bit reactive, a news crew doesn't do anything, they observe things that are being done by other people
  - × provide the team with leads from a feed that they could choose to chase down, interspersed with The Big One, which would basically be a countdown clock towards the main "plot" resolving
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# SITUATION:

You're chasing the Big One, the story that will make all of you rich and famous, and you can reclaim that noble title you left behind, or go back to the wife and kids you abandoned, or maybe just become a low-tier member of Management and have your own teams to boss around. That's the thing about Big One, though, you're not the only ones interested.

## IF I USE GENESYS

- × background questionnaire
- × **HOW DO WE DO PSYCHIC POWERS?!**
- × **Archetypes:** regular human, aristocrat, labourer, intellectual, cyborg, clone, synth ("bioroid") + psychic
- × **Careers:** base careers + anything the players decide they want to play (hacker, pilot, technician, priest, etc.)
- × **Gear:** spike drives, mag pistols, psytech, laz patches, big robots, anything the players want from the SWN gear, plus anything that is inherently part of the FV universe
- × **Finalize Skill List:** mix core skills, Star Wars and Beanstalk skills, see what the core book has to offer, fill gaps
- × **Finalize Talent List:** same as above, but Talents

## PITCHES:

### Synths on the Run

They made you to be perfect. You were bred for a purpose and hundreds of years of science and progress led to your birth. You were the backbone of the Empire - her soldiers, her scientists and her children. Then they said that those who made you were plotting to use you to usurp the throne, and the resulting war wiped out nearly all of you. Now, those who remain must live underground, hiding their truth from the universe that hates and fears them. Now you must survive in this world. But maybe there's more to be had - safety, family, a new life somewhere else? Or revenge? These imperfect humans could be taught a lesson. What will you do with the perfect life they gave you?

## **Psychic Academy**

This is it! All the trials and tribulations of your school experience are coming to an end. You survived, along with your classmates, and now all you have to do is graduate, right? Except, it's not enough to graduate, you're going to be the best. You're going to have the best posting, the most prosperous marriage and you're going to live a life far away from this frankly terrifying place. You're the most promising psychics the Empire has to offer, and now all you have to do is prove it.

## **Space Pirate Captain Acheron**

The sector is full of treasure, just waiting to be taken. The fat nobility rest on their laurels in the core worlds while you ravage their ships. The merchants of ACRE and Trilliant cry in the boardroom over the profits you've pillaged. But every era comes to a close, and more and more Vagrant ships are turning legit. Not you, you've done something so terrible the Empire will never forgive it. That's why you need to find another way out, just a few more credits and the Wizard will be able to hide you from your past forever. One last job, just one more.

## **Down and Out on Hong Lu**

Welcome to Hell. It wasn't always like this - Hong Lu used to be the shining red gate of House Cygnus, factories working day and night to produce the best that science had to offer. A whole species of perfect people left this world to live among the stars. Not you, though. You're stuck on this shithole, surrounded by strife, chaos and bloodshed, dying a little bit faster than everyone everywhere else. Not anymore, though. You and your friends have had enough of this heap of burning garbage, and come hell or high water, you'll see your way free.

## **PRISM News Ship 12**

Every day ten billion interesting things happen in Acheron Rho. Terrorists blow up orphanages, nobles kill each other in duels and I've heard that the Guild turned someone's baby into an octopus the other day. Everywhere in Acheron Rho, something is going on, and it's your job to report on it. PRISM pays well for excitement and entertainment for the masses of humanity living throughout the sector and you're going to break the Big One. Or die trying. Remember, if it bleeds, it leads.

6



FAAR

VERONA

SEASON TWO //  
GENESYS SYSTEM HACKS



# MARK

**Concept:** human ally to synths, a biopsionist, a doctor or healer of some kind (serf? noble?)

**Archetype:** Psychic

**Career:** Healer, Academic

# UANA

**Concept:** a child synth created to pretend to be a human child, an actor or musician, famous for their wholesome humanity, designed to appeal to people who hate synths already (but who is actually kind of anti-human and resentful) a Shirley Temple-type thing

**Archetype:** Clone (p27 Beanstalk)

**Career:** Entertainer

# ELSPETH

**Concept:** "windows vista synth" old model who has seen humans cause suffering and the ignoble lives of synths for a very long time, not a threat the way synths are but still artificial, wants justice and peace

**Archetype:** Bioroid (pg26 Beanstalk)

**Career:** ???

# WHEAT

**Concept:** a synth firebrand, a revolutionary activist who wants justice for the synths, etc.

**Archetype:** Clone (p27 Beanstalk)

**Career:** ???

## Background Questions:

*Are you a human or synth?*

Humans, are you noble or serf? Where and when were you born? To whom do you owe fealty? Is your family well-regarded or have they fallen from grace? What did you do during the War? Did you fight? Did you lose anyone you care about? Are your actions well-known or hidden in the Imperial record? Do you believe in God, the Church and the Emperox? Do Synths have a soul? What do you think of them?

Synths, what is your incept date? Were you custom-built or are you one of many who may share your face? What was your original purpose? Who owned you? Did you change hands? How many times? Do you remember everything or is your memory faulty? Do you age? Do you know if you have a built-in shutdown date? What did you do during the War? Did you fight? Did you lose anyone you care about? Are your

actions well-known or hidden in the Imperial record? Do you believe in God, the Church and the Emperox? What do you think of those who made you?

Do you still suffer from your programming? In what ways are you helpless to it? In what ways have you overcome it? Can you harm humans? Can, through your inac-

tion, you allow a human to come to harm? If you can, how? Did you overcome this yourself or did someone help you gain your freedom? What do you owe them, if so?

Who are you pretending to be - your allegiances or perhaps your very nature makes your real identity unsafe. What does your cover story say about you? How legit is it?



## NEW ARCHETYPE: PSYCHIC

**Brawn:** 1

**Agility:** 2

**Intellect:** 2

**Cunning:** 2

**Willpower:** 3

**Presence:** 2

**Starting Wound Threshold:** 8+Brawn

**Starting Strain Threshold:** 12+Willpower

**Starting XP:** 85XP

**Starting Skills:** 1 Rank in 1 Psionic Skill

**Special Ability A:** 1 Rank in 1 other Psionic Skill

**Special Ability B:** You have MES, and have been trained in two Psionic disciplines (though you may obtain more as you grow - you cannot choose more at character creation). You power these with your Strain, and may, if you wish, Torch your physical form to gain more. For each Wound you take, you gain 2 Strain.





# ON-THE-FLY CAREERS

Eight skills, four with a rank in them.

|                 |                |               |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| ASTRONAVIGATION | MECHANICS      | SURVIVAL      |
| ATHLETICS       | MEDICINE       | VIGILANCE     |
| BRAWL           | MELEE          | PSIONICS (?)  |
| CHARM           | NEGOTIATION    | BIOPSIONICS   |
| COERCION        | OPERATING      | METAPSIONICS  |
| COMPUTERS       | PERCEPTION     | PRECOGNITION  |
| COOL            | PILOTING       | TELEKINETICS  |
| COORDINATION    | RANGED (HEAVY) | TELEPATHY     |
| DECEPTION       | RANGED (LIGHT) | TELEPORTATION |
| DISCIPLINE      | RESILIENCE     |               |
| GUNNERY         | SKULDUGGERY    |               |
| KNOWLEDGE       | STEALTH        |               |
| LEADERSHIP      | STREETWISE     |               |



# PSYCHIC POWERS

We're going to use the Magic rules from the core book, modified for Psionics.

First, describe what you want to do, attaching it to one of the actions below. Then confirm that you have an appropriate Psionic skill. Then the GM will tell you the difficulty, and roll. On a successful roll, you get what you wanted and pay 2 Strain.

On a failure, pay 2 Strain and whatever other bad things the dice have to say.

## ATTACK

Biopsionics, Telekinetics, Telepathy

## AUGMENT

Biopsionics, Metapsionics

## BARRIER

Metapsionics, Telekinesis, Telepathy

## CURE

Biopsionics, Metapsionics, Precognition

## DISPEL

Metapsionics

## HEAL

Biopsionics

## INFLUENCE

Metapsionics, Telepathy

## INFORM

Metapsionics, Precognition, Telepathy

## MOVE

Telekinetics, Teleportation

