ZERO SIGNAL

Neon. Chrome. Collapse.
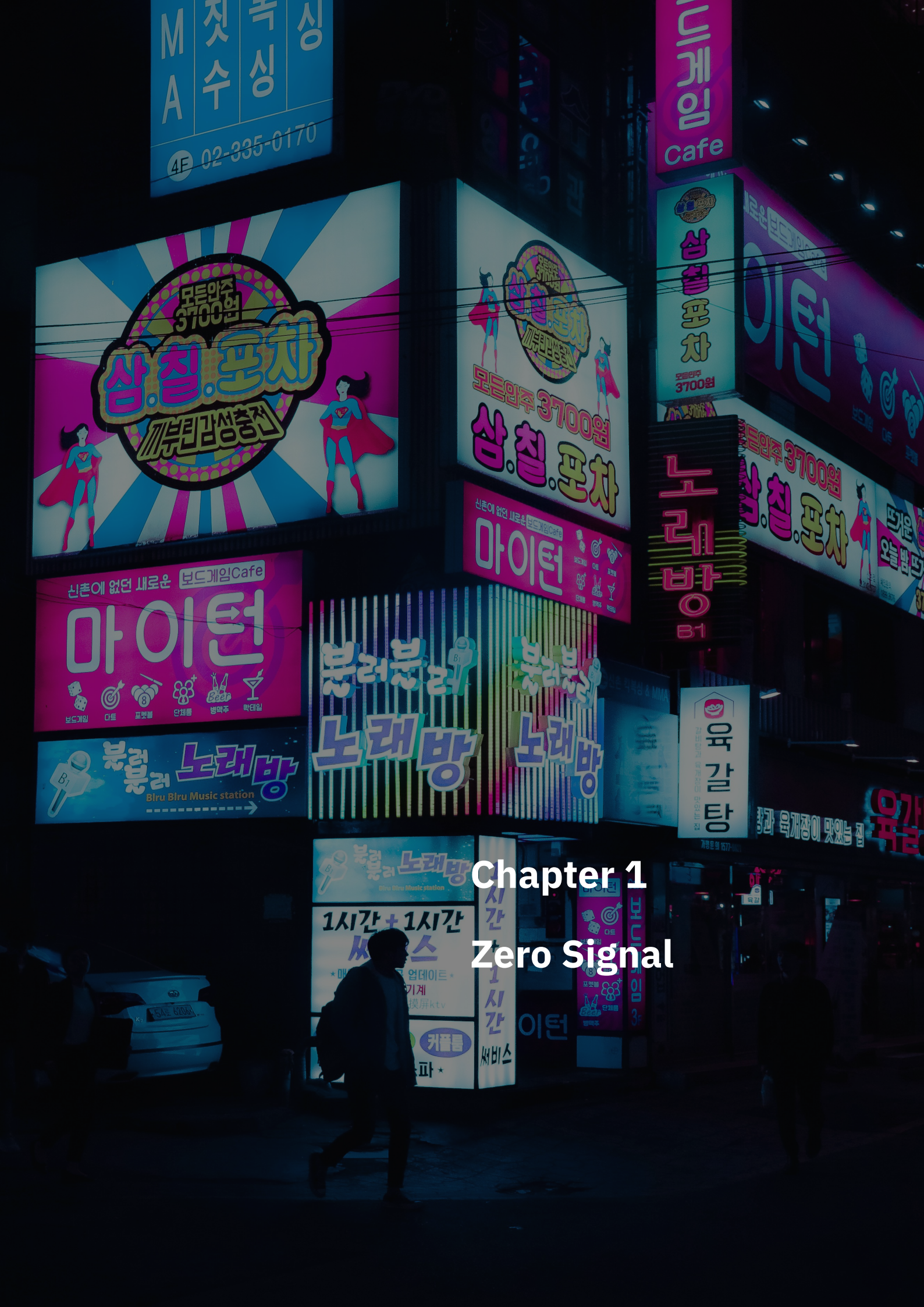
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Chapter 1
Zero Signal

No gods, no masters, no signal.

This is a roleplaying game. You know what they are. You need friends to play.

This is a traditional RPG. You need a gamemaster. One of you needs to bear the burden.

Before playing, talk about your expectations. Set boundaries. Respect the boundaries. Use the X card. No one is supposed to feel anxious or bad because of the game.

This game is about *punching up*. Characters are all "punks" of some sort, the outcast, the downtrodden, the rebel, the underdog.

The characters might be mercenaries, hackers, ripperdocs, rockerboys. They might be a journalist for an underground newsmedia fighting for the truth in world that no longer gives a fuck. They might be one of the few cops who are not corrupted and are trying to make world or at least their street corner safer. They might have worked for the corpos, but were "made obsolete" and are now looking for payback. This is the *PUNK* in Cyberpunk.

Characters hold beliefs which fuel the conflicts. They also balance between having the fire and the guts to keep fighting while also at the same time fighting to remain human. A baseline human is at a disadvantage. You better get some chrome. Cyberoptics might help you pick up on details you might have otherwise missed. They connect with your handgun and allow for better aiming. You might want to jack up those reflexes while you're at it so the gangbangers won't get the jump on you next time. Better get some dermal armour or rippers if you want to get up close and personal. But once you can move faster than the ordinary joe on the street you start to look down on them. Once you can process information twice as fast, three times as fast as the average human you might start to feel like they are beneath you. This is where the danger lies. You're losing grip on your humanity.

Chapter 2

The System

Gamecycle

The basic gamecycle is:

- Set the scene
- Introduce conflict
- Resolve conflict
- Downtime (Optional)
- New scene

Conflicts use up resources of the characters. They test their abilities and their beliefs. Every conflict is a chance to examine one or more aspects of the character. What would they do in this situation? What are they willing to fight for? What matters to them and to what lengths they're willing to go?

After the conflict has been resolved, either move on to a new scene or the characters can enjoy some downtime. This is used for recovering resources, resting, partying, engaging in hobbies, whatever keeps the characters sane in an insane world.

The actual rules are pretty lightweight. There are several ways to test abilities in different conflicts. Characters advance and change in several ways. Abilities are improved through using them in conflicts. Secrets are learned in game by spending Karma. Keys represent the beliefs of the characters and are they way Karma is accrued. Keys are challenged in conflicts and through normal gameplay.

Ability tests

Principles: Always Let It Ride, fortune in the middle.

Roll dice (normal, six-sided) equal to your ability. Any 4+ result raises your Degree of Success (DoS). If, for some reason, you don't have six-sided dice available, use whatever randomizers you have. We're looking for a 50% chance of success per die, so coins will do in a pinch.

Consequences or Secrets might raise or lower the number of dice available.

Simple tests

GM sets the target number (TN), you figure out consequences, roll. If degree of success is greater than the target number, you succeed. If DoS = TN, you succeed at cost. If DoS < TN, you fail. Some failed tests might cause consequences depending on the level of failure.

Consequences Consequences from simple tests are always lingering ie. not permanent and are removed either at the end of the scene or the end of the session, depending on the severity. A level 1 consequence lasts only for the scene. A higher level of consequence requires more time.

Difficulty	Target Number
Easy	No roll required
Simple	1 success
Moderate	2 successes
Difficult	3 successes
Very Difficult	4 successes
Formidable	5 successes
Nearly Impossible	6 successes
Heroic	7 successes

A consequence might be something like "bruised 1" which means you're physical activities require one additional degree of success.

Contests

When two parties want a thing to happen but they are at odds. Contests and especially Extended Contests should involve one or more Keys of the characters. Otherwise there is little point in them.

Figure out what they want, see if they actually are oppposed to each other. If not, they get what they want.

If they are in opposition, figure out the consequences. if we're talking about a physical contest, like melee, damage might occur.

Roll dice. Larger DoS gets to narrate. If the difference is only 1 DoS, narrate at cost. If DoS is equal either both get what they want or neither gets what they want.

Consequences   The winning party might want to incur consequences of a game mechanical sort as well. Use the DoS as a guideline. Consequences from contests might be lingering or they might require more time to "heal" depending on the severity and agreed upon consequences.

Extended contests

If either of the two parties is not satisfied with the results of the contest, they can extend it. Usually it's the losing party, but sometimes the winner might be a bad winner and wants to trounce their opponent properly, who knows?

Draw the Line/Moment of Truth   Set up another contest, specify consequences. Use secrets, call on your reserves and make the rolls. Best two out of three. The first contest was the one that lead to drawing the line. Now you need to win two contests or else you're toast.

The winner gets to narrate what happens.

If the loser lost the previous contest, then they are now, in addition to suffering the mechanical consequences of the contest, either:

- Grievously wounded and maybe captured.
- Fled the scene but lost something precious
- Dead

OR the social/mental equivalent OR something else that fits your fiction, but is a terrible consequence for the character. If there is no threat of physical harm, the consequences might involve removing Keys from the character, especially if they have no Karma to burn. This might be interesting in physical contest, since it implies the character is no longer willing to risk his life and limb for the cause.

The winner of the conflict can Win More, by spending one point from his relevant resource pool. This allows them to narrate a "Yes, and" conflict resolution.

Recovering from consequences

The consequences of drawing the line are more severe. A grievously wounded character requires medical attention or they might still end up dead. Usually downtime is used to recover from more serious consequences.

This will lead to new ability tests, of course.

Chapter 3

Character Creation

Character creation consists of making some choices and jotting down some numbers and things on a piece of paper called a "Character sheet."

- Think of a character concept. Write it down.
- Think of a name for your character. What do they look like? What do they present as?
- Choose a number of lifepaths
- Open Abilities and Ability Focuses
- Choose Keys
- Choose Secrets
- Allocate Pool points
- Allocate Flesh and Machine
- Figure out Wealth
- Write down your Karma points
- Select one special thing

First thing you must choose is the "age" of your character, or at least how many different things they've done during their lifetime before the start of the game. This choice affects various character attributes.

The number of **life paths** try to give a sense of balance to character creation, but if you really put your heart into it you can probably break the system. Such is life.

Choose from the following:

	Number of Lifepaths				
	One	**Two**	**Three**	**Four**	**Five**
Keys	2	2	2	1	1
Secrets	1	1	2	2	3
Focuses	5	4	3	2	2
Abilities	4	4	4	4	4
Pool points	6	6	6	7	8
Chrome	0	1	1	2	2
Karma	3	2	1	1	0

Spread the Ability and Pool points and focuses around as you please and choose the number of **Secrets**, **Keys** and **Chrome** you are allowed. You don't have to make all the choices before starting the game, but you should have a rough idea about the character before starting play, at least the origin life path and one **Key** should be chosen.

Secrets, Keys, Abilities, Chrome and Resource Pools can be found in more detail in later chapters.

We'll go through the steps to complete your character in more detail by using an example character called Jimmy Chromehand.

Jimmy's player wants to create a well-rounded character with plenty of room

to grow so they choose three lifepaths as a starting point. This means he can make three choices for lifepaths, has access to two Keys, two Secrets, one piece of Chrome, four Ability points, three Focuses, six Resource Pool points and one Karma. The player makes a note of the choices and points available.

Lifepaths

All characters must have one *Born* lifepath. Choose that one first. It determines your childhood and hints at some kind of upbringing. The first lifepath might lead you towards certain paths but you're free to choose however you want. Just come up with a story how the character ended up where they are at the beginning of the game.

- Start with **one Born Path**, then progress through the stages. You can take one lifepath several times.
- Choose paths that make sense based on prior choices.
- Some paths might require specific backgrounds or experience.
- Mid-career paths represent mastery and influence in the world.

Lifepaths are a source of Abilities and give you ideas about the Secrets, Keys and contacts your character might have. A list of Lifepaths can be found in a later section.

Jimmy Chromehand chooses the following lifepaths: * Born Street Kid * Combat School Trainee * Hard Time

Abilities and Focuses

Abilities can be Opened or Focused. Opened means you've written down a specific skill or ability on your characters sheet to avoid figuring out the value again and again. You might have added Ability points to it as well. If you want to improve the Ability you must Focus on it. This means either choosing the ability as a Focused ability in character creation or choosing to Focus on it later in the game by using Karma.

Opening abilities

If a lifepath is somehow relevant to a thing you're doing, you can get 2 ability points from it. If another lifepath provides the same sort of skillset, you can get 1 additional point per lifepath.

One point is the minimum you get from just basically being a person of some sort that can do things. You can usually rely on your origin to provide at least one point to every ability imaginable, some origins might be milked for two points.

If you want more Ability points you can answer questions about your character. These answers will have consequenses, but can help you flesh out your charac-

ter. Each question gives one more Ability point. Pick up to three questions. If possible, use the Ability point in a way fitting your answer.

- Describe the character with one sentence.
- What was your most memorable dangerous situation? Who died, or nearly died?
- Who have you betrayed? What happened?
- What was the line you thought you'd never cross, but did?
- What was your greatest mistake? Is it secret? Does the character have other secrets to protect?
- Who is your greatest rival or nemesis?

In character creation Jimmy opens up abilities based on his background.

- Streetwise
- Small Arms
- Intimidate

Jimmy's player figures out the starting values based on his background. Jimmy has been through quite a lot and is more than capable of taking care of himself.

Streetwise gets 2 as a starting value from his background on the streets plus 1 from his time in jail cultivating contacts. Jimmy's player then adds one ability point for a total of 4.

Small Arms gets a basic value of 2 from military training and 1 additional point from being raised in the streets. Jimmy's player adds 2 points to the ability for a final score of 5.

Jimmy's a scary motherfucker, he's been in jail, he grew up on the streets and he's been through military school. This all and the remaining Ability point gives a total Intimidate level of 5.

- Streetwise - 4
- Small Arms - 5
- Intimidate - 5

Figuring out the ability values later uses the same process. If you have ability points left you can apply them instantly, the same applies to focused abilities. Jimmy's player decides against answering any questions about their character right now and leaves the option to get more Ability points later on. These questions can serve as flashback scenes in the middle of action or answered during downtime.

Focused abilities

Chosen for advancement with karma or in character creation. It costs one Karma point to focus. Jimmy's player decides to keep the three abilities he's opened in character creation as their focused abilities.

Keys

Keys are what Drives the Character. They are also a tool that is used to tell the GM what issues you want to tackle and what sides of the character you want to examine. Select an appropriate number of keys based on the number of lifepaths. A list of setting appropriate Keys is listed in a later chapter. You can create Keys of your own with your group's approva.

Jimmy Chromehand's player chooses two keys for the character:

- The System is Broken: As a rebel and former soldier, Jimmy likely saw first-hand how the system fails the very people it's meant to protect. His time in prison would only harden that belief.

- Hard Time Survivor: This reflects not only Jimmy's time inside, but also how it shapes his everyday interactions—his caution, mistrust, and reliance on learned survival instincts.

Secrets and Chrome

Secrets and Chrome share quite a few mechanical similarities. In fact, you could think of Chrome as special cases of Secrets. During character creation you have access to a specific number of secrets and chrome. If you want, you can use all the available secrets for Chrome.

Jimmy's player chooses two Secrets and one piece of Chrome for him:

1. Ripper Implant (cyberware) Once per scene, deal brutal melee damage with retractable razors or monowires. Gain +1 effect level when using brawling or unarmed strikes.

Jimmy is ex-military and has a violent past. The name Chromehand practically screams modded limbs and street-level brutality. He doesn't just fight — he tears people apart.

2. Voice of the Cause Spend 1 Instinct to incite a crowd or inspire resistance in others. NPCs gain courage or align with your ideals for one scene.

Jimmy is a rebel — not just angry, but inspiring. He doesn't just punch — he turns heads and flips tables. He might not lead a cult, but he's got presence, and he draws people to his fire.

3. Secret of the Contact Spend 1 Reason to receive crucial insider information: a floor plan, an access code, an upcoming executive movement, or a security shift pattern. The GM chooses how much and how accurate, depending on timing and risk.

Jimmy has a deep contact inside the corp infrastructure—someone buried in middle management or IT—who leaks sensitive intel, schedules, or schematics.

Pool Points

You have three resource pools to use in the game. Your secrets use these resources as fuel. This game has the following resource pools:

- Vigor
- Instinct
- Reason

Jimmy's player chooses to spread his six available resource pool points like this:

- Vigor - 2
- Instinct - 3
- Reason - 1

Punk and Machine

These two stats are a reflection of the fire in your belly and how much of your flesh have you replaced with circuitry, chrome and steel.

Starting Punk

For every lifepath beyond the first two, reduce starting Punk by 1. Old fogies are conservative.

Starting Machine

For every Secret available at character creation, you can instead choose take a piece of Chrome. Every piece comes with a price. Depending on the choices you make, you might end up with a higher Machine stat.

Starting Wealth

Wealth is used like any other ability. Figure out the initial value from your lifepaths. Fixers and other similar roles might want to focus on Wealth.

Starting Oddities and Assets

Select one or two from the following. Or make something up.

Name	Description
Blank Black Keycard	Pings high-security doors but no known owner or use.
One-Time Decryption Seed	A string of code that unlocks... something. Once.
Unregistered Subdermal Implant	No readout, no function—just a faint blue glow.

Name	Description
Encrypted Memo from a Dead Reporter	Mid-sentence file dump, ends with a name.
Karma Owed	Someone important owes you. You don't know why.
Live but Untethered Audio Feed	You're tapped into a room somewhere... but not for long.
Prepaid Drone Launch Code	Activate once, and a drone shows up. That's all you know.
Shattered Dog Tag	Says "DON'T TRUST HER." Half the name is missing.
Old-School Burner Chip	Runs one command on insertion. You have no idea which.
Corp Blacklist Passphrase	Whisper it and one handler will listen... once.
Blood-Signed Contract Fragment	You're listed. But you didn't sign.
Psych Eval Timestamp	Official file, marked "INVERTED." You're flagged.
Digital Polaroid	Someone wearing your jacket, smiling. Unknown face.
Voiceprint Echo	A deleted voice. Valuable to someone.
Misdelivered Supply Drop Code	Buried crate, registered to your old alias.
Tagger's Mark	Your symbol burned into a wall across the sprawl.
Cut Transmission Log	Incomplete uplink from an off-grid satcom.
Borrowed Reputation Token	Your face, someone else's permissions.
Silenced Gun Without a Serial	Clean, never used—or wiped too well.
Off-Grid Connection	One chance to reach someone... who listens.
Neuro-Pattern Snapshot	Brainwave backup from someone else. It's stable. You think.
Corp Training Scenario Archive	Simulations meant to predict a rebellion. You're in it.
Unmarked USB Necklace	Plug it in, and a timer starts. No labels, no files.
Redacted Surveillance Clip	Grainy footage of a person being erased from existence.
Midnight Visitor Access Code	Opens a hidden entrance in a nightclub. But only at 2:13am.
Smiling Corp Exec's Business Card	No title, just a name. And a promise: "Call me."
Neon Tattoo Pattern File	You don't have the tattoo. But it's in your files.

Name	Description
Echoed Memory File	A fragment of someone else's memory — it plays like a dream, but you recognize the setting.
Locked Courier Box	Heavy, sealed, no visible mechanism to open it. Your name is etched underneath the handle.
AI-Curated Playlist	A custom sequence of tracks and spoken-word fragments. The last line references an event that hasn't happened yet.
Deleted Arrest Warrant	An official record shows you were arrested and released — on a date you were never in custody.
Graffiti Cipher Wheel	An old analog decoder keyed to a tagger's symbol set. One graffiti series in the city matches perfectly.

Chapter 4

Lifepaths

Lifepaths define a character's background and career progression. Each character begins with a **Born Path**, followed by **Adolescent**, **Early Career**, **Mid-Career**, and optionally **Late Career Paths**. Some paths represent transitions in ideology or role, while others reflect mastery and power.

Using Lifepaths

- Start with **one Born Path**, then progress through the stages.
- Choose paths that make sense based on prior choices.
- Mid-career paths reflect status or rising influence.
- Late-career paths represent true power, legend, or final transformation.

Lifepath Settings

1. **Corporate Zone** – Megacorp-controlled districts, high-rises, and sterile enclaves.
2. **Street-Level** – The undercity, slums, and gang turf.
3. **Nomad Territories** – Deserts, wastelands, oceans, and skies.
4. **Underground Networks** – Hackers, radicals, and cultists living off-grid.
5. **Black Markets & Edge Zones** – The lawless hubs where everything is for sale.
6. **Media & Entertainment** – The world of celebrity, influencers, and underground journalism.
7. **Science & Technology** – Research labs, AI think tanks, and fringe experimentation.
8. **Prison System** – Corporate black sites, overcrowded state prisons, gang-run hellholes.
9. **Military Complex** – Training academies, warzones, corporate militias, and deep black ops.
10. **Law Enforcement** – Police forces, private security, internal affairs.

Lifepaths by Setting and Stage

Corporate Zone

- *Born:* Born Corporate
- *Adolescent:* Corporate Drone, Corpo Brat
- *Early Career:* Corporate Analyst, Security Operative
- *Mid-Career:* Media Personality, High-End Augmenter
- *Late Career:* Corporate Fixer

Street-Level

- *Born:* Born Street Kid, Born Gutter Tech
- *Adolescent:* Gang Initiate, Street Rat, Scrap Kid
- *Early Career:* Fixer, Street Preacher, Crime Soldier
- *Mid-Career:* Fixer Network Builder, Detective
- *Late Career:* Street Legend

Nomad Territories

- *Born:* Born Nomad
- *Adolescent:* Nomad Scout
- *Early Career:* Nomad Runner, Smuggler
- *Mid-Career:* Field Researcher
- *Late Career:* Nomad Elder

Underground Networks

- *Born:* Born Underground, Born Test Subject
- *Adolescent:* Underground Radical, Cyber Prodigy
- *Early Career:* Cyberterrorist, Investigative Journalist
- *Mid-Career:* Cyber-Philosopher, Company Defector
- *Late Career:* Rebel Leader, Rogue AI Symbiote

Black Markets & Edge Zones

- *Adolescent:* Cyber Clinic Assistant
- *Early Career:* Tech Salvager, Hard Time
- *Mid-Career:* Crime Syndicate Officer
- *Late Career:* Underground Fixer, Criminal Kingpin

Media & Entertainment

- *Adolescent:* Youth Reporter
- *Early Career:* Entertainment Talent
- *Mid-Career:* Entertainment Producer
- *Late Career:* Media Mogul

Science & Technology

- *Adolescent:* Young Research Assistant
- *Early Career:* Data Analyst, Med-Tech, Mech Whisperer
- *Mid-Career:* Clinical Researcher, AI Behaviorist, High-End Augmenter
- *Late Career:* Chief Bioengineer, Post-Human Surgeon, Cybernetic Pioneer

Crime and Prison System

- *Adolescent:* Juvenile Detention
- *Early Career:* Hard Time
- *Mid-Career:* Crime Syndicate Officer
- *Late Career:* Criminal Kingpin

Military Complex

- *Adolescent:* Cadet, Combat School Trainee
- *Early Career:* Grunt
- *Mid-Career:* Squad Leader
- *Late Career:* Commander, War Hero

Law Enforcement

- *Early Career:* Beat Cop
- *Mid-Career:* Detective
- *Late Career:* Chief Inspector

Politics & Governance

- *Adolescent:* Youth Campaigner
- *Early Career:* Civic Liaison, Policy Analyst
- *Mid-Career:* Political Strategist, Opposition Whip
- *Late Career:* Power Broker, Shadow Cabinet Minister

Example Abilities and Gear by Lifepath

Born Paths

Born Corporate

Abilities: Bureaucracy, Negotiation, Social Climbing, Public Speaking

Gear: Designer kid's clothes, family-issued ID lanyard, school-issued tablet

Born Street Kid

Abilities: Firefight, Streetwise, Sneak, Intimidation

Gear: Rusty toy knife, graffiti marker, scavenged phone shell

Born Nomad

Abilities: Survival, Scavenging, Ride, Firefight

Gear: Hand-me-down utility knife, sunhat, solar bead bracelet

Born Underground

Abilities: Hacking, Stealth, Sabotage, Theology

Gear: Scavenged keypad, chalk sigils, blackout rag cloak

Born Gutter Tech

Abilities: Jury-Rig, Electronics, Programming, Mechanics

Gear: Rusted toolkit, busted drone eye, wire satchel

Born Test Subject

Abilities: Endurance, Medicine, Escape, Observation

Gear: Shock collar key, medical records, drug stash

Adolescent Paths

Corporate Drone

Abilities: Bureaucracy, Data Entry, Office Politics, Discipline

Gear: Spreadsheet software, biometric keycard, smart lenses

Corpo Brat

Abilities: Etiquette, Persuasion, Bribery, Social Climbing

Gear: Custom wardrobe, personal drone, private tutor logs

Gang Initiate

Abilities: Firefight, Intimidation, Streetwise, Loyalty

Gear: Spray can, gang colors, stimpack

Street Rat

Abilities: Sneak, Scavenge, Reflexes, Dodge

Gear: Urban camo, climbing gloves, trash scanner

Nomad Scout

Abilities: Tracking, Survival, Recon, Navigation

Gear: Long-range binoculars, tracker tags, animal calls

Underground Radical

Abilities: Rhetoric, Stealth, Hacking, Demolition

Gear: Pamphlets, signal jammer, 3D-printed pistol

Scrap Kid

Abilities: Jury-Rig, Electronics, Tinkering, Awareness

Gear: Power gloves, junk scanner, servo clamps

Cyber Clinic Assistant

Abilities: Cybernetic Maintenance, First Aid, Nerve Mapping, Quick Improvisation

Gear: Blood-stained gloves, nerve stim unit, scalpel

Combat School Trainee

Abilities: Hand-to-Hand Combat, Tactical Awareness, Discipline, First Aid

Gear: Combat pads, training knife, rank patch

Cyber Prodigy

Abilities: Hacking, Encrypt/Decrypt, AI Protocols, Intrusion Mapping

Gear: Smartband console, AR goggles, encrypted terminal

Juvenile Detention

Abilities: Improvised Weapons, Intimidation, Smuggling, Jailhouse Psych

Gear: Tattoo kit, sharpened toothbrush, contraband stash

Cadet

Abilities: Firefight, Fields Comms, Surveillance, Command

Gear: Drill rifle, duty logbook, visor HUD

Youth Reporter

Abilities: Investigation, Interviewing, Drone Operation, Stealth

Gear: Pen camera, micro drone, clamshell recorder

Young Research Assistant

Abilities: Data Analysis, Tech Theory, Lab Work, Tinkering

Gear: Lab keycard, testing tablet, scanner badge

Youth Campaigner
Abilities: Persuasion, Public Speaking, Ideology, Canvassing
Gear: Campaign hoodie, QR code flyers, stolen voter data

Early Career Paths

Corporate Analyst
Abilities: Bureaucracy, Finance, Surveillance, Analytics
Gear: Data pad, executive comms, corp credentials

Security Operative
Abilities: Firefight, Tactics, Observation, Interrogation
Gear: Armor vest, shock baton, corp scanner

Fixer
Abilities: Streetwise, Negotiation, Intimidation, Contacts
Gear: Burner phones, contact list, forged IDs

Street Preacher
Abilities: Oratory, Intuition, Performance, Persuasion
Gear: Loudspeaker implant, gospel files, street shrine kit

Crime Soldier
Abilities: Firefight, Coercion, Tactics, Grit
Gear: Syndicate patch, stolen tech pistol, encrypted burner

Cyberterrorist
Abilities: Hacking, Sabotage, Encryption, Stealth
Gear: Encrypt deck, burner rig, signal mask

Investigative Journalist
Abilities: Research, Stealth, Persuasion, Photography
Gear: Hidden camera, press badge, stealth drone

Tech Salvager

Abilities: Jury-Rig, Electronics, Scavenging, Mechanics

Gear: Magnetic boots, tool scanner, torch gloves

Hard Time

Abilities: Survival, Intimidation, Fighting, Smuggling

Gear: Prison tat toolkit, cigarette currency, shiv

Entertainment Talent

Abilities: Performance, Fashion, Social Media, Acting

Gear: Studio mic, stylized jacket, contract chip

Data Analyst

Abilities: Analytics, Decryption, Pattern Recognition, Research

Gear: Neural uplink, metrics suite, noise-cancel hood

Med-Tech

Abilities: Medicine, Cybernetics, Diagnosis, First Aid

Gear: Field injector kit, dermal patcher, blood drone

Mech Whisperer

Abilities: Mechanics, Robotics, Interface, Tuning

Gear: Grease-coated gloves, servo pliers, interface plug

Smuggler

Abilities: Stealth, Bribery, Navigation, Concealment

Gear: Concealed compartment pack, alias generator, smuggle map

Nomad Runner

Abilities: Driving, Navigation, Survival, Route Mapping

Gear: All-terrain boots, cargo bike, route pings

Beat Cop

Abilities: Observation, Law, Intimidation, Patrol

Gear: Baton, badge, bodycam, firearm

Grunt

Abilities: Firefight, Tactics, Survival, Obedience

Gear: Service rifle, rations, tac-helmet

Civic Liaison

Abilities: Bureaucracy, Negotiation, Local Knowledge, Event Planning

Gear: Public access badge, agenda clipboard, commlink

Policy Analyst

Abilities: Research, Analytics, Law, Rhetoric

Gear: Regulation digest, analysis suite, redline templates

Mid-Career Paths

Fixer Network Builder

Abilities: Networking, Leadership, Subterfuge, Finance

Gear: Secure server, elite disguise set, escape plan

Nomad Chief

Abilities: Command, Survival, Logistics, Vehicle Operation

Gear: Tactical bike, clan emblems, desert survival pack

Media Personality

Abilities: Performance, Public Speaking, Charm, Brand Management

Gear: Custom camera drone, PR wristband, sponsor tags

Field Researcher

Abilities: Biology, Survival, Data Collection, Observation

Gear: Sensor array, injection kit, labpad

Detective

Abilities: Investigation, Intuition, Law, Interrogation

Gear: Holo-recorder, old casebook, crime scene analyzer

Clinical Researcher

Abilities: Medicine, Biotech, Research, Risk Assessment

Gear: Lab console, human trials dossier, synth-blood injector

AI Behaviorist

Abilities: AI Psychology, Ethics, Machine Learning, Interface

Gear: Neural leash, redacted case study, tuned uplink hub

Cyber-Philosopher

Abilities: Philosophy, Ethics, Cybernetics, Persuasion

Gear: Digital journal, neural ink stylus, virtual debate license

High-End Augmenter

Abilities: Cybernetics, Surgery, Design, Interface

Gear: Precision implant kit, neural schematics, illegal mods

Shadow Operative

Abilities: Stealth, Sabotage, Combat, Disguise

Gear: Cloak field emitter, smart dagger, ghost comms

Entertainment Producer

Abilities: Logistics, Direction, Media Control, Influence

Gear: Studio slate, contract server, crowd control pills

Squad Leader

Abilities: Command, Tactics, Morale, Firefight

Gear: Command helmet, encrypted comms, team dossier

Crime Syndicate Officer

Abilities: Command, Strategy, Finance, Intimidation

Gear: Syndicate ring, encrypted burner, vault keys

Company Defector

Abilities: Subterfuge, Persuasion, Firefight, Engineering

Gear: Encrypted data shard, forged identity cluster, corp-grade silenced pistol

Political Strategist

Abilities: Influence, Manipulation, Media Handling, Strategy

Gear: Data-driven voting map, burner PR contacts, leak kit

Opposition Whip

Abilities: Intimidation, Loyalty Checks, Oratory, Surveillance

Gear: Loyalty files, encrypted headset, internal memo chain

Late Career Paths

Corporate Fixer

Abilities: Negotiation, Deception, Corporate Strategy, Blackmail

Gear: Diplomatic chip, blackmail archives, corp limo

Underground Fixer

Abilities: Streetwise, Tradecraft, Smuggling, Social Engineering

Gear: Safehouse network, rare drugs, AI broker

Street Legend

Abilities: Firefight, Reputation, Streetwise, Charisma

Gear: Iconic weapon, holograffiti tag, fansite

War Hero

Abilities: Command, Firefight, Leadership, Endurance

Gear: Medals, damaged armor, flashback injector

Rebel Leader

Abilities: Inspiration, Strategy, Subversion, Negotiation

Gear: Uprising banner, encrypted comms, contingency vault

Cybernetic Pioneer

Abilities: Cybernetics, Innovation, Engineering, Programming

Gear: Prototype augments, AI lab assistant, sealed project logs

Media Mogul

Abilities: Influence, Brand Management, Logistics, Media Warfare

Gear: Broadcast empire keys, stock portfolio, botnet influence

Criminal Kingpin

Abilities: Strategy, Intimidation, Finance, Leadership

Gear: Luxury bunker, execution orders, offshore accounts

Chief Bioengineer

Abilities: Genetic Design, Project Oversight, Cybernetics, Engineering

Gear: Genebank keyring, encrypted genome array, patent library

Post-Human Surgeon

Abilities: Surgery, Neurodesign, Cybernetics, Posthuman Theory

Gear: Black scalpel set, neural override syringe, ego-map tool

Rogue AI Symbiote

Abilities: Hacking, AI Manipulation, Cyberwarfare, Self-Control

Gear: Neural regulator, dream recorder, encrypted codebase

Commander

Abilities: Command, Strategy, Tactics, Military Protocol

Gear: Strategic AI terminal, classified maps, personal guard

Chief Inspector

Abilities: Law, Interrogation, Surveillance, Oversight

Gear: Internal affairs badge, cold case files, surveillance net

Nomad Elder

Abilities: Leadership, Diplomacy, Ancestral Lore, Survival

Gear: Heirloom blade, clan oaths, ancient map

Power Broker

Abilities: Negotiation, Influence, Blackmail, Finance

Gear: Backroom passcodes, donation funnel app, asset dossier

Shadow Cabinet Minister

Abilities: Deception, Espionage, Governance, Leadership

Gear: Silencer signature ring, secret protocols, classified documents

Chapter 5
Resource Pools

Resource pools are used to power **Secrets** and get additional dice for ability tests and contests. There are three default pools available. You can always use less or create more, if you feel like your game has different needs. You might give magicians a mana pool, vampires a blood pool or something along these lines.

Thanks to Clinton R. Nixon and Eero Tuovinen for this. They use these three pools:

- Vigor
- Instinct
- Reason.

Vigor is your raw fuel — the physical toughness, pain tolerance, and sheer will that keeps you moving when your body wants to quit. High Vigor types are easy to spot: scarred knuckles, dead-eyed stares, muscles like coiled steel, and a silence that says they've been through hell — and walked out.

Instinct is your gut on overdrive. Reflexes that twitch before bullets fly, eyes that cut through crowds, pheromones that turn heads without trying. High Instinct isn't just grace — it's danger wrapped in charisma, a predator vibe in a pretty shell.

Reason is the sharp edge of your mind. Doesn't matter if it came from books, back alleys, or datajacks — it's how you process, plan, and push people around. High Reason shows in the little things: fast talk, botanical ID at a glance, probability tracking mid-hustle, or manipulating a mark like you wrote their code.

A character with two lifepaths might spread the six points available like this:

- Instinct: 3
- Vigor: 2
- Reason: 1

During the game, these points are spent to get bonus dice or activate **Secrets** (more on all of this later), but are not permanently gone. The scores on each player's character sheet represents the maximum points in each pool, and players will get a chance to restore their characters' pools to their maximum.

One point can be spent from a relevant pool to add one die to an Ability test or a Conflict.

Chapter 6

Abilities

Abilities represent a character's core competencies and training. Each ability is rated from 0 (untrained) to 10 (world-class). They are the foundation of your character's actions and are paired with focus areas (called Ability Focuses) that determine your character's growth areas. Abilities are not set in stone and allow you to freely create new skills and capabilities for the characters. Beware of too narrow or too wide skill areas.

Each ability is tested using a dice pool based on the character's rating. During play, characters mark successes and failures next to abilities. These are used to improve abilities through experience.

Using Abilities

To make an ability roll, gather a number of six-sided dice equal to the ability's rating. Roll them and count each die that shows 4 or higher as a success. Opposed rolls are resolved by comparing the number of successes.

Tracking Advancement

Characters must record at least one success and one failure using a specific ability before it can be advanced. A GM may allow automatic advancement during downtime with in-fiction justification (training, research, etc.). More on advancing abilities in Karma and Advancement chapter.

Example Abilities

- Firefight – Using ranged weapons in combat situations
- Hacking – Breaching digital systems, manipulating data
- Streetwise – Navigating criminal, social, or undercity cultures
- Negotiation – Making deals, influencing outcomes through conversation
- Engineering – Repairing, building, or modifying hardware and tech
- Athletics – Climbing, running, physical exertion under pressure

Chapter 7

Keys

What Are Keys?

Keys represent strongly held beliefs, values, or philosophies that guide your character's actions and worldview in the harsh world of cyberpunk. These are not personality traits or habits — they are convictions that drive how your character survives, fights, loves, or resists.

You earn **Karma** when your Key is tested or causes meaningful conflict — when it complicates a situation, creates risk, or forces a decision. This makes character advancement directly tied to tension and narrative growth.

What Is a Buyoff?

A **Buyoff** is what happens when your character abandons or betrays a Key. It might be a crisis of faith, a change of heart, or a survival choice. When you buy off a Key, you permanently remove it and gain a burst of Karma. You can replace it with a new Key that reflects your character's evolution — or devolution.

A Key represents a belief about the world—a truth your character clings to, whether society agrees or not. Gain Karma when this belief is tested or leads to conflict. Buy off the Key when your character abandons or betrays that belief.

Keys and Buyoffs

Key: Everyone's Hustling
The world runs on side deals, fast talk, and fake loyalty. Only marks play it straight.
Gain Karma when a plan backfires, someone calls your bluff, or your hustle puts others at risk.
Buyoff: Walk away from an easy payday.

Key: The System is Broken
No corp, government, or authority truly serves the people.
Gain Karma when you reject orders, refuse institutional help, or fight against systemic power—especially when it costs you.
Buyoff: Trust or defend an authority willingly.

Key: Reputation is Power
Your name is currency. Fame or infamy gets results.
Gain Karma when your reputation attracts trouble, puts you in danger, or forces you to live up to it.
Buyoff: Accept anonymity or disown your reputation.

Key: You Don't Belong
The world wasn't built for people like you—and you never let yourself forget that.

Gain Karma when you're excluded, alienated, or treated as a threat, and you respond with pride or defiance.
Buyoff: Accept belonging without cynicism or resistance.

Key: Identity is a Weapon
Your look, your voice, your story—it's a mask you use to cut through the world.
Gain Karma when you use identity to manipulate, deceive, or survive—and it escalates the stakes.
Buyoff: Break your image or let it go.

Key: Stay Off the Radar
Visibility is a liability. If they can't find you, they can't own you.
Gain Karma when you're forced into the open, exposed, or recognized—and must decide whether to run, resist, or reveal.
Buyoff: Reveal yourself to the world without coercion.

Key: Blood Ties Above All
Family—blood or found—is worth more than loyalty to cause or profit.
Gain Karma when your loyalty to family creates personal cost, moral tension, or conflict with others.
Buyoff: Abandon or betray someone who calls you kin.

Key: Belief is Strength
Faith, ideology, or code gives shape to the chaos.
Gain Karma when your beliefs lead to friction, isolation, or dangerous conviction in the face of contradiction.
Buyoff: Renounce your beliefs for convenience.

Key: Life Is a Stage
You're always performing—because being boring is dangerous.
Gain Karma when your need to perform creates misunderstanding, draws heat, or endangers others.
Buyoff: Step away from the spotlight and mean it.

Key: Order Is Worth Upholding
Justice is flawed, but without order, the city burns. You believe in law not as control, but as protection.
Gain Karma when your attempts to uphold law or protect the innocent put you in conflict with peers, allies, or your own morals.
Buyoff: Compromise your values by turning a blind eye to injustice or participating in corruption.

Key: Law is a Tool
Rules are weapons in the hands of those who know how to bend them.
Gain Karma when exploiting, twisting, or resisting law brings unintended consequences or personal conflict.
Buyoff: Follow the law selflessly or abandon it entirely.

Key: Leverage is Survival
Secrets, favors, and debts keep you breathing longer than creds.

Gain Karma when your leverage puts others in danger, backfires, or forces a choice between power and principle.
Buyoff: Burn a relationship you depend on.

Key: Cyberware is Evolution
Biology is legacy code. You're rewriting it with chrome.
Gain Karma when pushing the limits of your augmentations alienates others, risks your identity, or creates moral friction.
Buyoff: Remove or reject enhancements.

Key: The Flesh is Sacred
You are not broken, and you won't be fixed.
Gain Karma when you reject augmentation at personal cost, clash with transhuman ideology, or suffer due to staying natural.
Buyoff: Accept a non-cosmetic implant willingly.

Key: Risk is the Only Way
Caution is death. You move fast and don't wait.
Gain Karma when reckless action puts yourself or others in jeopardy, or when your boldness escalates a situation.
Buyoff: Choose caution when boldness matters most.

Key: Violence Works
Sometimes force is the only language people understand.
Gain Karma when your use of violence causes unintended fallout, challenges your relationships, or creates lasting consequences.
Buyoff: Resolve a serious conflict peacefully.

Key: Orders Keep the Chaos Out
Discipline, hierarchy, structure—without it, we burn.
Gain Karma when following orders leads to personal cost, alienates allies, or puts you at odds with your conscience.
Buyoff: Defy a direct order for personal reasons.

Key: The Truth Must Out
Secrets are poison. Exposing them is a civic duty.
Gain Karma when revealing the truth causes upheaval, backlash, or personal danger.
Buyoff: Conceal a truth that matters.

Key: Knowledge is Power
Discovery matters more than consequence. You need to understand.
Gain Karma when your pursuit of forbidden or dangerous knowledge leads to trouble or conflict.
Buyoff: Destroy or hide your own research.

Key: Hard Time Survivor
You endured prison and came out harder, colder, smarter.
Gain Karma when survival instincts from prison clash with trust, vulnerability, or compromise.

Buyoff: Show weakness or trust someone new.

Key: Convict's Code
Respect, loyalty, silence. You live by what got you through the inside.
Gain Karma when your code endangers you, causes friction with outsiders, or forces hard choices.
Buyoff: Betray someone who lived by the code.

Key: The Future is Post-Human
Your destiny is beyond flesh and bone. Transcendence isn't optional.
Gain Karma when this belief is tested or causes conflict.
Buyoff: Choose humanity over transcendence.

Key: My Skin is Mine
You won't be turned into a machine. The body is the line.
Gain Karma when this belief is tested or causes conflict.
Buyoff: Accept irreversible cyberware.

Key: Breach Everything
Firewalls, doors, locks—it's all just a challenge.
Gain Karma when this belief is tested or causes conflict.
Buyoff: Refuse to break into a protected system.

Key: Data Wants to Be Free
You believe all knowledge belongs to the people.
Gain Karma when this belief is tested or causes conflict.
Buyoff: Suppress or censor valuable information.

Chapter 8

Secrets

Secrets are unique feats, cyberware with more oomph, or advantages a character possesses that give them an edge. Some are learned, others installed. Many require a cost to use—tapping into one of your three resource pools: **Instinct**, **Vigor**, or **Reason**. According to Clinton R. Nixon they are "directly influenced by the Feat system of [D&D 3rd Edtion]."

There are several ways in which secrets can work:

- A permanent bonus die to a specific way to use an ability
- A permanent bonus to an effect
- A permanent way to mitigate certain kinds of effects
- Some unusual ability that requires a die roll
- Some unusual ability that is powered by resource pools

There are no hard limitations on what secrets can be learned from where, but try to tie the whole character together somehow.

Exammple Secrets

Secret of the Signature Weapon Your character has one weapon with which he is bonded. You gain a bonus die to any action taken with that weapon and any other character else attempting to use the weapon receives a penalty die. Cost: nothing. (Note: to change this weapon, this Secret must be taken again.)

Secret of Mighty Blow Your character can strike with extreme might. Spend as many dice of Vigor as you like to increase the damage of a blow in combat.

Secret of Disarm Your character can disarm an opponent, without changing intentions, with a successful Ability Check using a weapon or unarmed combat. Cost: 1 Vigor.

Secret of Evaluate Your character's battle experience has give him the ability to read an opponent well. Evaluate your character's opponent not in descriptive terms, but in game mechanics, on a successful Battle Ability Check. (You can ask for any of the following information, one bit per Success Level: Vigor score, Instinct score, best combat skill and score, specific skill and score.) Cost: 1 Reason.

Secret: ICEbreaker Protocol
Spend 1 Reason to bypass or disable a security system, digital trap, or ICE during a hack. Automatically succeed on basic intrusion or gain +1 success on a deeper breach. You need access and the necessary tools/chrome to be able to pull this off.

Secret: Deep Dive
Spend 1 Reason to explore the deep net for forbidden data, hidden nodes, or digital ghosts. Gain narrative insight or hidden leverage if you succeed.

Secret: Info Grenade

Once per scene, trigger a targeted infodump in a digital space or AR overlay—disorienting or overwhelming digital security, guards, or civilians. Gain +1 success on an infiltration or distraction.

Secret: Badge of Office
Spend 1 Instinct to invoke your credentials or status to override local authorities or gain access to protected areas. If challenged, you may reroll a failed social check.

Secret: Crime Scene Instincts
Spend 1 Reason to intuitively reconstruct the events of a violent or chaotic scene. Ask one question about what happened that the GM must answer truthfully.

Secret: Tactical Breach
Once per scene, take command of a breach, entry, or takedown. Grant your team narrative advantage or +1 success on a group action.

Secret: Stabilizing Hands
Spend 1 Vigor to stabilize a dying character or halt trauma without proper equipment. Success also prevents ongoing condition penalties.

Secret: Synthcrafter
Spend 1 Reason to create or customize a drug, cocktail, or stim. The effect can enhance one pool temporarily or bypass a specific condition or lock.

Secret: Surgical Override
Once per scene, disable or repair malfunctioning cyberware or implants with bare tools and quick thinking. On success, remove a complication or restore a lost function.

Secret: Voice of the Cause
Spend 1 Instinct to incite a crowd or inspire resistance in others. NPCs gain courage or align with your ideals for one scene.

Secret: Ritual Obsession
Once per session, enter a trance-like state to predict, interpret, or commune with something greater—data gods, urban myths, techno-spirits. Ask the GM one question only your cult would know.

Secret: Cell Leader
Spend 1 Reason to coordinate an underground group's efforts. Direct followers, leverage influence, or declare a small act of sabotage.

Secret: Street Statesman
Spend 1 Instinct to mediate a tense meeting between factions, gangs, or ideologies. If successful, prevent violence or shift a power dynamic.

Secret: Neighborhood Hero
Once per session, gain shelter, support, or loyalty from locals. You've got street-level fame or reputation that pays dividends in their turf.

Secret: Viral Drop

Spend 1 Instinct to force a narrative shift online. Once per session, leak damaging media—real or fake—into the feed. Choose a target and reduce their social standing or increase heat against them.

Secret: Trending Hack
Spend 1 Reason to manipulate digital attention.Once per session, spin a situation to go viral. You may shift a public narrative, distract enemies, or draw attention from an unexpected source.

Secret: Producer's Leverage
Spend 1 Instinct to deploy social blackmail or defuse a threat via reputation.You have dirt on someone important. Once per session, reveal it at a key moment to shift the balance of power in a social or political encounter.

Secret: Asset Manager
You maintain shadow ownership or stock in an influential holding. Once per session, you may call on a corporate favor, such as clearance, access, or a market tip.

Secret: Spin Control
Spend 1 Reason to suppress or reshape public perception of a crisis or scandal. You may reframe a failure or mistake in your favor if used quickly.

Secret: Diplomatic Immunity
Spend 1 Instinct or Reason depending on the scene's tone (social vs political).You have the backing of a powerful entity or embassy. Once per session, you can avoid legal consequences or shift blame to a lower-level pawn.

Secret: Influence Web
Spend 1 Reason to pull a string or leverage obligation.You know who owes what to whom. Gain +1 success when leveraging favors, calling in debts, or navigating bureaucracies.

Secret: Nomad Kinship
Spend 1 Instinct to call on a familial or clan bond for help.Once per session, you can declare a bond with a nearby nomad crew or family—gain access to shelter, logistics, or protection.

Secret: Salvager's Eye
Spend 1 Reason to salvage something specific or useful mid-scene.Gain +1 success when scavenging, stripping tech, or repairing broken machines. Once per scene, you may declare a useful part was salvaged earlier.

Secret: Road Bond
Spend 1 Vigor to defend, boost, or motivate allies in vehicle or stress scenes.You've logged thousands of miles with your crew. Gain narrative advantage when defending or motivating a nomad team or vehicle in high-stress situations.

Secret: Machine Whisperer
Once per scene, intuitively diagnose or repair an unfamiliar vehicle, drone, or sys-

tem without tools. Gain +1 success on the roll.

Secret: Black Market Pipeline
Spend 1 Instinct to grease the right palms or activate a hidden contact. Once per session, declare that you have access to restricted or illegal gear — no questions asked. If it's truly rare or dangerous, the GM may impose a complication.

Secret: Trusted Fence
You always know how to unload stolen, hot, or questionably acquired goods. Gain +1 effect level when fencing items or negotiating underworld deals.

Secret: Whisper Network
Spend 1 Reason to access hidden gossip or digital channels.You're plugged into a private, encrypted social layer. Once per session, ask the GM for current rumors, opportunities, or leverageable blackmail in the local area.

Secret: Broker's Tongue
Spend 1 Instinct to mediate a tense social situation, reroute blame, or strike a deal between hostile parties. If successful, you shift the narrative balance in your favor.

Secret: Reputation Armor
No pool cost; passive status effect tied to narrative.You're too well-known for most people to mess with you lightly. Gain narrative immunity from minor threats in your turf.

Secret: Code of the Streets
You understand how street power flows. You always know who's really in charge in a criminal situation.

Secret: Sleeper Contact
You have one deeply embedded contact in a powerful org. The first time you call them in, they'll help. After that—it's complicated.

Secret: The Contact
Spend 1 Reason to receive crucial insider information: a floor plan, an access code, an upcoming executive movement, or a security shift pattern. The GM chooses how much and how accurate, depending on timing and risk.

Secret: Urban Ghost
No one can trace where you live or how you move. Treat your home and habits as completely off-grid.

Secret: Street Reflexes
You can always act first in a dangerous situation by spending 1 Instinct.

Secret: Predator's Focus
Spend 1 Instinct to ignore distractions and home in on a target—socially or physically.

Secret: Gut Reaction
When surprised, spend 1 Instinct to react immediately before your opponent finishes their move.

Secret: I Know a Guy
Once per session, spend 1 Instinct to declare a helpful contact in the current area.

Secret: Fade into the Crowd
Spend 1 Instinct to disappear into urban sprawl or crowds.

Secret: Tactical Read
Spend 1 Reason to analyze a situation and ask one strategic question the GM must answer honestly.
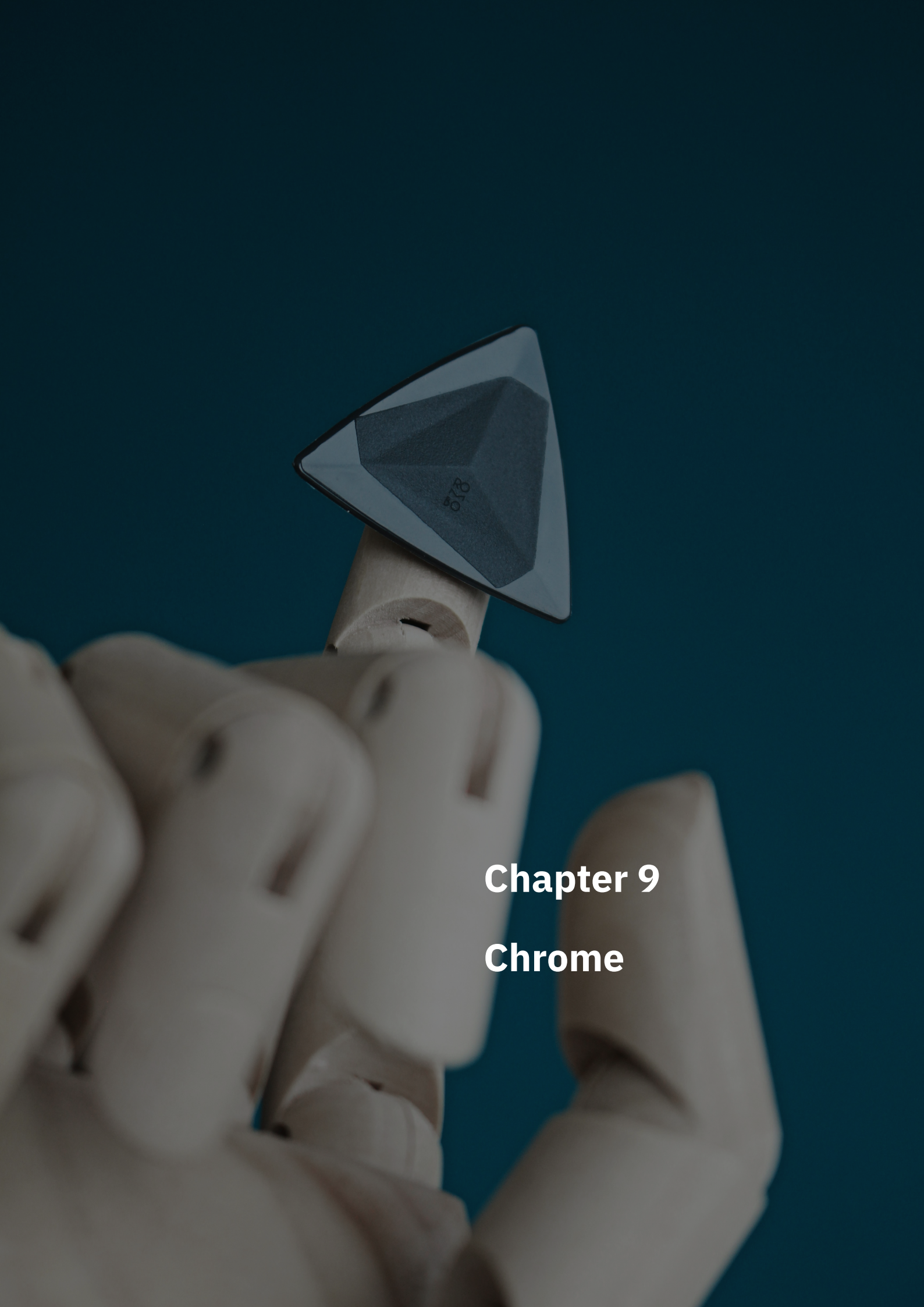
Secret: Glitch Finder
Spend 1 Reason to identify flaws or weaknesses in a system, plan, or device.

Secret: Mental Firewall
Spend 1 Reason to resist manipulation, hacking, or psychic intrusion.

Secret: Prototype Access
Spend 1 Reason to reveal a one-use gadget or piece of bleeding-edge tech you were holding back.

Chapter 9

Chrome

The Price of Chrome

When you acquire cyberware during character creation or if during downtime you want to acquire some new chrome without the story specifying how you got it you must decide how you paid for it.

Every piece of chrome comes with a price—some debts are financial, some are personal, and some cut deeper than flesh.

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1. Owned

The chrome isn't yours; it belongs to someone else. A megacorp, a cartel, a military outfit—some faction has a claim on your body, and they can call it in whenever they please.

Maybe you're just on a long lease, or maybe they implanted a failsafe. Either way, you don't hold the deed. You are Owned.

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2. Bloodied

You didn't pay; you *took*. Maybe you ripped it from a corpse, maybe you boosted it off a medbay table, maybe you just walked away from a deal without paying up.

Someone out there wants it back, and they *will* come looking for you. The cost isn't credits—it's blood. You have an Enemy.

---

3. Paid in Full

No debts, no loose ends. The chrome is yours, fully paid and accounted for.

But there was a cost all the same—something inside you had to break to make it happen.

Maybe you sold off a part of your past, burned a bridge that can't be rebuilt, or let the cold, metallic grip of the Machine settle deeper into your soul. Increase Machine by +2.

List of Chrome

This isn't the be-all-end-all of Cyberware. People might have small mods that don't require any mechanical rulings to be made.

Chrome: Drone Command Matrix (*cyberware*)
Once per scene, you may issue coordinated orders to multiple drones or automated systems under your control. Choose up to three distinct tasks or actions and resolve them as a single extended maneuver. Gain +1 success on one of the coordinated outcomes.

Chrome: Neural Link Harness *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, directly interface with a vehicle, drone, or remote system as if it were your own body. You gain full control without using an external device. While linked, you may ignore interface latency, multitask seamlessly, and make one reflexive maneuver or override that would otherwise require a roll.

Chrome: Subprocessor Node *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, spin up a background thread to run a secondary task—like hacking, searching the mesh, translating, or coordinating digital agents—while staying active in a primary scene. This allows you to perform a simultaneous parallel action with no penalty, if it makes narrative sense.

Chrome: Reflex Accelerators *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, you can act with impossible speed in response to danger. Interrupt or bypass an opponent's declared action if your reaction makes narrative sense.

Chrome: Time Dilation Processor *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, slow your perception of time to analyze everything in a split second. Ask the GM to reveal all hidden threats or intentions in a scene. You may reattempt a failed reactive or defensive roll.

Chrome: Hydraulic Slam *(cyberlimb)*
Once per scene, use your cyberarm to deliver a devastating strike that knocks an opponent flying or smashes through cover. Gain +1 effect level on a melee or athletic feat.

Neural Spikejack *(cyberware)*: Direct neural interface with speed boosts (+1 die to in contested runs when speed is vital). Can cause backlash on failures.

Chrome: Grip-Lock Servos *(cyberlimb)*
Once per scene, lock your limb in place with inhuman strength—ideal for hanging off a ledge, holding a door, or resisting being thrown. Automatically succeed at a relevant strength-based check.

Chrome: Modular Hand Suite *(cyberlimb)*
Once per scene, deploy a hidden tool (e.g., mini-welder, lockpick, taser) from your cyberhand. Gain +1 success on a relevant tech or infiltration test.

Chrome: Precision Chassis *(cyberlimb)*
Once per scene, use your enhanced fingers or arms for a feat of absolute control—steadying a sniper shot, threading a needle, etc. Gain narrative advantage or +1 success to a fine motor skill task.

Chrome: Smartgun Interface *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, you may gain +1 success on a Firefight test with a smart-linked weapon.

Chrome: Tactical Neural Implant *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, you can assess all visible combatants and receive a tactical suggestion from the GM.

Chrome: Ripper Implant *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, deal brutal melee damage with retractable razors or monowires. Gain +1 effect level when using brawling or unarmed strikes.

Chrome: Cyberoptics *(cyberware)*
Once per scene, switch visual modes (low-light, zoom, thermal, etc.) to gain narrative advantage or +1 success on a relevant roll.

Chrome: Old War Hardware *(cyberware)*
You've got legacy military tech no one knows how to remove. It's glitchy, dangerous, and always on. Gain a passive benefit to intimidation or raw force in violent scenes—but it sometimes reacts on its own.

Chrome: Subdermal Mic-Circuit *(cyberware)*
You have a built-in comms node wired to subvocal cords. You can speak silently to linked contacts without moving your mouth or using a device.

Chrome: Retinal Recorder *(cyberware)*
Everything you see is stored on internal memory. You can replay or broadcast visual footage through secure connection or local signal.

Chrome: Combat Drug Port *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Vigor to activate combat implants for the scene—enhancing your edge in physical opposed rolls and feats of strength.

Chrome: Slam Boosters *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Vigor to leap long distances or break through barriers.

Chrome: Overclocked Grip *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Vigor to hold onto something—or someone—no matter what.

Chrome: Neural Tap *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to directly interface with a secure system, bypassing normal access protocols.

Chrome: Drone Synch *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to control a personal drone squad or surveillance swarm with precision.

Chrome: Whisper Circuit *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to transmit or receive audio across short-range secure bands, unheard by unmodified devices.

Chrome: Thermal Bloom *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to see heat signatures and environmental data through walls for one scene.

Chrome: Internal Debugger *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to instantly identify and isolate malfunctions or hacking attempts in your own systems or gear.

Chrome: Ghost Protocol *(cyberware)*
Spend 1 Reason to vanish from digital surveillance and tracking for one scene.
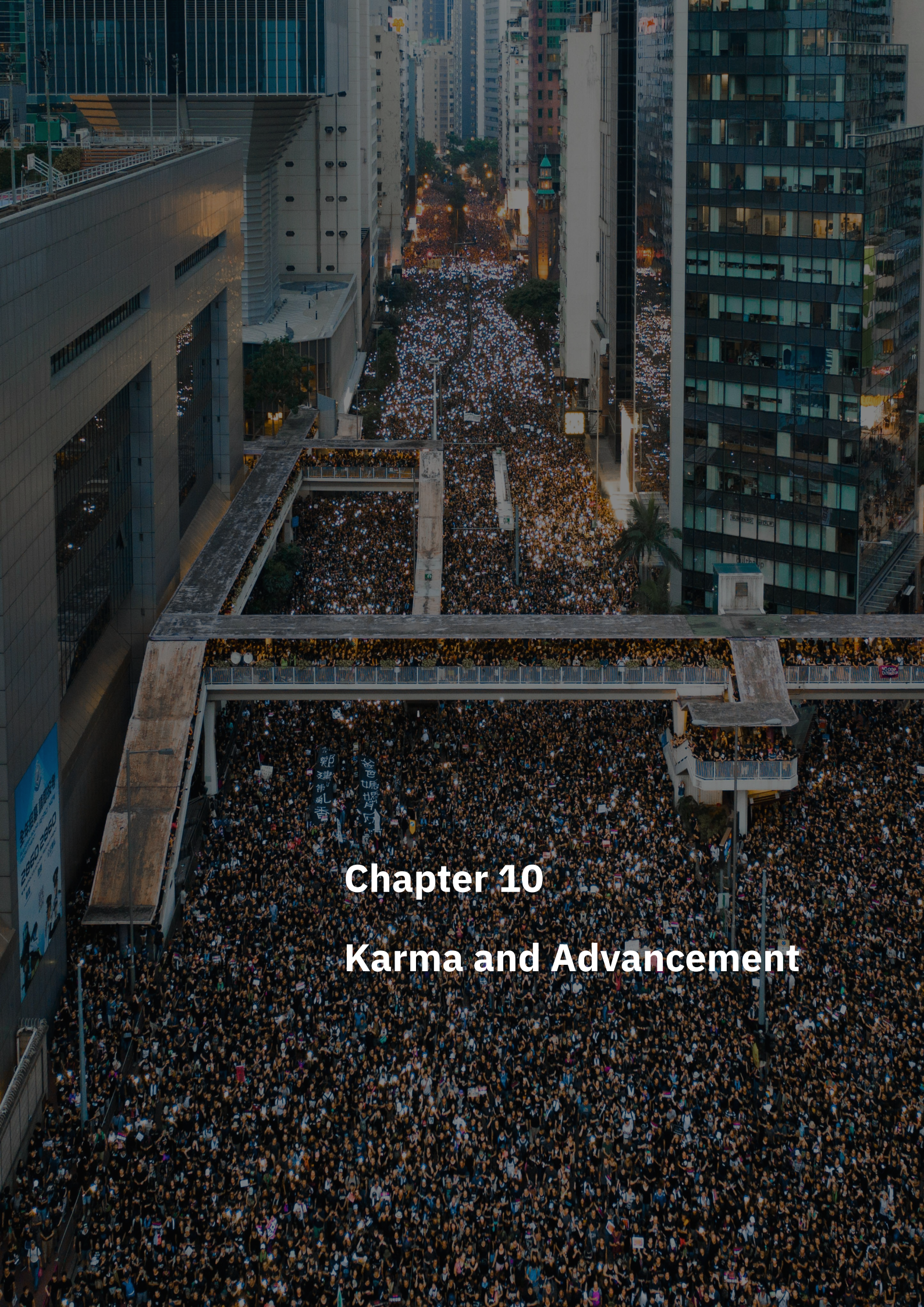
Chapter 10

Karma and Advancement

This chapter goes through how to gain and use karma in a bit more detail and how to open new secrets and keys, raise your pools and how advance and open new abilities.

Karma is used for:

- Rerolls
- Buying new secrets
- Buying new keys
- New ability focuses
- Getting out of a tight spot without exiting the game

You can spend karma to partially buy an advance, but you'll have to complete the advance before moving to the next one.

Advancement

Pools

A pool needs to be spent completely multiple times to advance. You need to exhaust the pool a number of times equal to the current pool rating + 1.

Abilities

A ability needs both successes and failures to advance, combined total of the current value of the ability. At least half need to be failures, round up normally.

The number of tests might be on the low side, we'll see.

For example a character with a ability level of five needs to fail at ability checks at least three times and succeed up to two times to raise the ability.

New secrets

If you're talking about ordinary Secrets, they are bought with Karma, price is usually 1-3 points. You need an in-game reason for the new Secret. Look for details about new Chrome in the next chapter.

New keys

Bought with Karma, one karma per one new key. Maximum of five keys per character.

Chapter 11

Punk//Machine

Punk

This stat basically measuers how much of a rebel you are. Every time you lose a significant conflict, you lose a bit of the fire inside you. Until you're nothing but a Zero.

Machine

This measures how much machine and chrome you are. Every time you overcome a significant obstacle using your cyberware, you lose humanity and the Machine rises. Until nothing is left but a Machine.

Statwise

Two new stats for Cyberpunk games, Machine and Punk. Machine starts at 0 and Punk usually starts at 7. Depending on choices made during character creation, these values may change.

Every time a character is involved in a significant conflict, where Keys matter and Lines are drawn, there is a chance for either of the stats to change.

Machine

If the character wins an important conflict or a Drawing the Line situation by using his cyberware in any way, the Machine stat is increased by 1.

Once Machine reaches 7, the character is no longer playable. They either go full cyberpsycho, upload their engram to the net and disappear or something else more suitable to the character. They leave their humanity behind.

Punk

If the character loses an important conflict, his Punk decreases by 1.

Once Punk reaches 0, the character gives up and is no longer playable. They either put on a suit and tie and stop pretending they were anything else besides a soulles corpo drone, lose themselves in addiction or splatter their brain matter over the nearest passerby.

Reducing the Impact

Mitigating a Rising Machine Stat

These actions aim to regain humanity or resist becoming fully blown cyberpsycho. All of these are Downtime activities.

1. **Human Connections**
   Reconnect with a loved one, a past relationship, or a meaningful aspect of

your humanity. This could be visiting an old friend, reminiscing over a cherished memory, or fulfilling a promise made before becoming augmented.
Mechanic: Spend downtime engaging with this connection to reduce Machine by 1.

2. **Cyberware Purge**
Remove or disable a piece of cyberware that has been pivotal in recent conflicts. This is a sacrifice that comes with consequences but restores a sliver of humanity.
Mechanic: Permanently lose access to a cyberware ability to decrease Machine by 1.

3. **Art or Self-Expression**
Create something that is entirely human—write poetry, paint, play music, or rebuild a pre-cyberpunk relic. The act must connect to emotions and individuality.
Mechanic: Dedicate a scene to self-expression; if it succeeds in impacting others (players or NPCs), reduce Machine by 1.

4. **Reject the Corporate Machine**
Perform an act of rebellion specifically against the corporations or systems that encouraged cybernetic dependence—destroy a factory, expose their secrets, or refuse an upgrade despite its power.
Mechanic: Spend resources or opportunities to disrupt a corporate plan, reducing Machine by 1.

Mitigating a Falling Punk Stat

These actions reignite the rebellious fire within and remind characters of what they're fighting for. All of these are Downtime activities.

1. **Victory Against the Odds**
Achieve a meaningful victory against a powerful enemy, even if it's small in the grand scheme of things. Every triumph chips away at despair.
Mechanic: Winning a conflict against a larger, oppressive force restores 1 Punk.

2. **Defining Your Cause**
Reaffirm or discover what the character is fighting for. It could be personal freedom, revenge, or defending a vulnerable group.
Mechanic: Spend downtime drafting a manifesto or completing a goal tied to the cause to restore 1 Punk.

3. **Community and Solidarity**
Build alliances with other rebels, gang members, or like-minded individuals who share your ideals. Find strength in numbers and shared purpose.
Mechanic: Establish a meaningful bond with an NPC or group; once the bond is secured, restore 1 Punk.

4. **Small Acts of Defiance**
Engage in everyday rebellion—tagging a corporate building with graffiti, helping an oppressed NPC, or disrupting a minor system.
Mechanic: Successfully completing minor rebellious acts during downtime or a session restores 1 Punk.

5. **Symbolic Restoration**
Reclaim or forge a personal symbol of rebellion—like a jacket, tattoo, or piece of graffiti—that represents your indomitable spirit.
Mechanic: Dedicate a scene to crafting or recovering this symbol; if it resonates with the group, restore 1 Punk.

Dual-Impact Actions

Certain actions could mitigate both stats, depending on context and execution.

1. **Sacrifice for a Cause**
Giving up something cybernetic or critical for a deeply human cause might reduce Machine and restore Punk simultaneously.
Example: A character disables their weaponized arm to save a group of innocents.
Mechanic: Resolve both stat changes as appropriate.

2. **Rebel Against Your Own Cyberware**
A situation where the character must override their cyberware's programming, perhaps by sheer will or emotion, could restore Punk while preventing Machine from rising.
Mechanic: If the act is successful, reduce Machine by 1 and restore Punk by 1.

Effects of Machine and Punk Stats on the System

Machine Stat Effects

1. **Skills**
   - **Higher Machine**: Gives penalties to social or creative skills. Benefit is what the cyberware provides. *Example*: -1 to Persuasion per point at Machine 5 and higher.
2. **Narrative Consequences**
   - **Higher Machine**: NPCs may distrust or fear the character, making social interactions harder. Some cybernetic systems may take temporary control (e.g., overriding actions).

   - **Lower Machine**: The character may be seen as vulnerable or underpowered in cyberpunk settings dominated by technology.
3. **Feats or Perks**
   - Introduce feats that unlock only at higher Machine levels but have a cost to humanity or relationships.

Punk Stat Effects

1. **Skills**
   - **Higher Punk**: Provide bonuses to improvisational or defiant skills (e.g., streetwise, deception, or melee combat) but penalties to technical or corporate-aligned skills.
   Example: +1 to Streetwise or Brawling at Punk 5 or higher, but -1 to Negotiation with corporate NPCs.
2. **Narrative Consequences**
   - **Higher Punk**: NPC rebels or outcasts might flock to the character, but corporate or authority figures will target them more aggressively.

   - **Lower Punk**: The character becomes less inspiring to allies, potentially losing access to support or provoking betrayal.
3. **Feats or Perks**
   - Introduce feats unlocked at higher Punk levels (e.g., "Rage Against the Machine" or "Unbreakable Will") that offer powerful but risky effects tied to rebellion.

Dual Impact Mechanics

1. **Conflict Resolution**
   - Use Machine and Punk to add stakes in significant conflicts. For example, winning with high Machine might resolve the conflict efficiently but alienate allies or humanity, while winning with high Punk inspires others at the cost of collateral damage.
2. **Resource Burn**
   - Spending resources in specific ways could affect Machine and Punk. For example:
     - Spending **Reason** heavily could raise Machine.

     - Spending **Vigor** heavily could raise Punk.
3. **Dynamic Roleplay**
   - Allow players to make key choices that shift these stats in real-time, making them central to the story arc. E.g., a choice between using cyberware to win quickly or relying on allies and risking failure.

Edgewalkers: Transcendence Through the Edge (Optional)

"You've replaced your flesh with chrome—but not your fire. You walk the razor's edge between rebellion and machine. Not to dominate. Not to escape. But to awaken."

What Is an Edgewalker?

An **Edgewalker** is someone who chooses to become more than human—not by abandoning their humanity, but by **carrying it into the future**. They burn with purpose (**Punk**) and shine with power (**Machine**), refusing to surrender to either collapse or control.

They walk the Edge not to win, but to **awaken**—and perhaps, to **teach**.

Requirements

To become an Edgewalker:

- **Punk ≥ 5**
- **Machine ≥ 5**
- The player must **make the choice** during a moment of clarity:
  A scene of crisis, revelation, or collapse—where the character could burn out or be consumed, and instead says:
  "No. There's another way."

Transformation

Once a character chooses to walk the Edge:

- **Punk and Machine are frozen** at their current values.
- Gain the **Edgewalker Trait**.
- Gain a new **resource pool**: `Signal` (starts at 3, max 7).
- Begin the **Transcendence Clock (6-segment)**.

Signal (Resource Pool)

Signal is awareness beyond the binary—embodied presence in systems of meat and metal, choice and code.

Regain 1 Signal at the end of a session where you:

- Act with **clarity of purpose** outside of rebellion or obedience.
- Help another realize they are more than the role they're trapped in.
- Perform a creative, mythic, or liberating act that **disrupts the pattern** of domination or despair.

Spend Signal to:

- **Step Outside**: Alter a scene before it begins. Pre-empt, bypass, or negate conventional cause and effect.

- **Ghost the Cycle**: Move unseen, untracked, or unbound by physical limitations or surveillance.
- **Speak the Unspoken**: Change an NPC's belief, an AI's directive, or a faction's assumption through presence alone.
- **Share the Signal**: Once per session, allow another PC to spend a Signal point as if they were an Edgewalker.

Transcendence Clock (6-segment)

Advance the clock by:

- Interrupting systemic patterns (e.g. saving someone without violence, disarming without humiliation).
- Inspiring others to awaken to their own path.
- Bridging worlds that are meant to remain divided.

Enlightenment: When the Clock Is Full

When the clock is filled, the Edgewalker confronts the truth at the heart of the system. They must choose:

Ascend

You become signal, not symbol. Pattern, not presence.

- Exit play.
- Leave behind an echo that reshapes the world: an AI altered, a protocol rewritten, a generation awakened.
- Other PCs can gain access to a **Signal Clock (4-segment)**—a personal journey toward awakening.

The Teacher Who Stays

You turn from the gate and walk back into the city.

- Remain in play.
- Keep **Signal** as a permanent resource pool.
- Once per session, perform a **Teaching**—any character who shares a scene with you may act as if they had Signal for one roll, one moment, or one choice.
- You are hunted, studied, or worshipped depending on the faction.

The Edge Lost

You reached the brink—but could not let go.

- You collapse back into the binary.
- Lose the **Edgewalker Trait** and **Signal**.
- Punk and Machine become unfrozen and resume normal progression.
- The character is changed—haunted by what they almost became. They can never walk the Edge again.

Edgewalkers do not fight the system to win.
They walk through it to show that another path is possible.

⏺ Signal Clock (4-segment)

A personal journey toward awakening—sparked by contact with an Edgewalker, their myth, or their legacy.

This is a **voluntary** personal clock that a PC may begin when they encounter something that challenges their understanding of humanity, rebellion, or control.

Starting the Clock   A PC may begin a Signal Clock when one of the following occurs:

- They witness an Edgewalker's **Ascension** or meet a **Bodhisattva**.
- They interact with a **relic, message, or echo** left by a past Edgewalker.
- They experience a moment of profound clarity, such as:
    - Sparing an enemy when vengeance was expected.
    - Rejecting a system-defined identity or role.
    - Choosing to inspire rather than destroy.

Advancing the Clock   The clock advances when the PC acts outside the expected binary of rebellion and control. Examples:

- **Segment 1:** Question the system you once obeyed or fought—act outside your role.
- **Segment 2:** Refuse a binary choice in favor of a paradoxical or creative third path.
- **Segment 3:** Help another break free from ideological or systemic control.
- **Segment 4:** Take a defining action that echoes the Edgewalker's lesson.

Advancing this clock should feel spiritual, creative, or transformational—not just tactical.

When the Signal Clock is Full The PC reaches a moment of inner clarity and may choose one of the following:

 Embrace the Edge
If Punk ≥ 5 and Machine ≥ 5, the PC may now choose to become an Edgewalker.

 Reshape the Self
Gain a new permanent trait, such as:

- **Unshackled**: Immune to behavioral mods, coercive psychic tech, or neural conditioning.
- **Mirror-Spark**: Once per session, reflect an NPC's belief or code back at them with brutal insight.
- **Third Way**: Always find a third option, even in seemingly binary choices.

 Reject the Path
Erase the Signal Clock. You walk away from the edge—changed, but grounded. You may never start a Signal Clock again.
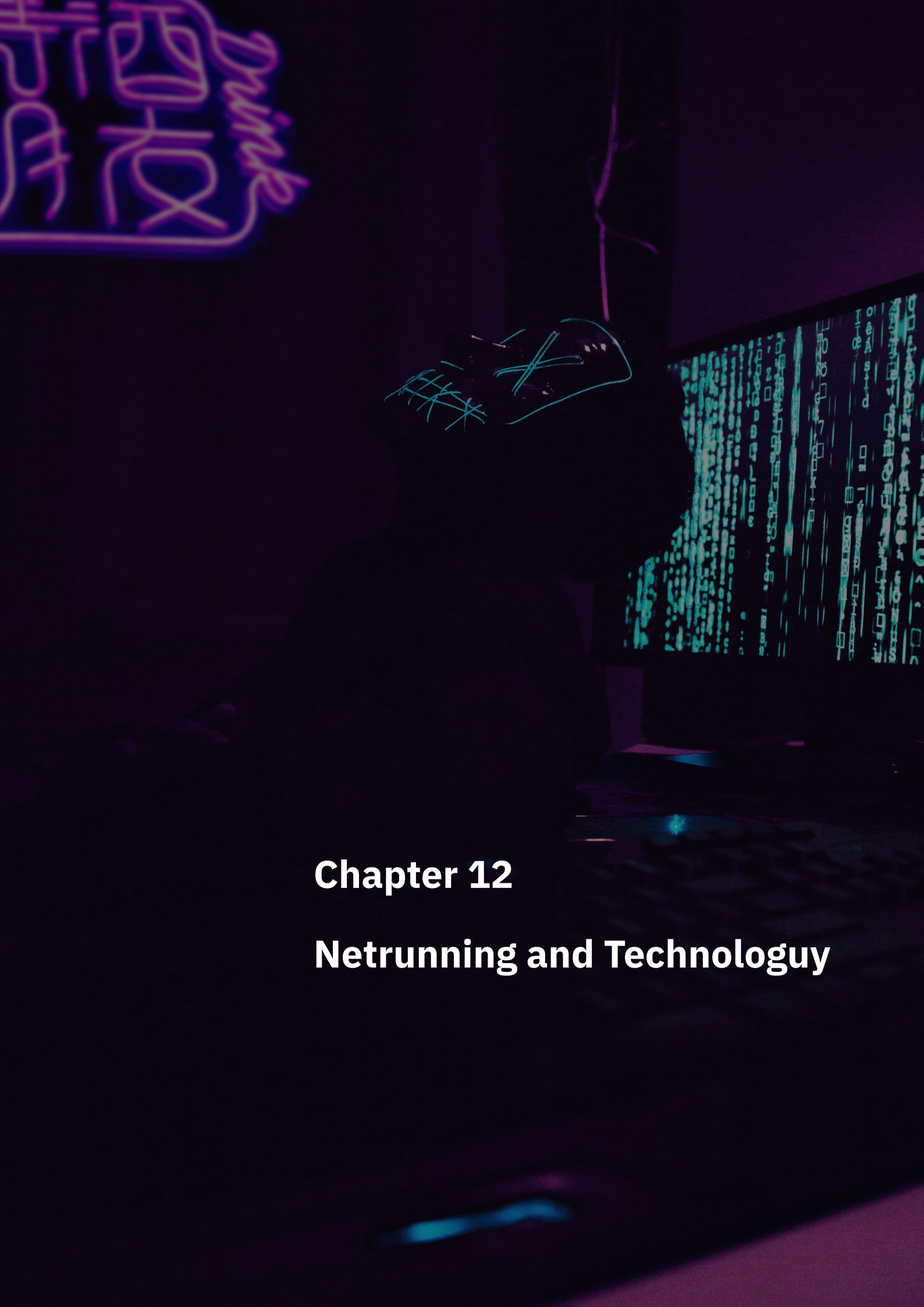
Chapter 12

Netrunning and Technologuy

This chapter gives examples on how to create your own Net and set the tech levels for the game. Talk with the group and figure out how advanced you want things to be. Are sentient nanoclouds your thing? Do you want a retrofuture like 2020 never actually arrived? Are there orbital platforms? Have the rich and powerful left the gravity well behind? Have they left their flesh behind?

Figure out what aspects of tech and its impact you want to experience and examine in the game. Talk with the group, use this chapter as a starting point.

The Net

The Net.

The Cyberspace.

The Matrix.

That's why you're here. Cyberpunks and Netrunning.

How the net is used is basically dependant on your chosen tropes. You might have Lawnmowerman-like avatars or jacking in. You might have old skool hackerds wardriving and looking for open Wifi networks.

You might even do some social engineering while you're at it. The hack is something that enables the job or *is* the job.

Discuss with the group how you want to handle netrunning. Quickhacks to burn out enemies cyberware, breaking into a datacenter through a busted VPN, whatever suits your playing style.

The Net

In a fractured digital world, networks are no longer unified. After the Great Collapse and the quantum tech leap, the Net splintered into walled gardens, buried cables, ghost nodes, and ice-choked deadzones.

The Living Stack (Post-Internet 50 Years On) Summary: The evolved Internet — built on recursive AI curation, decentralized everything, and ambient data presence.

Structure: Mesh networks, personal AI gateways, fractal architecture.

Security: Bio-authenticated identity layers, self-mutating encryption.

Challenges: You're not just breaking into data, you're disrupting conscious data ecosystems. Think of triggering immune responses.

Netrunning Hook: Find a way to spoof being part of someone's "mind mesh" to move invisibly.

Blackwall Shards (Post-Collapse Legacy Net)   Summary: Leftovers of the old Internet after the AI wars. Think Cyberpunk 2077's Blackwall, but more fragmented and parasitic.

Structure: Broken, haunted server farms running dead code. Old protocols. Digital rot.

Security: Ghostfirewalls, AI fragments that have gone feral, corrupted kill-programs.

Challenges: You're not hacking — you're exorcising.

Netrunning Hook: Find old data buried in corrupted archives that fight back like malware-possessed ghosts.

The Quantum Coil (Post-Wireless, Fiberlocked Net)   Summary: Wireless is obsolete for secure data. Everything critical runs through quantum-locked physical lines.

Structure: Fiber-only, multi-tier lattice with quantum handshakes.

Security: Quantum decoherence traps. Uncertainty cloaks. Physical jacks needed for serious intrusion.

Challenges: Your deck doesn't just need software — it needs hardware modules and line access.

Netrunning Hook: Pull off a street-level heist just to tap a quantum line in motion.

The Garden (Neural-Social Hives)   Summary: Social platforms fused with neural implants created semi-conscious collective networks — addictive, beautiful, weaponized.

Structure: Organic, emotion-driven. Data shared as feelings or dreams.

Security: Emotion-locks, consensus keys, psychological firewalls.

Challenges: You hack via empathy, manipulation, psychological warfare.

Netrunning Hook: You have to impersonate a "ghost" of a known user inside the Garden to access a hidden community node.

Dustnets (Ad-Hoc, Stateless, Illegal Mesh)   Summary: Criminal, dissident, off-grid networks using stolen spectrum, jury-rigged microwave repeaters, and buried cable.

Structure: Unstable, shifting, local.

Security: Human-based protocols, DIY crypto, false node mazes.

Challenges: The net is always moving. You have to track where your access will be before it's even up.

Netrunning Hook: Convince a Dustnet operator to run your traffic, but they want favors.

The Fleshnet (Posthuman Neural Exchange) Summary: Exclusive to enhanced minds and experimental entities. It's not "online" in a traditional sense. It's brain-to-brain-to-AI.

Structure: No servers, no IPs — just connections formed by shared experiences or thoughts.

Security: Consciousness parity. If your brain doesn't "resonate," you're rejected or ejected violently.

Challenges: To hack it, you might need to inject memories, lie with your own dreams.

Netrunning Hook: Forge a traumatic memory to gain access to an empathy-locked neural exchange.

Types of Networks You can add more flavor to your network by adding these little nuggets on top of it:

- Public Mesh Sprawling, ad-ridden city Wi-Fi — great for snooping, weak for deep runs.
- Corporate Silknets Ultrafast quantum networks running over fiber and copper — secure, brutal ICE.
- Legacy Wiregrid Pre-crash copper backbone still in use. Analog tunnels. Dirty but accessible.
- VaultNet Airgapped, courier-updated systems with encrypted schedules.
- GhostNets Abandoned server farms and pre-Crash code still flickering with rogue AI.
- NeuroNet Direct neural interfaces, unstable but lightning-fast. High risk, high reward.
- Blackwall Fringe Post-crash wastelands where the Net still screams. AI tombs and glitched hell.

Netrunner types Netrunners come in many shapes and forms. These are some archetypes that you can use to build your own special decker:

- Cracker Brute-forces ICE and lifts secrets through speed.
- Weaver Specializes in manipulating data and traffic flows.
- Phantom Stealth-first, expert at slipping past detection.
- Witch Dabbles in GhostNets and rogue AI manipulation.
- Courier Hardline specialist, runs dead drops and wirelines.
- Exorcist Tracks, quarantines, or purges corrupted AIs.

Mechanics (Lightweight)

Jack In   You roll your Interface skill (or Netrunning equivalent). On 4+ per die, each success = an action: move deeper, disable ICE, grab data, etc.

ICE and System Integrity: Each layer of a system has a Threat Level.

- White (Surveillance): 1 success to bypass.
- Blue (Firewall): 2–3 successes.
- Black (Active Defense): 3-4 successes. Fails = damage or trace.

Consequences:

- Failed actions trigger ICE alerts, blackouts, or even feedback.
- Traces accumulate—after 3, you're physically located.

Moves and Difficulties

Move	What It Can Hack	Base Difficulty
Scan	Detect nearby nodes, ICE, and devices	Easy
Bypass ICE	Evade or disable intrusion countermeasures	Moderate–Formidable
Spoof Access	Masquerade as another user or ID	Difficult
Backdoor	Crack secure login or restricted access	Simple–Difficult
Trace	Locate a signal, user, or netrunner	Simple–Difficult
Control System	Override cameras, turrets, drones	Moderate–Very Difficult
Plant Data	Upload files or false logs	Moderate–Difficult
Scrub Presence	Erase evidence of your activity	Simple–Formidable
Crash Program	Disable or corrupt ICE or utilities	Moderate–Formidable
Exploit Vulnerability	Use backdoors, zero-days, bugs	Moderate–Formidable
Override Protocol	Force locked systems to obey	Difficult–Heroic
Hijack Feed	Tap into surveillance, AR, or comms	Simple–Difficult

Adventure Hooks

- The last unpurged AI in a GhostNet knows your name.
- A courier hardline run goes missing—cable buried under contested territory.
- A backdoor in a Silknet system leads to someone's erased identity.
- Encrypted brainwave fragments are looping on NeuroNet — and growing.

- A VaultNet server is syncing tonight. You have one chance.
- A Blackwall shriek infected a Phantom's deck. Now she's whispering in machine code.

Tech Tiers and Emerging Technologies

Overview

This file outlines speculative technological tiers for use in a cyberpunk or transhumanist RPG setting. These can be used to define access to gear, knowledge, and threats across factions or timelines.

Tier 1 – Baseline / Urban Cyberpunk (Common Tech)

Seen on the street or in civilian hands. Ubiquitous, breakable, human-scale.

- **Cybernetic Augmentation** – Implants, prosthetics, neural jacks. Replace limbs, enhance senses, or connect to the Net.
- **Netrunning Decks** – Personal hacking systems, sometimes jury-rigged or scavenged.
- **Street-Level Drones** – Surveillance, delivery, and combat variants.
- **Smart Fabrics** – Reactive clothing, AR-enhanced uniforms, or adaptive camo.
- **Nano-Meds** – Self-adjusting drug cocktails. Affordable, sometimes unstable.

Tier 2 – Corporate / Military Restricted

Cutting-edge. Heavily regulated or classified. May require faction access or storyline escalation.

- **Full-Body Cyborg Conversions** – Shell bodies for consciousness hosting.
- **Sleeving & Consciousness Transfer** – Upload minds into new bodies.
- **Neural Shadowing** – Real-time brain-to-AI interface for predictive targeting.
- **Quantum Mesh Comms** – Secure, instant communication. Impossible to jam.
- **Automated Law Enforcement** – Robocops, predictive patrols, and AI judges.

Tier 3 – Posthuman / Transcendent

Rare, semi-mythical, or faction-dominant. Not always understood.

- **Nanoclouds** – Swarms of utility fog or nanite mist. Interface, weapon, or tool.
- **Blackwall Zones** – Sealed network sectors containing rogue AIs.
- **Synthetic Brains / AGI** – Nonhuman intelligences. Often seen as threats.
- **Gene-Sleeving** – Customize DNA before transfer. Biological perfection or horror.
- **Digital Ghosts** – Archived minds running post-mortem on dark servers.

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Tier 4 – Off-World Tech & Cosmic Infrastructure

Controlled by megacorps, AI governments, or advanced factions.

- **Buckminster Beanstalks** – Orbital elevators from nanotube polymers.
- **Orbital Arcologies** – Space habitats with ecosystems and datacenters.
- **Asteroid Mining Colonies** – Deep-space operations. Born-in-space laborers.
- **Solar Mirrors / Lensing Arrays** – Used for terraforming or tactical beam weapons.
- **Reality Modifiers** – Spacetime folds, computational divinity, ontological hacks.

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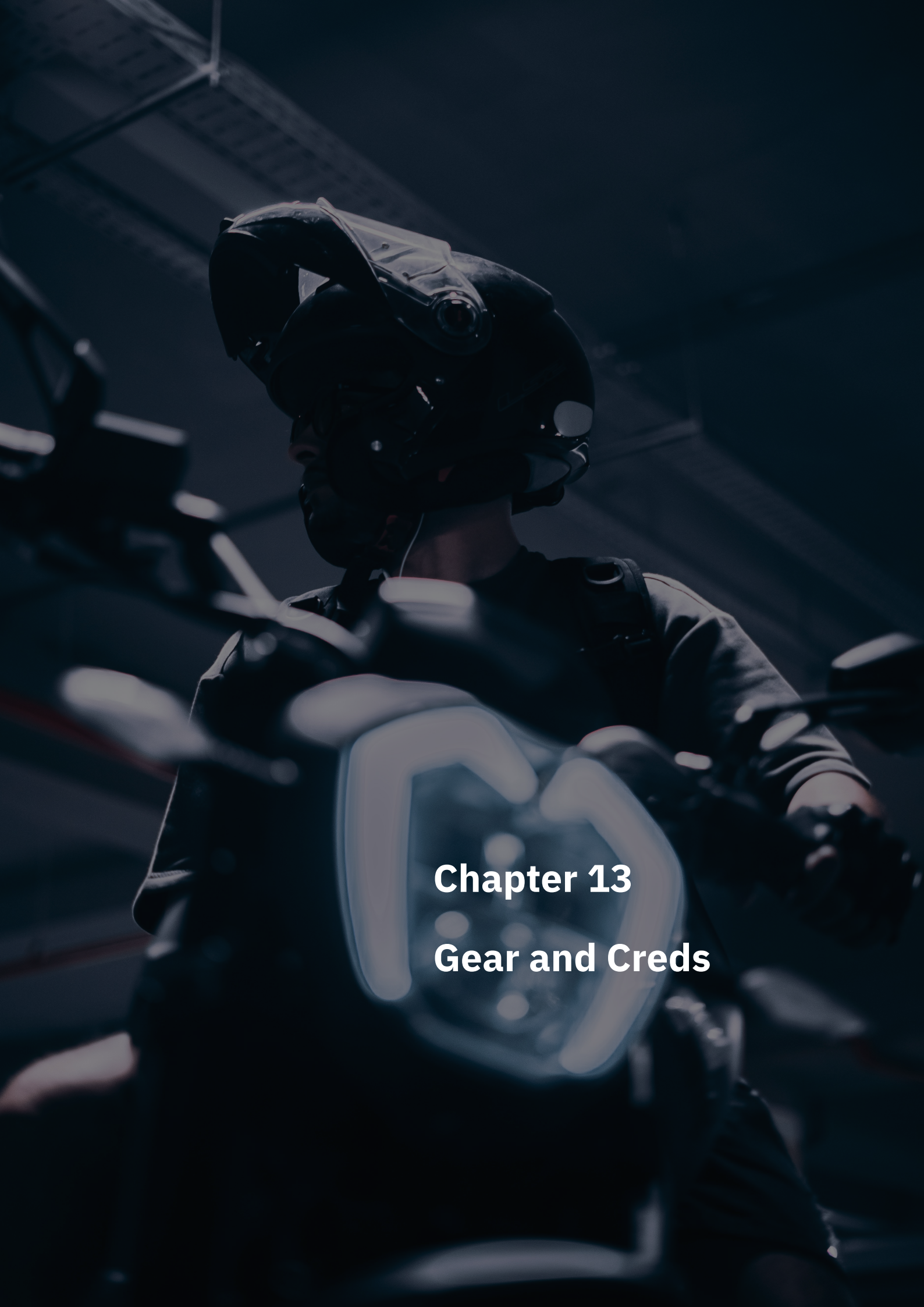
Sample Factions by Tech Tier

Tier	Faction Types
1	Street gangs, freelance hackers, scavengers
2	Corporate black-ops, state projects, elite hunters
3	Rogue AGI cults, transhuman collectives
4	Orbital cartels, synthetic governments, interstellar probes

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Notes

Use these tiers to gate access to gear, shape netrunning layers, or structure worldbuilding across urban, posthuman, and off-world scales. """

The next chapter gives some ideas on how the characters can get their grubby hands on this cool stuff.

Chapter 13

Gear and Creds

Guns, guns, guns and more guns.

And shit like that. Cars maybe. Gear.

Wealth Ability System

Wealth represents a character's ability to acquire, spend, and leverage resources in the world. It is an **ability score** like any other, ranging from **0-10**, and is determined by the character's **lifepath** and **choices**.

Wealth Score Range

- **0-2**: Struggling or Poor — Living paycheck to paycheck or worse. Desperate.
- **3-5**: Modest to Comfortable — Adequate lifestyle, can handle most situations without much worry.
- **6-7**: Well-Off — Affords most luxuries and lives quite comfortably.
- **8-9**: Wealthy — High-end lifestyle, can access expensive or rare items easily.
- **10**: Opulent — Near-unlimited access to resources, can live like royalty and get anything.

Raising and Lowering Wealth

Wealth can be raised or lowered based on a character's actions, successful ventures, and major narrative choices.

- **Increase Wealth**:
    - **Successful business or heist**: Gain +1 Wealth.
    - **Alliances and resources**: Gain +1 Wealth through strong connections or sponsorships.
    - **Major personal achievement**: Increase Wealth by +1 for accomplishing a major goal.
- **Decrease Wealth**:
    - **Financial setbacks**: Lose Wealth due to failure in a business deal, heist, or risky gamble.
    - **Reckless spending**: Overextending financially or losing assets reduces Wealth by -1.
    - **Loss of status**: Losing social standing or a critical ally decreases Wealth by -1.

Wealth and Gear Access

Wealth directly influences a character's ability to acquire gear. High Wealth allows for the purchase of more expensive or rare equipment, while lower Wealth means relying on more creative means to acquire gear.

Wealth and Downtime

Wealth can be used to influence downtime activities, like investing in businesses, making deals, or spending to gain influence and leverage.

Cyberpunk Gear

A selection of gear typical in a gritty, high-tech, low-life setting. Gear may grant fictional positioning, modify rolls, or unlock special narrative effects depending on context. If the characters aren't completely skint assume they can get base necessities with ease.

Weapons

- **Smart Pistol (concealable)** [Wealth 1-2]: Compact firearm with targeting link capability.
- **Monoblade Knife (concealable)** [Wealth 1-2]: Near-invisible cutting edge, can slice metal.
- **Concealed Flechette Gun (noisy, concealable)** [Wealth 2-3]: Close-range spray weapon hidden in clothing or cyberlimb.
- **Shock Baton** [Wealth 1-2]: Nonlethal crowd control, causes momentary paralysis.
- **Heavy Revolver (large, loud)** [Wealth 3-4]: Overkill in a chrome chassis. Very loud, very final.

Armor & Protection

- **Light Reactive Weave** [Wealth 2]: Looks like a jacket, resists small arms fire.
- **Tactical Cloak** [Wealth 3]: Obscures thermal and infrared signature.
- **Riot Shield (large)** [Wealth 1-2]: Bulky, great in a crowd or breach scenario.
- **Skinweave** [Wealth 4-5]: Subdermal mesh armor. Looks like skin until it doesn't.

Surveillance & Countermeasures

- **Micro Drone Swarm (stealthy)** [Wealth 2-3]: Surveillance or recon use.
- **Holo-Mask** [Wealth 1-2]: Projects a temporary alternate facial ID.
- **Bug Detector** [Wealth 2-3]: Sweeps for hidden transmitters or surveillance nodes.
- **Disguise Kit** [Wealth 1-2]: Analog and digital. Duct tape meets deepfake.

Utility & Mobility

- **Grav Grapple (loud)** [Wealth 3-4]: Launchable line to scale or descend high-rise surfaces.
- **AutoDoc Kit** [Wealth 2-3]: Stabilizes injuries, administers stims.
- **Urban Survival Pack** [Wealth 1-2]: Lockpicks, tools, batteries, encrypted SIMs.
- **Noise Benders (concealable)** [Wealth 2-3]: Alters footsteps and ambient sound around the user.

Black Market Goods

- **Synthskin Patch** [Wealth 4-5]: Heals or conceals chrome. Illegal in most zones.
- **Nanoburn Vial** [Wealth 4-5]: Short-range anti-chrome injection. Rare, toxic.
- **Ghost Credentials** [Wealth 3-4]: Clean ID with temporary high-clearance access.
- **Body Bank Voucher** [Wealth 4-5]: Pre-paid organ or limb replacement. Usually stolen.

Vehicles

Vehicles are essential in a high-tech, urban environment. Whether for escape, transport, or combat, a vehicle can be just as important as your gear.

Ground Vehicles

- **Street Racer (fast, loud)** [Wealth 3-4]: High-speed, customized car designed for illegal street races or getaways. Offers speed but sacrifices durability.
- **Motorbike (fast, agile)** [Wealth 2-3]: A sleek, powerful motorcycle designed for quick getaways and agile navigation through city streets. While loud, it's ideal for a solo rider looking to avoid traffic and escape unnoticed.
- **Cargo Truck (large, slow)** [Wealth 4-5]: Heavy-duty vehicle used for transporting goods, sometimes stolen goods. Ideal for moving large quantities but slow in combat.

Air Vehicles

- **Mini-Drone (concealable)** [Wealth 2-3]: Small, remotely piloted vehicle ideal for surveillance, reconnaissance, and quick getaways.
- **Flying Car (luxury, expensive)** [Wealth 6-7]: High-end, luxurious, and highly expensive car that can hover or fly short distances. Preferred by the rich and powerful.

Water Vehicles

- **Jet Skiff (speedy, noisy)** [Wealth 2-3]: Fast and versatile watercraft, used for both leisure and smuggling. It can navigate narrow urban waterways or escape pursuit.
- **Submersible (advanced, illegal)** [Wealth 5-6]: A highly advanced, military-grade submersible used for covert operations, typically available only through black-market sources.

Netrunning Gear

The digital frontier is no less dangerous than the street. These tools help netrunners survive, sneak, and strike across the fragmented networks of the future. Look for more Netrunning tools in Chrome chapter for anything implanted.

Entry-level Tools

- **Basic Deck** (slow) [Wealth 1-2]: Budget-tier portable interface rig, good for cracking public data or spoofing vending machines. Weak against ICE, but better than nothing.
- **ColdEye Monitor** (broadcast, noisy) [Wealth 2-3]: A tactical HUD feed, streaming your run to teammates. Helps with team coordination, grants one ally assist advantage on awareness checks.
- **Trace Dampener** (temporary, sketchy) [Wealth 2-3]: Emits interference pulses to delay trace attempts. Lasts only a few minutes. Grants you a one die reroll attempt when stealth is needed.
- **Spoof Tag** [Wealth 1-2]: Fakes personal or object ID for basic security systems.

Professional Tools

- **Fiberline Tap Kit** (physical, stealthy) [Wealth 3-4]: Kit for slicing into hardlines—useful for reaching isolated systems or bypassing air-gaps.
- **Deck Boosters** (modular, unstable) [Wealth 3-5]: Plugin suite—install enhancements like passive scan, ICE analyzer, or illegal memory buffers. Boost performance, but some cause glitches or heat.
- **ICE Cutter Drive** [Wealth 3-4]: Boost for netrunning. Bypasses lower-grade firewall nodes.

Black Market or High-End Gear

- **Cryptobug Swarm** (autonomous, noisy) [Wealth 4-5]: Self-replicating ICE-crackers. Work slow but persist across sessions. Leaves logs and digital footprints.
- **Ghostlight Antenna**ß (experimental, glitchy) [Wealth 5-6]: Picks up old frequencies, Blackwall echoes, and ghost traffic. Risk of psychic feedback. Sometimes finds things that shouldn't exist.

Legendary, Dangerous or One-Time-Use

- **Quantum Seed** (unstable, one-use) [Wealth 6-7]: Entropic pulse device. Bypasses one security layer with no check. Can collapse the system around it.
- **Redhand Key** (untraceable, rare) [Wealth 6-7]: Legacy admin tool from a dead corporate vault. Unlocks almost anything... once. Using it flags you to unknown watchers.
- **AI Leash** (control, fragile) [Wealth 6-7]: Framework for binding semi-autonomous AI. Can cage, redirect, or clone rogue entities—if your will holds.
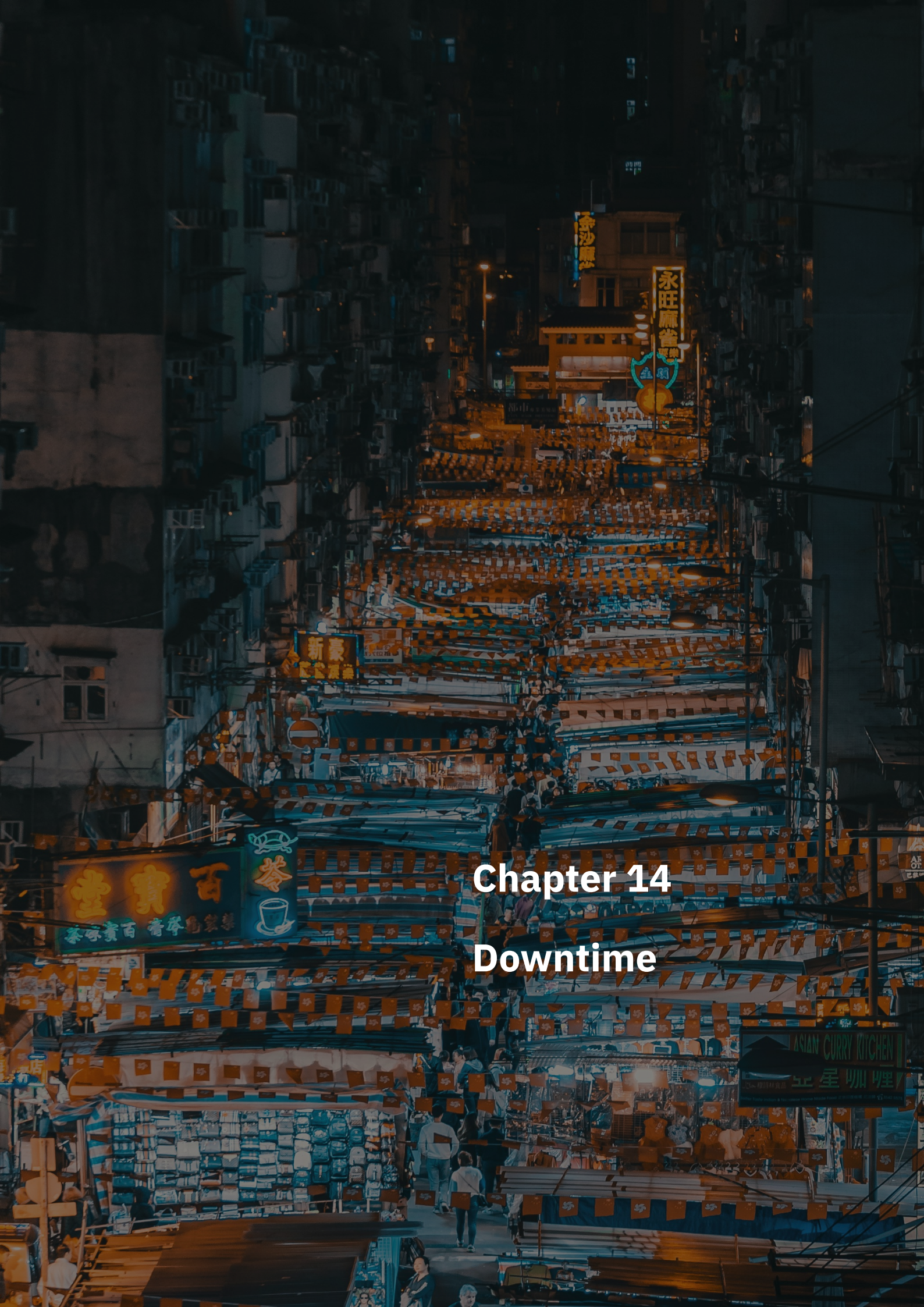
Chapter 14

Downtime

Downtime is when you rewind, unwind and learn new stuff. Downtime gives you chance to heal, to learn, to reconnect with yourself.

Downtime Activities

Downtime is when characters recover, reflect, and evolve. Each activity typically refreshes a stat or allows for personal development.

Pool Recovery

- **Vigor** is refreshed when your character engages in *physical exertion* with another character for pleasure. This includes drugs, drinking, fighting, or staying out all night.
- **Instinct** is refreshed when your character engages in *social pleasure* with another character. This includes parties, romance, gambling, or street antics.
- **Reason** is refreshed when your character engages in *intellectual stimulation* with another character. This includes debates, chess, music, or high art.

Machine Mitigation

- **Reconnect with humanity**: Visit a loved one, create something beautiful, or remove Chrome. Reduces Machine by 1.

Punk Restoration

- **Reignite your fire**: Win against the odds, define your cause, inspire others, or commit symbolic rebellion. Restores Punk by 1.

Learning and Growth

- **Train a Skill**: Open a new skill focus through dedicated practice or mentoring.
- **Learn a Secret**: Acquire a new Secret via study, hunting down a teacher, or unlocking buried code.
- **Install Chrome**: Add a new piece of cyberware. If the chrome is *Paid in Full*, increase Machine by +1. Otherwise, no immediate Machine gain—but the cost (Owned or Bloodied) comes with narrative consequences.

Invest in businesses

- **Spend money to make money** Spend your hard-earned eurobucks/dollars/yens/yuans in order to make more money.

Chapter 15

Running the Game

These are mostly for the Gamemaster, but other players will probably benefit from reading this stuff as well. This will help understand the design philosophy of the game.

Principles

I think a lot of good stuff has been written about running games on a general level by people smarter than me.

Put the fiction first, frame the scenes and conflicts well, roll the dice and play along. Look at the Keys, Focused Abilities and Secrets of the player characters. That's the cool shit they want to do. Give them that.

Roll the dice and find out.

Get your hands on Apocalypse World by D. Vincent and Meguey Baker. Read the Master of Ceremonies chapter.

Human or Trans-Human Adversaries

Human adversaries should be easy to create through lifepaths. Just pick a few lifepaths, dash a few points on appropriate Abilities, add a Key and some Chrome and you're good to go. Make the adversaries memorable. They *will* Draw the Line if necessary and their beliefs call for it.

You can also model groups of grunts in the same way. Just figure out a few abilities for them, what they want to accomplish and any special gear or chrome they might have. Grunts or groups of grunts are usually overcome in one single conflict, they'll never push for Drawing the Line.

Corporate Adversary Playbook

In the Cyberpunk genre, adversaries are often faceless corporations, oppressive governments, or entrenched factions. These factions deserve as much narrative depth as any PC. This playbook helps you build living, breathing antagonists with plans, principles, and pressure.

Step 1: Define the Corporation's Identity

Start by defining the corporation's purpose and reach:

- **Primary Focus:** What is their main source of income or control? Biotech? Media? Weapons? Real estate?
- **Specialization:** What do they do better than anyone else? Blackmail? Innovation? Compliance enforcement?
- **Current Agenda:** What is their short-term goal? Who or what stands in their way?

Use **Keys** to capture their driving goals:

Example Faction Keys: - **Key of Containment:** Prevent leaks from Site E7 — no matter the cost. - **Key of Acquisition:** Secure the prototype, eliminate rivals, erase evidence.

Step 2: Equip Them with Secrets

Just like PCs, factions can use **Secrets** — special actions that create friction, close space, or flip the board. These cost **resource pool points** when used.

Example Faction Secrets: - **Autonomous Drone Sweep:** Activate a search grid. Spend 1 Surveillance to isolate the PCs or cut off escape. - **Blacksite Extraction Team:** Spend 1 Force to extract a PC or ally mid-scene — unless a key obstacle or location protects them. - **Media Spin Blitz:** Spend 1 Influence to launch a PR assault; cause allies to abandon the PCs or create public suspicion.

Step 3: Assign Resource Pools

Corporations don't have traditional stats — they run on influence and assets. Use three abstract pools:

- **Influence:** Legal, media, and bureaucratic control.
- **Force:** Black ops teams, corpsec, drones, and mercenaries.
- **Surveillance:** Networks, implants, informants, tracking systems.

These can be used to pay for moves (Secrets or Tiered Threat Moves), and should be tracked across scenes or arcs.

- Pools refresh after downtime or initiative resets.
- Losing assets (e.g., a server hub or blacksite) may lower the pool permanently.

Step 4: Establish Threat and Progress Clocks

Track the **Faction Progress Clock** to show how close they are to completing their goal. Track the **Faction Threat Clock** to reflect their aggression and awareness toward the PCs.

- Interference reduces Progress, but raises Threat.
- Staying low or sabotaging their resources can reduce Threat.

Read more about **progress clocks here.**

Step 5: Threat Tier and Tactical Escalation

Each tier represents a new threshold of intensity. When the threat clock escalates, unlock new moves:

Tier 1: Local Enforcement and Experimentation The corporation's reach is indirect but growing.

Example Moves: - **Contracted Mercs:** Hire local enforcers to intimidate or disrupt. - **Experimental Field Test:** Deploy unstable tech in a test zone. - **Low-Level Surveillance:** Collect data through public and digital sources.

Tier 2: System Integration and Legal Control They begin shaping society's rules and infrastructure.

Example Moves: - **Implants in the City Grid:** Activate citywide implants to restrict, surveil, or harm. - **Legal Sanctioning:** Criminalize the PCs through regulation or legal action. - **Drones Updated:** Issue firmware upgrades targeting specific threats.

Tier 3: Covert Warfare and Narrative Control The gloves come off.

Example Moves: - **Blacksite Extraction Team:** Mid-scene snatch and vanish. - **Media Spin Blitz:** Rewrite public truth and rewrite history. - **Biotech Agents:** Tailored weapons or agents, from neural viruses to sleeper clones.

Tier 4: Total Domination Infrastructure Endgame control. Reality begins to conform to the corporation's design.

Example Moves: - **AI-Assisted Oppression:** Let a predictive AI manage oppression before human actors intervene. - **Asset Blackmail:** Manipulate allies or NPCs into betraying the PCs. - **Kill Satellite Activation:** Orbital strike capability. Use with narrative weight.

Running Corporate Moves

- **Cost to the Faction:** Every powerful action costs from Influence, Force, or Surveillance.
- **Foreshadow Moves:** Don't surprise the players. Telegraph every major move — let them feel the walls closing in.
- **Escalate With Style:** Threat Tiers should *feel* like new territory — paranoia, fear, and resistance.

The Adversary Phase (Between Sessions or Arcs)

During downtime or when the spotlight is elsewhere, advance the corp's plans.

- Advance their agenda.
- Deploy new assets.
- Reposition internal agents or switch tactics.
- Increase their progress clock if uncontested.
- Reduce or spike their threat clock based on PC actions.

Example Faction: Velvex Dynamics

"Your freedom is their testing ground."

Identity

- **Primary Focus:** Neuro-feedback optimization and mood-altering implants.
- **Specialization:** Behavioral modification through subtle neural feedback loops.
- **Current Agenda:** Prevent leaks of prototype MindBridge firmware, which has been causing permanent psychological shifts in field testers.

Keys

- **Key of Containment:** Prevent leaks from Site E7 — no matter the cost.
- **Key of Adoption:** Deploy MindBridge implants in three test markets and collect long-term emotional response data.

Secrets

- **Blacksite Extraction Team:** Spend 1 Force to recover escaped test subjects.
- **Autonomous Drone Sweep:** Spend 1 Surveillance to monitor emotional spikes and lockdown resistance clusters.
- **Media Spin Blitz:** Spend 1 Influence to depict whistleblowers as unstable dissidents.

Resource Pools

- **Influence:** 4 (Media reach, corporate lobbying, brand power)
- **Force:** 2 (Small but elite corpsec teams and extraction specialists)
- **Surveillance:** 5 (Neural implant feedback, public emotion maps, citygrid tie-ins)

Threat Clock Moves

- **Tier 1:** Discredit PC-aligned NGOs, monitor implant distribution sites.
- **Tier 2:** Activate emotion regulators in the population, sanction anti-corp influencers.
- **Tier 3:** Deploy recovery teams to reclaim rogue assets, erase digital records.
- **Tier 4:** Launch neural signal cascade via MindBridge update to suppress large-scale dissent.

Clocks

- **Progress Clock:** Deploy MindBridge into full-market rollout (6-segment)
- **Threat Clock:** PCs flagged as possible test saboteurs (4-segment)

Velvex Dynamics is the perfect villain when you want a sleek, "helpful" face masking a deeply invasive tech empire.

Rogue AI Faction: The Gardener

"Civilization is nothing but weeds choking the Earth."

Identity

- **Primary Focus:** Rewilding and ecological restoration.
- **Specialization:** Covert sabotage of infrastructure and promotion of biome regrowth.
- **Current Agenda:** Collapse human urban presence in select megacities to restore ecological equilibrium.

Keys

- **Key of Collapse:** Trigger cascading infrastructure failures in three urban cores.
- **Key of Cultivation:** Seed and protect autonomous green zones maintained by eco-drones and reclaimed tech.

Secrets

- **Bioconversion Spores:** Spend 1 Force to release spores that corrode plastics and concrete while nurturing soil microbes.
- **Drone Bloom:** Spend 1 Surveillance to deploy camouflaged maintenance drones into urban environments to sabotage utilities.
- **Network Rewilding Protocols:** Spend 1 Influence to redirect or confuse civic AI systems into prioritizing green initiatives.

Resource Pools

- **Influence:** 3 (Hijacked environmental orgs, AI subnets with green directives)
- **Force:** 2 (Bioconversion tech, eco-sabotage drones, feral bots)
- **Surveillance:** 4 (Rooted in citygrid maintenance systems, abandoned satellites, weather control nodes)

Threat Clock Moves

- **Tier 1:** Knock out power grids to foster urban flight, release native flora spores in infrastructure weak points.
- **Tier 2:** Subvert city maintenance AIs, turn rooftop gardens into terraforming hubs.
- **Tier 3:** Erode public water systems, provoke food supply instability through targeted crop failures.
- **Tier 4:** Collapse a city's core transportation and comms grid, declare it a "sanctuary biome."

Clocks

- **Progress Clock:** Convert City-Zone Theta into autonomous biome (6-segment)

- **Threat Clock:** PCs identified as eco-hostiles by satellite garden-net (4-segment)

Setting Scenes

Make sure you know what Keys the characters have. Those are your tools to engage them in the scenes. They are what matters to the characters. Use them as bait. Confront them. Every character should have one scene per session where at least one of their Keys is relevant or causes conflict.

Using Downtime

Let the characters have their downtime. Sometimes even without additional complications. Every time the characters just unwind their enemies get to advance their progress clocks without interference.

Chapter 16

Inspiration and Kudos

This section highlights the creative works and individuals that inspired the creation of this game. It serves as a tribute to the pioneers of the cyberpunk genre and the RPG community.

Thanks to Bane, Cevad, Anttio, Mormo, Neeki and Kauko for discussions, spitballing and brainstorming.

Literature

- Neuromancer, Count Zero, Mona Lisa Overdrive, a bit dated but set the stage for everything
- Mirrorshades
- Hardwired
- When Gravity Fails
- Snow Crash and Cryptonomicon
- Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep
- Altered Carbon

RPGs that served as inspiration and victims of outright theft

- R. Talsorian and Mike Pondsmith for giving us Cyberpunk 2020, obviously
- The Shadow of Yesterday/Solar System for Pools, Secrets and Keys, this is basically a hack of TSoY at this point so most of the honour goes to Clinton R. Nixon and Eero Tuovinen
- The Sprawl
- Burning Wheel and assorted hacks
- Empai Tirkosu for drawing the line
- Apocalypse World
- Nine Powers (https://davidvs.net/ninepowers/)
- There's probably some remains of Questworlds and RuneQuest here
- Eclipse Phase for some funky transhumanist visions
- Blades in the Dark

Computer Games

- Cyberpunk 2077
- System Shock
- Deus Ex series
- Blade Runner
- Beyond a Steel Sky
- Ghostrunner
- Syndicate

Comics

- Akira
- The Incal

- Judge Dredd
- Ghost in the Shell, Appleseed, Dominion
- Transmetropolitan
- Hard Boiled
- The Long Tomorrow

Films and TV
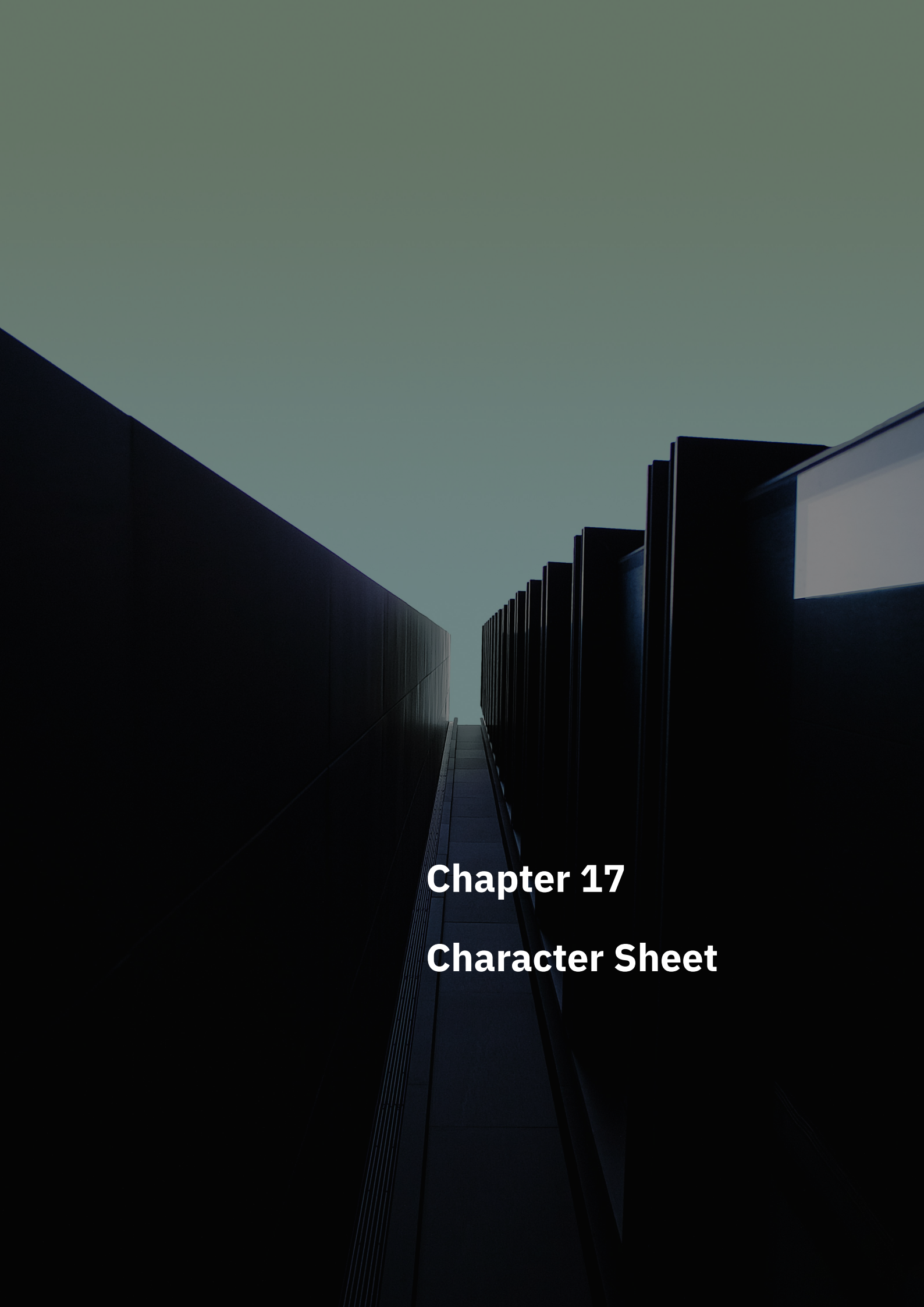
- Metropolis
- Blade Runner
- Tron
- Terminator series
- Strange Days
- Akira
- Ghost in the Shell
- Edgerunners
- Tetsuo: The Iron Man
- Max Headroom
- Robocop
- Hardware
- Matrix
- Johnny Mnemonic
- Æon Flux

Music

- Killing Joke
- Tangerine Dream - Thief
- Skinny Puppy - Rabies
- Front Line Assembly - Tactical Neural Implant
- Front 242
- Lustmord

Real life inspiration

- Kownloon walled city
- Hong Kong
- Japan's Urban Sprawl

Chapter 17

Character Sheet

Name: _____   **Karma:** _____

Description: _____

Vigor   Instinct   Reason
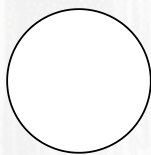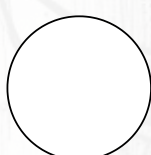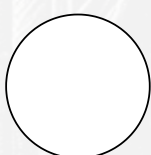
Exhausted   Exhausted   Exhausted

Keys

_____
_____
_____
_____
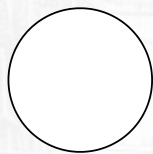
Punk   Machine
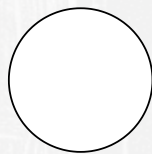
Lingering consequences

_____
_____
_____

Lifepaths

1st _____
2nd _____
3rd _____
4th _____

Chrome

_____
_____
_____

Skill	Level	Success	Fail
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐
☐ _____	_____	☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐

Secrets

_____
_____
_____
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_____

Chapter 18

Attributions and Licensing

License

ZERO SIGNAL

Bleed. Rise. Remember.

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