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A Game of Angels  
by Steve Dee

Playtest Rules  
v 0.95 October 2018

*“Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure, and we are so awed because it serenely disdains to annihilate us. Every angel is terrifying.”*

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

*“Beauty chains me to the earth /  
But if I could fly where would I fly? /  
The heavens are not a place for human souls”*  
- Bankei Zenji

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***This is a playtest document, Part One of Two, Version 0.95 of the Rules***

***If you are reading this, please run this game and send feedback to [tinstargames@gmail.com](mailto:tinstargames@gmail.com)***

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## ***GOD'S AWAY ON BUSINESS...***

### **Abandoned by God. Surrounded by Enemies. Desperate for Answers.**

For millennia, angels and demons have been locked in a cold war, prevented from outright battle lest all Creation be destroyed. They descended to earth instead, living among humans, fighting a proxy war with covert means. Finding their powers bound into physical objects, they hid themselves and those Relics in the shadows of human history, becoming forgotten as anything but legends and myths.

Now God has sealed the Gates of Heaven so the War can rage above while earth remains untouched. The fallen angels and their demonic kin are left behind – forever. Without God's voice to guide them, every angel has their own plan on how to save the world – or rule it. And the power of the ancient Relics will determine whose plan reigns supreme. An archaeological arms race begins, where all of existence is the prize and no rules apply.

But digging up the past reveals some secrets even angels cannot bear to know – or would kill to keep...



**RELICS** is a roleplaying game of mythology, mystery and memory. Using the unique Fugue system from the critically-acclaimed *ALAS VEGAS*, the game puts the focus directly on story and player interaction, not numbers and rules. The memory mechanics allow players to build their ancient angelic history as they tell the story of their current struggles, and unravel the secrets of their own origins as they battle the supernatural threats that have arisen anew.

A product of Tin\*Star Games

FICTION BY MICHAEL AIKEN GOES HERE

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*“A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name”*

- Judges 13

*“Did it hurt when you fell from heaven, Sam?” he asked, and I laughed politely. It did, actually, but as in that old cowboy film, it hadn’t killed me, and swimming had proved to be the harder part.*

*“I’ve heard that one before” I replied.*

*He rolled away from me. I knew from experience that meant I had misjudged the laugh. I wanted it to be knowing, not condescending but humans are so subtle in their language, and so easily offended. He couldn’t have thought his quip unique. He was babyish at my touch, reveling in my attention, but he was very much a man. But even so, I had pricked his ego. I realised that was because it implied I had had other lovers.*

*I said nothing and flexed my wings instead. He reached out to touch them as I’d hoped, and I shivered on cue. Perhaps without pretending. It was hard to tell, after so long. The wings were key, I knew, again from experience. Show them the horns, the halo, the claws, the shining light...they are impressed, yes, but not dazzled. Show them the wings and they fall in love. Of all our aspects, that is the one they cling to. I think they very much want to be able to fly.*

*He ruffled my feathers adoringly. I felt his body tense up again, and I wondered if he was thinking of sex once more. Instead he curled inwards, protectively.*

*“You can’t stay, can you.” It was phrased as a question but with no tonal indications. I was trying to figure out how to respond when he thankfully continued. “You – someone like you – you don’t want us.”*

*I have lived on this strange rock of a planet for centuries, and the two of us had been intimate companions for almost a week and I was still breathless at his arc from egotism to self-deprecation in eight words. For them, conversation was a sport like fencing. I said nothing, hoping he would defeat himself.*

*The truth was I was leaving, of course. This was a seduction job, a means to an end. He was our best lead on the location of what human folklore had once called the Spectacles of al-Rashid. He was the grandson of an insanely rich drug baron who had avoided infiltration by any governments’ agents because – we believed – those spectacles granted him the ability to see if anyone was lying to him. And that was only one of his treasures; he had, if we were correct, the sixth bowl of the Apocalypse. His grandson couldn’t know any of that, and would hopefully get us into the closer circle, but he could sense my hesitation because although I am very persuasive from a distance, I am a bad liar up close. I decided to use it.*

*“I have a mission,” I said. It wasn’t a lie. He nodded. It fit the narrative he had no doubt constructed. I was about to tell him he wasn’t part of it, he was a distraction I couldn’t give up, but the moment was ruined when the door exploded inward in a ball of fire. The blast knocked me clear off the bed and by the time I got back up my large associate had my boyfriend’s neck in his fist and Malachi was between the two of us.*

*“What. The. Hell.” I said, trying to stay calm. I shouldn’t have. They don’t care.*

*“Change of plan” yelled the gigantic angel squeezing the life from my companion. “They’re relocating. And the Fifth Day are the buyers. We have to get in tonight.”*

*Wait. Did I just think of Wade as my boyfriend before, I thought, and then couldn't believe I was thinking that right now.*

*"Your idea was too slow." That was Malachi. Of course he liked speed, he was a goddamn Nesh. And Vulcan was an Aryeh who have no patience either, not when they work for the Shield. I was a stiletto surrounded by sledgehammers but until that very moment, I'd never considered them anything but friends. Then Vulcan said: "So I squeeze it out of him. Much quicker." His fist glowed red and Wade bubbled out a squawk of agony, his eyes lost in mad panic.*

*We were on the side of the angels, I knew that. I'd fought beside these two countless times since the days of Ancient Egypt. And until God left us, I knew every cost, every sin, every agony, was part of the plan. But She wasn't here any more. And suddenly I picked up my gun and pointed it right at Vulcan.*

*"The hell you will".*

## CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS

*“I’ve been on the outside long enough, absent long enough. I’ve stood outside the world long enough. I want to enter into the History of the World. Or even just hold an apple in my hands.”*

- Damiel, *Wings of Desire*

You are an angel. You were created by God to shape the world into existence. You were charged to watch over creation and not interfere in its path. You decided you could not simply observe, so you fell to earth to fight the great War against demons on the front lines. You live amongst the humans, even though their world was strange and alien to you.

Now God is gone. The War is happening beyond the Gates of Heaven, and for those who are left behind, the rules have changed forever. But maybe the rules were rigged to begin with...

**Relics** is a roleplaying game of modern urban fantasy. Players take the roles of marooned angels who spend their time uncovering powerful relics, reconnecting with their ancient pasts and discovering a new future. Demons, mortal agents and other enemies stand against them. The world is in terrible danger, and not every angel cares about saving it any more. The players are angels who still care – at least some of the time – and despite their different natures and beliefs come together to fight for a better future. Or at least a less demon-haunted one.

In this book you’ll find everything you need to know to play the game and tell those stories with your fellow players. The game works best with two to six players, but more are possible. One of the players takes on the special role of the storyteller (or Dealer, as we call him), and they are said to be “running” the game for the other players. We’ll describe that further below. You’ll also need pens and paper, a standard deck of tarot cards (see where you got this book for the official **Relics** tarot deck) and a dozen counters or chips.

This first chapter explains all the basics of the setting and the core concepts of the game. Chapter Two describes how to make a character, and Chapter Three describes the rules to play the game. All players should read through those chapters, although if the Dealer is willing to help them learn, all they need to know is in this first chapter. They can even skip ahead to the “Ten Things to Know” and they’ll have most of the game down. Chapters Four, Five and Six explain more about how angels work in **Relics** and how we model their powers in the system. These chapters are all optional for players, but Dealers should be familiar with them. The last three chapters explain the secrets at the heart of the game and should *only* be read by those intending to be the Dealer. They’ll also find lots of tools and advice in there to make running games easier.

### As Above

It was in God’s nature to create, and so She did. With a spark of Her divine fire, She breathed the universe into existence. But being God, she was not of existence. So She created her angels, beings of divine energy yet able to interact with Her great creation, to shape it and form it. And they did so, and their nature shaped the world below. From their nature their came humans, reflections of angels, sharing the divine spark of God and able to perceive or imagine a higher plane and a greater purpose. The angels were drawn to such beings like themselves and were gleeful to discover they could talk to them directly of the things beyond. And so it was that gods and monsters walked the earth and begat many myths and legends, faiths and religions.

The interaction did not go well. Mortal and angel together was an explosive combination that seemed to lead to nothing but chaos and bloodshed. And so God decreed that angels could no longer interact with the creation they had shaped. Life was too fragile – and too beautiful – to risk being disturbed from above. Even if suffering occurred from this edict, interference would surely make things worse. Such was Her belief and the Law.

Many angels raged to be denied the world they had built. They believed they deserved to determine every will of the world, to shape it to their purpose and bend it to their will – to control it and rule it absolute. Their pride and greed tainted their souls and their forms and they were known as demons. And so began the War.

## **...So Below**

Creation was both the prize and the battlefield, and as such the War could not rage wild. A cold war began, fought by stealth and proxy. Many angels and demons decided it was better to fight the war on earth itself, trying to change their creation directly, and harness its power against their enemies. They discovered that God had protected her world: the descending celestials found themselves without their heavenly powers. Their divine natures were instead bound into items, which also trapped them on earth. Still, they sought loopholes, and found some, and more and more came to try their own luck and fight the War below. The battle could still be fought, albeit with even more distance and subtlety. Others simply abandoned their existence, slipping away from the world, waiting for the War to properly begin and bring them meaning once more.

But the War never came. God, in Her ineffable wisdom, found a way to save her creation from calamity. She closed the Gates to Heaven, forever sealing off the supernal world from the natural one. The angels had been cast out before, but they never truly expected it to end like this. It was never supposed to be forever. They remain, but to what end? To fight the War their own way? Or find something new to live for? Their enemies remain as well, and, with the Gates closed, their Relics are no longer damping power as they once did. They have a chance to bring back the days of myth and legend. They can shape the world as they did of old, to walk again as gods. To be Gods, since no other remain. To rule the world – or save it.

### <sidebar>**Falling and Damnation**

*“Falling is the last thing an angel feels.”*

- Gabriel, *Gabriel*

Much human angelic fiction and religious doctrine conflates the idea of the angel descending to earth with the angel suffering moral corruption, as a parallel to how disobedience towards God causes humankind to “fall” into sinfulness and separation. In **Relics**, falling only refers to the descent, of the angel leaving the supernal world and becoming bound to creation. Choosing sides in the War, and choosing moral pathways are things on a different axis to whether the angel resides above or below. What’s more angels can – could – travel to earth from heaven and back before “falling”; the process is about a shift in their nature so they can interact as natural beings, not godlike figures. Once fallen, though, they were bound by their Relics and could never return.

What's more, as far as any angel is aware, there was never an angel called Lucifer, and neither he nor anyone else is the antithesis of their God. Nor is there any place akin to the Christian hell or any myth's underworld. However, it's certainly possible angels impersonated gods like Hades or Maat and dug out massive palaces beneath the earth, to inspire myths or to emulate myths that already existed. More than one angel has claimed to be Lucifer to other angels, and many many more have used the same line on humans. And the angels can never know for sure. They helped make creation but even they do not know all of God's plans. It's just barely possible Satan was among them all along.

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## Playing the Game

*“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels”*

Hebrews 13:2

Relics is a game about telling a story. One player takes a more direct role in shaping the setting and scope of the story. In other games they are known as the dungeon master or gamemaster but in **Relics** we call them the **Dealer**. The Dealer is responsible for setting the scene in the game. They control the environment, play the minor characters and develop conflicts and dramatic encounters that that players will face. Together with the other players and the rules, the Dealer determines the success and failure of those conflicts, and the consequences thereof. The Dealer is not playing against the players; his responsibility is to be a fair arbiter of play, to express and adjudicate the rules, and express narrative tropes and through both, help the players have fun and help their characters shine as heroes in the stories they weave together.

The other players will take on the role of playing those characters, which in this game are called **personas**. Typically each player plays a single persona each, and this collection of characters form the protagonists of the story being told. The nature and capabilities of these personas are recorded on a persona sheet which every player has. Guided by their character's qualities, players make decisions as to what their personas will do, reacting to and working to overcome the conflicts and challenges the Dealer presents them, and so create an exciting narrative of their successes and failures. Though their characters strive to succeed, the players are not trying to win so much as tell a fantastic and dramatic tale. Players and the Dealer work together to help each other create the most enjoyable experience of the game and the best possible story they can create.

Players may like to act out their character's actions in a theatrical way, and Dealers may do likewise, playing characters the personas meet. Other players prefer to describe their characters in the third person like writers of fiction. Neither way is “better” or more correct and most gamers use a combination of the two, switching back and forth. Likewise, players will move back and forth between referring to game rules and in setting concepts as players and speaking in-character within the world of the game.

The main goal of players is to entertain each other, and to provide space for everyone to contribute equally to the story and to have their character feel significant and powerful in the narrative. To this end the rules are designed to give characters a variety of different skills and powers and balance these mechanics so that every character is roughly equally placed in their capacity to succeed in conflicts and influence outcomes. The rules include random elements, to ensure a story that nobody can predict and where the outcomes of actions are always in doubt, but these rules should be adjudicated with common sense, logic, fairness and the needs of good storytelling.

## Scenes, Sessions and Series

A game of **Relics** is played out around a table with a group of players over the space of a few hours. During this, the players will describe their personas moving through a series of **scenes**. A scene is not a precise definition of time; it is a narrative construct. A scene can be thought of as a discrete dramatic unit where the personas deal with a single situation. Typically it will be a limited amount of time and be contained to a single place, but it could also be something like a discussion over a long car journey, or describe a night of searching the city for clues for demonic activity. The Dealer has final say on when a scene ends and a new one begins. Scenes can have ragged edges. Two angels may be talking to a mortal while one runs upstairs to explore the mortal's house; the Dealer may split them into two scenes or keep them as one. Scenes only matter for the purpose of Miracles and other rules cases that operate once a scene or for the duration of a scene. For players who prefer more precise in-world definitions for powers, scenes can be discarded, but we use the terminology throughout.

After any number of scenes the story may come to a close or the players will run out of time to keep playing. The total time played is called a **session** of the game. After this, the game is over but the story of the personas will likely continue. Further stories may be told with the same group and the same Dealer, or with some different combination. Some groups may like to shift the Dealer's role around; others have a rotating cast of players depending on who is available, some may have no continuity between the players but the world and story persisting throughout the story. Generally throughout these rules we assume that the roster of personas is fairly small, but there's no reason why your game could not involve dozens of characters and different Dealers, all expounding the same world. Sessions of **Relics** connected by the same personas and a continuity of setting are collectively called a **series**. In the Dealer's chapter we talk about splitting a series into seasons but this is optional (see Chapter Nine).

Through a series, angels can grow and develop and explore their past as well as their future. They can also learn more about their universe and uncover deeper and deeper secrets that lie at the heart of the **Relics** universe. The design of the game assumes a series will comprise somewhere between three to twelve sessions. Mechanics are provided to track the development of powers across this time, whether the story remains on about the same sort of level or scope, or if it develops from low-level stories of naive angels dealing with minor threats to epic battles for the future of creation. Players track the abilities they gain and their persona's development by noting it on their persona sheets.

Future products for the **Relics** game will include published **scenarios** which are outlines and structures designed to help Dealers run single sessions or even a full series.

## Theme and Tone

A series of **Relics** grows in the telling and will be something uniquely created by all players and the Dealer, working in concert. This means a series can often go some strange, new and wonderful places regardless of where you begin. However **Relics** has a baseline set of assumptions of the kinds of stories it is trying to emulate. The primary genres of a **Relics** series are mystery, horror and action, using the tropes of urban fantasy and mythology. The mystery comes from hunting Relics and the strange phenomena they may cause, the horror comes from how demons and mortals alike have done evil in the search of such powers or with them once acquired, and the action lies in the battle to stop these agents and halt or avenge the evil acts. Beneath this runs a theme of moral philosophy and eschatology, questions to the purpose and end of existence. That also allows elements of satire and bathos.

If the game was a movie it would be rated MA or R for strong violence, some drug use and adult concepts. The mood is one of isolation, broken by desperation. The key is minor, but the beat is a thundering trochaic march.

## The Game System

This is a narrative RPG, where the focus is on the stories created by the players together. The system exists to support that play. A lot of the time, that play is done without the system, informally, through discussion. The Dealer describes the situation and the players describe how their personas react. Other times, we bring in formal rules to drive and resolve conflict, encourage new ideas and add unpredictable elements to the story.

The rules used in this game are based on the Fugue System. This system was created by James Wallis and first appeared in his game **Alas Vegas**. It was released under the Creative Commons license (see the last page in this book). The Fugue system has two main parts to it: it uses a tarot deck to generate random outcomes, and it is designed for the personas to begin as amnesiacs, who discover who they are through the play of the game. The personas in **Relics** do not have amnesia, but we still use the concept of memories in the same way: flashback scenes triggered by players provide personas with character abilities they can then use to impact on their environment, while the skill and the flashback provide all the players with a greater idea of who the character is. More on the differences between the Fugue system in **Relics** and in **Alas Vegas** can be found in Chapter Three.

## The Conceit of Memories in Relics

The Fugue system, like all character generation, begins with the players knowing nothing about their personas. Unlike most RPGs, they do not determine this information before play, but rather during it. The explanation in **Alas Vegas** for playing a character who does not know their own history or personality is that the personas have “Hollywood amnesia”, rendering their minds blank slates that will be revealed to them through flashbacks.

**Relics** uses the same mechanic: the players begin with little definition of the personas and add to them through play. However, the personas do not have amnesia: they know exactly who they are, even if the players do not. The flashback is not informing the persona of something they have forgotten but informing the *audience* of something that until now was not a part of the narrative. The character has known all along about this part of their history, it is just that it is only now being told in the story. This kind of storytelling is common in television and movies, with flashbacks providing exposition, character background and setting information. This idea is however in all storytelling: the audience has no idea who characters are until they reveal themselves through what they say and do. We tell ourselves the characters are always acting “in character”, but that is an assumption we freely make when entering a fiction. Of course, players in an RPG are not simply the audience but also the author, and it is true that authors often have a better sense of their characters’ inner lives and motivations, and hint at this hidden world beneath the surface as that surface is pulled back over time. But all writers describe characters being revealed through the process of telling the narrative, and even slowly gaining a mind of their own. In truth, deeper character emerges from surface actions, rather than the other way around.

Some roleplayers will not find this enjoyable, because their method of roleplaying involves a sublimation into the mind of their character and performing a simulation of that character’s “true”

words and actions. If they demand this kind of total fealty and in-world simulation, the conceit used in **Relics** will not be fun for them. Other players may be less bound to one style, but still nervous to explore new territory to them, feeling adrift without a sense of who they are in fact playing. Resources are provided later in the rules for players and Dealers alike to smooth over this process. We flag this right at the start, as it is the most unconventional part of the rules. You will likely find, however, that players get the hang of it very quickly.

#### <sidebar>**Technical Terms**

If you want to get all fancy and impress your players, you can tell them that the memory mechanic is exegetic not diagetic. Originally from theology, exegesis refers to the meaning of a work, with diagesis refers to the expression of the text in itself. In *The Usual Suspects*, the diagesis is Verbal Kint telling Agent Kujan about how Dean Keaton led them in a fight against Kaiser Soze. The exegesis is something very different indeed. (That technique is called the Unreliable Narrator, but you don't need one to have diagesis and exegesis diverge or work independently.) Exegetically, the angels have always known their memories. Diagetically, they come out when needed – and this may change the exegesis, as the flashback may reveal truths about the personas which change the meaning of what we have already seen. Indeed, players may discover that although they said one thing earlier in the session or series, they are now revealed to have been lying. The thrill of not knowing if you are a reliable narrator or not is what makes **Relics** unlike any other roleplaying game.

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## **This Rulebook**

This book contains the rules for telling the stories of the personas, and the setting they inhabit. Chapter One you're reading right now and introduces you to the game. Chapter Two explains how to make a persona, an angelic character in the game. Chapter Three explains all the rules you need to play apart from how Miracles work, which are covered in Chapter Four. Unless the Dealer is content to walk players through the game, players should read these chapters. Chapters Five and Six go into more detail about the life and society of angels and are more optional for players. Chapters Seven and Eight lay out much more about the background of the game, including secrets; players who read those sections may reduce their enjoyment of their game! Chapter Nine is specifically for Dealers and provides advice on taking on that role. Finally there are Appendices providing useful tools for players and Dealers alike. XXX come back to this because there may be stretch goals.XXX

The rules are simple but even so do not have to be memorized! The rulebook can be consulted during play to help guide the use of rules or to verify some fact in the setting, so it is a good idea to keep it handy when playing. The contents and index should help you find the information you are looking for quickly and easily. If not, make a quick decision and move on; dramatic pacing is always more important than being "correct". Indeed, what is "correct" in the rules can be ignored, either temporarily or wholesale. The only thing that matters is that everyone at the table is playing by the same rules and with the same idea of what the setting is and the reality of the scene currently taking place. If those things contradict the rulebook but lead to everyone having fun and telling a satisfying story than what the rulebook says doesn't matter. Everything in this book is a tool designed to help you build great experiences. If any use of this book would get in the way of that, discard it. Use the tools when and where they are useful, ignore them when and where they are not.

## The Tarot Deck

*“The tarot could be described as God’s Picture Book”*

- Lady Frieda “Pixie” Harris, creator of the Thoth Tarot

The tarot deck was invented in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was used for games for three hundred years before being linked to divination or anything religious. This recent connection was helped particularly by the occultist Jean Baptiste Aliette in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Aliette was the first to link tarot to the four Greek elements (earth, wind, water, and fire) the four humours of alchemy (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile) and ideas of Egyptian magic. From there they were also connected to kaballah, gnosticism and other kinds of religious and magical belief. Nowadays they are most commonly associated with divination and are ubiquitous in “New Age” culture. No offense is intended to those who take the tarot as a serious part of their religious or spiritual world-view, but in this game we use them as a simple collection of random – and beautiful – objects, with no more meaning than they grant themselves.

There are many different tarot decks out there, with different artists, but from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards they all share the same make-up of cards. The Minor Arcana is 56 cards, made up of 14 cards of four suits: Swords, Staves (also called Wands), Coins (sometimes called Discs, or Pentacles) and Cups. Each suit contains cards numbered from 1 (also called the Ace) to 10, then a Page (11), Knight (12), Queen (13) and King (14), collectively known as the court cards. The Major Arcana, a separate suit, contains 22 special cards, originally used as powerful trump cards in the various tarot card games. These are also numbered and distinctly named, from the Fool (0) to the World (21). It’s important to know the terms used here for the mechanics of the game. In some uses of tarot reversals are important (whether the card has the correct vertical orientation); reversals are not important in this game.

During character generation and other times in the rules, the tarot deck is used to generate random numbers. Sometimes we want a number from 0 to 21, in which case you draw until you find a card from the Major Arcana, and note its number. This is called a *Major Draw*. Other times we need a selection from four things and draw until you find a card from the Minor Arcana and note its suit. This is called a *Minor Draw*. Finally, in play there is simply a “draw” when any card is drawn from the deck and both its number and suit is noted. In this way we can use a single deck of cards to provide a variety of different scales of results. For these and other card draws, always return cards and shuffle them between drawing. The only exception is the blackjack mechanics for Complex Tests (see Chapter Three).

Any kind of tarot deck is usable for this game but it is good to have one with different art for every card in the deck (many only have art for the court cards and Major Arcana). The Rider-Waite-Smith deck is a good example of this kind of deck, and widely available (although it uses Pentacles rather than Coins). It also features much kabbalic and angelic symbolism which is good for our purposes: there is an angel on the Lovers card, on Temperance, on the Star and on Justice (a card sometimes even called The Angel), and the Four Living Creatures (aka the tetramorph, which is part of persona design) appear on the World card and the Wheel of Fortune card. Even more such images appear in the Thoth Tarot created by Aleister Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris. But note if you use this deck, it has Princess, Prince, Queen and Knight as its Court, and has a few different names in the Major Arcana. Due to the popularity of angels in modern New Age belief, you may also find “Angelic Tarot” decks. Some of these replace the four suits with the four archangels mentioned in the bible, and which in some Judaic and other texts are elevated above all others: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel (also spelled Auriel or Oriel). Our rules assume the more common suits.

## <sidebar>**Away From The Table**

Roleplaying games can be played in many ways. The assumption of these rules is you will use them to play around a table with paper, pencil and dice. However, the world of **Relics** can equally be explored through other storytelling and roleplaying media. You can play online using various platforms that simulate the RPG table (like Roll20.net), storytelling software like storium.com or simply through chatting online with text or voice or forum posting. Relics can also be played Live Action, with players dressing in costume and playing out the roles of their characters like actors. Drawing from a Tarot deck means you don't need a table, although the blackjack mechanics will not work like that! As always, we encourage you to find your own creative alternatives and play **Relics** however you prefer.

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## **Faith Matters**

The setting for this game uses elements of the Judaic, Christian, Islamic and Zoroastrian faiths, and other religions living and dead. This is not an intent to mock or undermine those faiths. Faith, religion and the cultures that surround them are important parts of human existence and personal experience. We've used these elements respectfully – we hope – because of their primacy in our culture and the emotional resonance that comes from that, in order to tell a story about faith and belief. Angels are, after all, metaphors for our ideas of god, faith, religion and the church, and the point of this game is to explore those ideas seriously. If you think we've erred somewhere, please let us know.

Players entering this game should be aware of the kind of things the setting discusses, and also what you and your fellow players intend to do with the themes and elements we provide. We trust you wouldn't use your game to attack a fellow player's religion but what you consider satire, horror or exploration might be offensive or disrespectful to another. Even with good intentions, it's very easy to make mistakes. Take care with your subject matter, ask in advance, and establish a clear dialogue before any play begins, and you can save a lot of hurt before it happens. There are more guidelines in Chapter Nine on how to ensure everyone is on the same page at the start, and how to put on the brakes if needed.

## **Western Religion (Except When It's Not)**

*“God hates it when you refer to Him as mythology”*

- Rufus, *Dogma*

The setting in **Relics** and any series that explores that setting necessarily plays fast and loose with the core mythologies of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with a bit of Zoroastrianism, and several dead religions from the Middle East and Eurasia. Part of the thrill of the setting is the knowledge that much of what these religions teach is incorrect or only a shadow of the truth, and angels get to know (some of) the real truth behind them, and players get to explore the excitement of those differences and the unknown between and beyond.

Of course, that thrill is most potent to those people born and raised in a culture and society steeped in Western and European culture. Words like angels, demons and gods and the language of religious relics have power because they underlie so much of our every day life and the belief systems that run through the DNA of our history, society and philosophy. But that's only true to those of us who live in that

Western superculture. Anyone raised outside of it has their own history, culture and philosophy that has its own meaning and weight attached to words like god and religion, with their own rules and different philosophies. And, in the face of their culture being increasingly minimised on the world stage, may take little joy in being playful with such things.

For the purposes of this game, we assume your game takes place in the West. We also don't make any claims about the supernatural truth of religious and spiritual beliefs that lie outside that purview. Angels in the setting don't know (but have some guesses) about those things, we've provided a few hints at what might be true for the Dealer's eyes only, and we've left it at that. Your series and personas are more than welcome to explore these questions, although with the caveats of good faith and fair warning as discussed above.

Importantly, we don't want to ever imply that the angels in this setting and the Western religious mythos they draw from are the most correct approximation of the universe, and that therefore other religious and spiritual beliefs are less correct or less accurate approximations. Including other religions in a game about angels inevitably creates this sense, which is why they make a limited appearance herein.

## **Tone and Morality**

**Relics** by default is a game with a fairly dark and gritty tone. We've aimed for what would be about an M/MA level in films: violence, dark themes, some horror. However, **Relics** is a tool for you to tell your own stories. It is up to the Dealer and his players what tone those stories will take. Chapter Nine goes into more discussion about setting tone and style of your games. As with religious elements, all the players should discuss things before they play and note any elements they feel uncomfortable covering in the game. Just because it's about dark topics doesn't mean everyone wants all their buttons pushed. Respect each other; scare with care.

**Relics** is also a game about morality and questions thereof. With God departed, angels no longer have any clear guidance on Her intent, and only had a shaky idea to begin with. They know the world is full of demons, evil acts and perhaps humans who deserve to go to Hell, but there is no Hell, there is no Heaven, and they only have their own conscience to answer to. The purpose of angelic myth, fundamentally, is to discuss the nature of good and evil, and **Relics** is no exception. In particular, **Relics** is about the Problem of Evil, the philosophical question of what actions we take as good people to try and stop or curtail evil, and how to do those actions without compromising our own morality. This means that there is no set moral boundaries or expectations built into the game. Players may ask whether a certain action is "okay" in the game, or allowed for angels to do: apart from fitting tone and everyone being player being okay with such things, the Dealer is within their rights to provide no answers. It's up to the angels – and their players – to work out what they should be doing, and how much they care about what they should be doing when evil abounds. Players wanting extrinsic certainty about right and wrong will be disappointed, and Dealers are encouraged to make these choices impossible or at least painful.

## **Ten Things To Know About Relics**

The angels the characters will be playing in **Relics** are complicated beings with alien natures, beliefs and customs, and the world they inhabit is vast, deep and complex. However, much of these details are not necessary to know at the beginning, and are designed to be learned by players through play. The

following section describes the key parts of the setting that all players should be familiar with, so players can jump straight in.

## **1. The Bible Got Most of It Wrong**

And so did the Torah and the Koran. Angels aren't preachers of God's word, nor are they here to save souls or take spirits to heaven. There IS no heaven for mortal spirits, as far as angels know, nor a Hell, nor a final judgement on the quality of your behaviour. Angels are guardians of the earth and its inhabitants, and wish to protect it from demons, and are locked in an eternal war against this enemy. Many of them interpret their duty as directly improving mortal existence or mortal character. Some are preachers, some are healers. Many more couldn't care less about humanity. And nobody is going to give your granny a harp and a halo at the pearly gates when you kick the bucket.

## **2. Strangers in a Strange Land**

That said, you are an angel, and much of the myth is definitely true. You were made of fire and light to serve God but you couldn't directly interfere so all you could do was be a watcher. A whisperer in ears at best, and even then into ears you don't truly understand. So sometime in the last twenty thousand years or so you fell and became semi-mortal. You try to blend in but you are and always will be an outsider. Long time residents have gotten very good at the performance, but nothing is ever perfect, and it never feels normal, because you are a creature of a higher power that doesn't quite belong. Deep down, most angels would love to go home again. Or at least, not be so alone any more.

## **3. You Can't Go Home Again**

Falling to earth was said to be permanent, but everyone has an escape clause in their minds. There were always stories about ways to go back, that one day God would call her children home again – if only to at last start the War against the demons. And God was always there, too. Even on earth, you knew She was there, watching and listening. Now the Gates to Heaven are closed permanently and God is *gone*. Forever. For the first time, angels are totally alone, no longer bound by the God's commands, but also lost without Her guidance. That has caused a wave of fear, panic and confusion to run through angel society like nothing ever before.

## **4. Fallen Angels Filled the World With Magical Items**

When angels fall they are bound to a Relic, a singular object designed to contain their angelic powers, ground them in this reality and prevent them from unleashing their true existence onto the natural world. Over the ages, angels found loopholes which allowed them to detach from or embody themselves into their Relics, so they could give these things to mortals, granting those mortals immense powers that the angels hoped the mortals would use for good. Over time, humans and other forces have gathered these items for their own ends. Others have been lost to history, at least for now. Demons follow the same rules, and have even more Relics out there.

## **5. An Arms Race Has Begun**

When the Gates of Heaven closed, the thunderclap caused dormant relics to reawaken. The severing of the connection between earth and heaven means Relics are no longer permanently attached to their owners, allowing them to be passed around with ease. Angels and humans alike can gain enormous power the more of these treasures they can grab. The arms race has become a gold rush, turning the cold war against demons red hot, and whoever wins may be able to rule the world. Even angels who

were ambivalent about fighting demons know that demons cannot be allowed to hoard this power. Sitting on the sidelines and letting time drift by is no longer an option.

## **6. Thou Shalt Steal**

For the longest time, angels didn't need to know anything or learn anything because they were connected to the cosmic truth of God. Now they desperately need to know what's going on. Ironically, humans may hold the very knowledge they seek, but that knowledge is tied up in powerful Relics, buried history and sacred books, all of which are typically possessed by dangerous and powerful institutions: godlike corporations, shadowy conspiracies, modern cults and powerful religions. To find out what they need to know, angels have to break in to the most impregnable places on earth, fight the unstoppable power of worldwide organizations and steal the unstealable from under their noses. And stop them from being stolen back, or being stolen by other angels with very different ideas about who should own such things (ie them, not you).

## **7. Angels Are A Product Of All They Remember**

Most angels have lived on earth for centuries or millennia. Unlike humans, they have no such thing as rote learning or muscle memory. Everything they know is tied to an experience. Over the unending ages, much of their memory has become faint or forgotten. As their Relics wake up, so do their pasts. As they dig up lost Relics and track down ancient truths, they also rediscover their lost memories and piece together the things they'd prefer to stay forgotten. Secrets are out there, both deeply personal and deeply powerful. Looking is not going to be easy or fun. It may reveal things about the universe even angels aren't ready to know, and would kill to keep secret.

## **8. The Path is Unclear**

Angels don't know where God went, why She left or if She's coming back. They don't know what they're supposed to do now that God's law about not interfering in human history is not being enforced, and the War is going on without them. Angels are also incredibly diverse beings. From their very creation they were built to do different things, and were led by different Heralds. After falling, angels had vastly different ideas about how best to fight demons, win the War and protect creation. Now large political divides and factions have grown up around these. Angels do not always agree nor get along, and are not always on the same side, and in the face of growing ignorance and fear, unity is impossible. An angel's greatest enemy is his fellow kind.

## **9. Everybody Wants You Dead**

There are demons and devils and they hate angels the way fire hates oxygen. Then there are angels who you thought were on your side who seem to be acting towards evil ends. Or they just disagree with you about the ends they believe are right – or agree about the ends but not the means. Then there are the other things that weren't in the brochure about planet earth: elementals, spirits, ghosts, monsters. And there's the mortal agents who know how the world works and are quickly finding out about angels and how to kill them. And all of these things want to rule the world and that requires angels being brought to heel. Angels and humans are in the firing line, evil is afoot, and somebody has to fight back.

## **10. You Can't Trust Anyone**

Angels are alone. Humans can't understand who they are and what they're going through. The only beings they have anything in common with are their fellow angels but they only share a connection

because they are equally in exile. There is little sense of loyalty or owed devotion, and no desire to share information, because what you tell another angel could be what that angel uses to kill you, or trades to your worst enemy, or needs to perform some act of terrifying evil. There are countless mysteries you need to solve, and nobody on earth or in heaven is going to help you do it. God's away on business, which means you've been left in charge. Good luck.

*There was no such thing as Hell. Not really. But if there were, war would be pretty damn close.*

*The roof of the old bombed-out schoolhouse vibrated for the 157<sup>th</sup> time that day – Rahma had counted – and dust rained again from the ceiling onto the beds of the Red Crescent’s makeshift hospital as another round of bombs hit somewhere else in the city. Government or American? Not that it mattered, Rahma reflected. If one of them hit the hospital they’d all be just as dead no matter who dropped it.*

*A young man, legs blown away below the knees, whimpered softly for his mother – something understandable in any language. The morphine was wearing off, and they weren’t expecting more for at least a week – if they were lucky. Rahma bit her lip, looked around, and sighed. What mortal medicine could not do, Raphael’s gift would have to. She walked to his bedside and knelt beside it, laying her hands on his shattered legs. “Be free,” she murmured, closing her eyes as her Relic, the silver crescent moon that hung at her throat, gleamed with a pale white light. “I will take this burden from you.” The man took slow deep breaths as the pain ebbed from the ragged stumps, and he fell into a blessed, restful sleep.*

*Rahma had only taken two steps away from the bed when the agony hit. She staggered, panting, leaning sideways against another bed as the cold sweat ran down her face. Her Semblance’s legs were shrieking at her, every nerve ending below the knees aflame.*

*It wasn’t real, she reminded herself, just as she’d done every time in every war as humans invented more and more excruciating ways to slaughter each other, and she’d taken their pain into herself and held it down until it drowned. Your legs are still there. Now move them, you have work to do.*

*She hauled herself to her feet, thanking the absent God for making her a Behema. Pain was temporary, and she was eternal. It would pass. She hobbled down the ward towards a little girl who’d started to cry as her broken arm throbbed in its sling. “Be free,” Rahma murmured as she dropped to her aching knees, laying a hand on the girl’s arm. “I will take this burden from you...”*

*War was hell. But maybe, once she’d collected enough of its pain, she could return to Heaven.*

## CHAPTER TWO: CREATION

*“We look and act and perform and even die like humans, but we’re something else”*

- Elijah Snow, *Planetary*

All of the players in **Relics** apart from the Dealer play the game by controlling a singular protagonist called a **persona**. That character is described by a list of attributes that describe who they are and what they can do, collected on a **persona sheet**. This chapter tells you how to assemble those attributes and create a persona so you can begin playing the game.

### The Steps

Generating a character takes several steps, outlining several different facets of your persona and their history. To help clarify the process, it proceeds chronologically through an angel’s existence, from their origins, to their descent, to their current human form. Mechanically, the most important elements are your Aspect, Herald, Mission and the Miracles in your Relic.

1. Determine your **Aspect**
2. Determine your **Herald**
3. Determine Your **Descent**
4. Determine Your **Mission**
5. Describe your **Relic, Dominions** and first **Miracle**
6. Add **Descriptive Touches** (optional)
7. Create **Memories** with your fellow players

You can go through this process with a concept already in mind, or you can go in with a blank slate and let random results prompt your imagination. Generating from the random tables involves either a Major or Minor Draw. As described in Chapter One, A Major Draw means drawing only from the 22 Major Arcana, and noting the number of the card drawn (0 to 21). A Minor Draw means drawing from the 56 Minor Arcana cards and noting the suit (Swords, Staves, Coins or Cups).

### Step One: Aspect

*“And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.”*

- Revelations 4:7

Angels are things of another world, with different physical rules. When they coalesce into an earthly form called a Vessel, they become caught in the fabric of our universe, and try to cohere to our natural world. This distills angels down into four facets, forms known as the Four Living Creatures or the tetramorph. They are all present in some way in every angel: the angelic form has horns like an ox,

claws like a lion, the face of a human and the great wings of an eagle. But every angel also has one form which reigns supreme. The crowning form is known as their Aspect. Aspects determine the core essence of an angel, and their function in creation. It is an irrevocable and eternal stamp upon their being and action. Some angels are chosen to strike forth with the might of God, others to resist the forces of evil. Some are born to move across the waters on wings of eagles. Others are called to speak forth the word of God. Choose or do a Minor Draw on the table below.

Each Aspect is associated with one of the things angels were built to do, known as their Mastery. In game terms, if you are doing an action that aligns with your primary Aspect's Mastery, you have a better chance to succeed and have a greater quality of success. Note that the suit associated with each Aspect is used in the mechanics for Mastery, not just for this random draw, so whether you choose or take a random result, be sure to note down the attendant suit as well. For more on Mastery, see Page XXX. Each Aspect has a unique Miracle that only they can perform, reflecting their command over their Aspect.

Minor Draw	Aspect	Mastery	Miracle
Swords	Aryeh	Striking	Sword of Majesty
Staves	Behema	Resisting	Body of Beryl
Coins	Nesher	Moving	Wings of Heaven
Cups	Isha	Speaking	Voice of God

## Aryeh

Aryeh is the Aspect of striking. This is not just physical attacks, but all forms of urging, dominating or destructive actions. Those who wear the face of the Lion are decisive and bold, full of courage, ferociousness and forthrightness. The Aryeh are often leaders, even if they do not seek out such roles, because those who strike out tend to shine brightly. The Aryeh angel fights their own battles but also leads armies and dictates fates. Sometimes the Aryeh answer to *seraphim* - the Burning Ones. They are (naturally) associated with the suit of Swords.

Their Mastery is over the action of *striking*. When they push out to damage or destroy, they are more likely to succeed.

Their Miracle is Sword of Majesty. Angels are creatures of fire and can shoot forth small flames (a trick that stopped impressing mortals when the lighter was invented), but the Aryeh have harnessed that to its apex. Once per scene they can manifest a foot-long blade of solid fire that burns at something around 2000 degrees and cuts through a few inches of steel. Many angels carry swords on their Semblance to disguise the blade; others find a gun is sufficient cover for the burning puncture wounds. In mechanical terms, the blade acts at a higher level of Scale than regular weapons (see page XXX), or does one additional wound in attacks against a mortal enemy or enemies. It hurts angels and demons, but doesn't do more damage to them. The manifestation lasts only long enough for one Simple Action or one round of a Complex Action.

## Behema

Behema is the aspect of endurance and persistence. The Ox-faced angel outlasts, outfights and outruns all comers, and can withstand the greatest blows. Angels of this aspect are natural guardians and

intercessors, who stand for others long before they look to themselves. Some mistake their reticence for softness, but none as strong as the Behema. Yet they are gentle in their own way, for none has a heart so full of love as the Ox. The Behema overlap with what the humans called *cherubim* – the Mighty Ones. Strong and unyielding, their symbol is the suit of Staves.

Their Mastery is over the action of *enduring*. When they hold against a force and refuse to yield, they are more likely to succeed.

Their Miracle is Body of Beryl. Angels are creatures of fire coalesced into a kind of crystal that appears not unlike a shiny mineral and is much more resistant to damage than mere flesh. For the Behema, the form is as strong as diamond and take an enormous amount of punishment. In mechanical terms, once per scene they can ignore any one attack resulting from a failed Simple Test or several attacks if they all fall in the same round of a Complex Test. They only get one. Then they're on their own.

## Nesher

The Aspect of Nesher is that of swiftness and stillness. The Eagle-faced angel is predator like the lion but of a different sort: they watch and wait for the perfect moment, swoop down and fade away. They are also the rushing bull, the charging lion, the soaring owl. The Nesher angel is about moving in every sense. Moving in and out, moving silently and unobserved, moving things where they need to be. A term that matches the Nesher is *malakim*, the Messengers. They are associated with the great human system of movement – the suit Coins.

Their Mastery is over the action of *moving*. When striding across space with this mortal frame they inhabit, they are more likely to succeed.

Their Miracle is Wings of Heaven. All angels can fly, but slowly and ponderously, no faster than a walk. Nesher can soar, swoop, dive, hover, zoom at speeds of hundreds of miles, and generally outfly anything short of a bird of prey. Mechanically, they win any Test of flight against non-Nesher angels, and have two Blessings on any flying tests.

## Isha

The human-faced angel is, naturally, the most human of all. Their nature is the most human of things: communication. They are diplomats and traders, teachers and sages. They are not always the most knowledgeable, but the loudest voice is the one that leaves the impression – on the individual and on history. And although they talk they still know how to listen. The human word *ishim* matches them the closest – The Human-like Ones. To be human is to be alive and drink from the cup of life, and the Isha are associated with the suit of Cups.

Their Mastery is *speaking*. Whenever they bring forth their voice to direct or instruct others in the mortal world, they are more likely to succeed.

Their Miracle is Voice of God. All angels have impressive, resonant voices, but the Isha speak with the sound of a great tumult and the earth shakes to hear it. When they choose, they can bear true witness and be believed: as long as they do not lie, anyone who hears them while they speak with the Voice of God believes absolutely that what is said is true. The truth here must be absolute; not what the angel

believes to be true. This does not command or control anyone, but it can be very convincing. For example, someone told that if they remain somewhere they will surely die will likely want to flee. It can add a Blessing to any Tests involving such communications.

### <sidebar>**Ancient Names**

Angels know they have to work with human terminology to make humans understand them. So they don't mind using words like seraphim, cherubim, malakim and ishith; these broad categories fit their descriptions fairly well and were best guesses by ancient peoples, translated into Avestan, Aramaic or Akkadian. Elohim (the godly-ones) is a general word for angels as well, but to humans this sometimes became another class of angel. Hashmallin translates as the Lightning Ones or Amber Ones, which could be servants of storm-Herald Chazaqiel, or just angels arriving in their usual blinding light. The ggalim could describe the whirlwind of movement of the Neshet, or could be a mistranslation of the wheels of the ox-cart; the chariot mentioned in Ezekiel could be a mistranslation of the word chayot, which means beast of burden. Cherub comes from kerub, which could mean mighty, or great, or the one-like-god, at a time when the bull-headed god of Akkadia was worshipped, hence one like the bull. The ancient names were best guesses, and even when they were good, they were turned into hierarchies or classes in ways that make no sense to angels. Humans always insist on bringing up the groupings of the Torah, of the Zohar, or of the scholar Maimonides or the derivation used by Thomas Aquinas, and angels shake their heads. Even Aryeh, Behema, Neshet and Isha are approximation for human ears, and are only broad fields to the infinite angels. But humans are all about categories, and do so insist on names for everything.

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## **Step Two: Herald**

*“Every blade of grass has an angel that bends over it whispering ‘Grow! Grow!’”*  
- The Talmud

Angels were once one, indivisible and unending. But creation was infinite in its variety and complexity, and the angels fragmented into individuals to deal with each aspect of the universe. The first few angels were given the task not just of mastering their assigned element of reality but also commanding, organizing and teaching those beneath them. These progenitors were known as the Heralds. An angel's herald determines their chief Dominion – the aspect of humanity they can control - and also in part their personality and attitude. (More on Dominions is discussed in Step Five.) Theoretically, all angels owe continued obedience and fealty to their Herald, and disdain and distrust to those in service to other Heralds. Now that God is gone and the Heralds presumably vanished with Her to fight at Her side, these allegiances should be meaningless. But old habits die hard.

Followers of a Herald are called soldiers, legions or members of that Herald's choir. Again, these are human words, approximating the relationship. It is however a relationship that involves obedience and has a military sense to it. As soon as the angels were creators, the demons rose and the angels became warriors. As soon as they were taught to create by their Herald, they were taught also to fight.

The following is not a complete list of all the Heralds; angels are manifold and legion. But these are eleven of the first twelve. The twelfth, Raziel, was the Herald of Prophecy. Raziel sat aside from the river of time and could see God's plan extending far into the future. He was the angel who gave Daniel and Joseph the ability to dream of the future and read others dreams. When God closed the Gates, Raziel and his regiment vanished. Many believe they saw the closing coming, and fled above to stay

with God and join the battle. If this is true, however, why did they not warn anyone. Others believe that without God, there is no set future or fate, so Raziel's angels have ceased to be.

There is also a legend of Zaphkiel, the angel of Truth, who has power over angels themselves. But nobody knows if they really exist.

<b>Major Draw</b>	<b>Herald</b>	<b>Dominion</b>
0-1	Azrael	Excelsis
2-3	Barachiel	Intercession
4-5	Chazaqiel	Lightning
6-7	Gabriel	Communion
8-9	Metatron	Countenance
10-11	Michael	Protection
12-13	Raphael	Healing
14-15	Raguel	Passing
16-17	Sandalphon	Witness
18-19	Tzadqiel	Shaping
20-21	Uriel	Fire

## **Azrael**

Azrael is described as the boldest of angels. The first to descend to earth, the first to speak to humans, the first to dazzle them with his majesty. Azrael's servants listened to the prayers of mortals and gave them the strength they so desired. As a result Azrael appears, under different names, in lots of mythology, and is disliked by other angels for causing a lot of problems. The angel of preeminence does not care, and neither do their followers.

**Dominion:** Excelsis, the power to make themselves and others strong.

## **Barachiel**

Barachiel is the archangel of intercession, of moving swiftly to stand between mortals and their very doom. But Barachiel is mercurial, as quick to act as he is to be swept up in other matters. Their agents are likewise: swift but unreliable, incredibly powerful but only when they focus on the problem long enough. And then sometimes they focus too much, and rise into a whirlwind of activity trying to do everything and be everywhere.

**Dominion:** Intercession, the power to move themselves and others across space.

## **Chazaqiel**

Chazaqiel is known as the Breath of God, the archangel of the fog, the cloud, and the storm that gathers. To them is given the sea and the sky, and the waters that fall between, and the lightning that sparks across. Chazaqiel's soldiers are the kind of people who don't go inside when it rains and end up getting hit with lightning. They see this as a plus. They love to feel the rain on their face, the wind in their hair and the electricity in their fingers.

**Dominion:** Lightning, the power to stir electricity in objects and the atmosphere.

## Gabriel

Gabriel truly was God's chosen messenger. They spoke to Mary, to Muhammaed and to Jim Morrison. Gabriel is described as being the closest to God and the truest expression of Her will. Certainly a lot of Gabriel's agents believe this and will tell you so. Agents of this Herald master all forms of communication and expression but sometimes they only use it to talk about how great they are.

**Dominion:** Communion, the power to share their thoughts and those of others.

## Metatron

The burning bush, the statue with the feet of clay, the seven headed beast: God is a creature without language and prefers to work in images and metaphors. Or rather She sends her child Metatron to do this: Metatron who commands mortal minds and deceives their senses. Agents of Metatron are exhausting because they talk in riddles. But they also understand that humans do too. Perhaps more than anyone, the soldiers of Metatron truly understand humanity.

**Dominion:** Countenance, the power to make things appear as other things.

## Michael

Michael is the power of God and Her right hand. Certainly God's drive to protect is one of her most strident features and Michael embodies that to the core. Their agents take the protection of mortals and the mortal world as a sacred duty that can never be shirked. This makes it difficult for them to relax, and they don't get invited to many parties.

**Dominion:** Protection, the power to shield themselves and others from attack.

### <sidebar>Michael is a Boy's Name

Michael is a Hebrew word meaning "the one who is like God" or more literally "who is like God?", a question with no answer. It was not specifically male originally and has become associated with a male first name through the accidents of culture and time. The important part is that the names are again approximations from early human encounters. Regardless of their name the Heralds have no real gender. No angel does, until they fall, and even then, it is complicated: see the next sidebar.

</sidebar>

## Raphael

Raphael saw the world's savagery and cried the first tears of creation. The angel as the restorer, who held up the arms of Aaron, calmed the rage of Jacob and strengthened Daniel in the lion den: these are the acts of Raphael. Agents of this archangel tend to the world's pain often at the risk of ignoring their own, and their own pain can be immense as they feel so much suffering within themselves.

**Dominion:** Healing, the power to cure wounds of the body, mind or spirit.

## Raguel

Time is something angels do not properly understand, for it does not move for them. But for everything else on earth, summer moves to winter and life to death. Quiet, dutiful Raguel took it upon themselves to rule over this part of existence. It is possible that the legend of the Grim Reaper stems from the

cloaked and hooded agents of Raguel who take souls quietly into death. Some human mythologies have the forces of Raphael and Raguel opposed but angels of both choirs get on well and enjoy philosophical debates.

**Dominion:** Passings, the power over death and decay and time's forward march.

## Sandalphon

Samuel was described as “having the wisdom of an angel, to know all the things that are on the earth”. Sandalphon is that angel. All that can be seen is theirs to see. They don't move to stay the hand of evil – that belongs to Barachiel or Michael. They wait and they watch. Seeing the things that they see wears upon them greatly. When the angels were ordered to not interfere, it was the angels of Sandalphon who were ready to teach how to carry this burden.

**Dominion:** Witness, the power to sense everything that can ever be sensed, however far or hidden.

## Tzadqiel

Tzadqiel means the “the purity of God”, and Tzadqiel is the epitome of that purity. Not spiritual purity free from sin, but the world pure in its creation, untainted and untrammelled. Tzadqiel wished it would stay that way but time and chaos unwound all things. Their agents now try to put it back, to mend what has been broken, to unite what has been divided. They are obsessed at finding that last piece to make it right, the lost melody of a tune forgotten, or the perfect cup of coffee.

**Dominion:** Shaping, the power to turn the substance of a non-living thing into something else.

## Uriel

Uriel's name means “God is my light”. Uriel created the sun, believing that light was vital so that all could be enlightened to the beauty of creation, and the glowing beacon represents the blazing glory of God. Agents of Uriel share the intensity of their antecedent. Nothing can turn off their blinding desire to light up the world. That wears on the nerves, but they are invaluable in the darkness. And rarely matched in a fight.

**Dominion:** Fire, the power to shoot forth heat and flame wherever they command it.

### <sidebar>Historic Names

For most angels, the paradigms behind Zoroastrianism, Kabbalah and Judeo-Christianity were the cultural frameworks in which they found it easiest to define themselves, and they adapted those names early on. In other times, in other cultures, they may have adopted different names, or had them thrust upon them. Uriel may have been Helios, Horus, Bellenos, Amaterasu, Huhnapu and more. Or those may have been other angels. Or it may just be a coincidence. Not every sun god is necessarily an angel of Uriel.

Meanwhile, angels cannot escape the stories they find themselves bound up into, so many choose names for their Semblances from human mythology. Judaic mythic names are the most common but for every Joshua there is a Vulcan, a Tehuatl, or a Xena. Others name themselves after whatever they see around them when they fall, whatever seems best to “blend in”. It is not unheard of for angels to name themselves after a thing they think is a name but isn't: Tovarish who runs the bar in Arkhangelsk always has people laughing at his name, but it brings in customers.

If you'd like to draw your angels name from ancient Akkadian, Hebrew or Aramaic, see the Appendix XXXXX.

</sidebar>

### Step Three: The Descent

*"[Crowley was] an angel who did not so much Fall as Saunter Vaguely Downwards"* - Good Omens

Some angels fall on purpose, with a clear intent in mind, even if that intent wavers when they encounter reality. Others fall by accident, or with no great plan, or through carelessness of memory or vagarity of emotion. It is as individual as an angel themselves, and for many, a deeply private moment. No matter what the reason, there is always, always some regret, sadness and anger associated with that choice, and the memories around it.

Angels who fall with clear intent are often already drawn to a clear Mission (see Step Four), so you may find it easier to choose your Mission first. Or indeed you may not truly see why your angel fell until the very end of creation. This is a step about personality and storytelling, not mechanics, so can be skipped or returned to later, at your preference. On the other hand, a clear view of what led you to earth may help everything else come into focus.

#### Major Draw

#### Descent

0-1

**Passion.** There was someone or something you had to have or be near and it was worth giving up the supernal for – or so you thought before you gave it up...

2-3

**Rebellion.** God's laws and philosophies rankled you. There had to be another way to act, if only so it was your way. You had to fall, if only to prove a point.

4-5

**Power.** To win the War, you have to think outside the box you are given. Fighting on the front lines, knowing the enemy, knowing the terrain, these things matter.

6-7

**Justice.** A demon or a dark angel or a human committed a terrible crime. Falling was the best way to make them suffer or atone.

8-9

**Ennui.** It sounds very flippant, but a restless spirit is a wise one. Nothing changes in the supernal. On earth, everything changes.

10-11

**Rejection.** Something in God's law, Her creation or being Her servant that went against what you saw as right. Something your fellow angels did could not stand. You had to walk away – or put things right.

12-13.

**Atonement.** Like the former, but you committed the atrocity, or was so close to it yours is the guilt to share. You wear your descent as a hair shirt, as a scarlet letter, as a sign of your sin.

14-15

**Experience.** You had to know more about humanity, or more about the world. You had to become part of it, to truly feel it as it really is. To see what all the fuss is about for these mortals.

16-17                    **Carelessness.** You did not so much make a singular, defining choice as simply realise you had come to feel more at home below than above. Maybe you barely noticed the final step.

18-19                    **Madness.** Perhaps it was a fit of pique or some passing curse, or perhaps it was a long-building sickness in your mind or soul. Whatever the case, when the fog cleared, you had cast yourself down.

20-21                    **Mysterious.** Maybe you don't remember Falling. Maybe you have an idea why it happened, but don't want to admit it to yourself or think about that part of your past. Maybe someone did it to you. Maybe there was a mix-up, it was supposed to be someone else...

#### <sidebar>**A Brief Guide to Metaphysics**

An angel has a supernal state, in heaven, and a material presence on earth. In the latter, they take the form of solid fire in a vaguely humanoid shape but with claws, horns, wings and a halo of light. This is known as the Vessel. Over the Vessel they present the Semblance, which shows them as human to the world. In both the supernal and material state, angels possess a Virtus, which is like their soul, or their identity. Before an angel falls, they can come to earth, assume a Vessel, and when departing (or killed), know that their Virtus would swiftly be reborn in heaven. After falling, their Virtus is tied permanently to their Vessel and their Relic, preventing them from ever going home. If the Vessel is destroyed, the Virtus is as well – although some angels have found ways to separate their Virtus from their Vessel. The Vessel is destroyed in this process but the Virtus can remain either in the Relic or, in rarer cases, as a free-floating entity which can possess humans or animals to stay alive. But for the most part, the thing angels hate most about falling is become effectively mortal, with just one life to lose.

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## **Step Four: Mission**

*“We are here to guide them”*

*“No. We are here to obey”*

- Michael and Gabriel, *Legion*

Angels have been falling to earth for a long time – perhaps longer than there have even been humans. And like humans, they found that once free from God's commands, they were unsure of the purpose or meaning of their existence. Six major philosophies emerged, and aeons ago they were named after the six components of the 'Armour of God' (as mentioned in Isaiah, Solomon and throughout Paul's letters, to name just Christian sources). Soon they became factions to which angels ascribed membership, identity and devotion. Many angels are renegades, undecided or torn in two directions but ultimately all of them would rather ascribe allegiance to one than be left without allies. With the departure of God, the search for meaning becomes more desperate and the purported answers clutched too more tightly. The divisions become more stark, the distrust deepens. An angel's greatest enemy, all too often, is their own kind.

You may prefer to remain unaligned, but choose or draw regardless to reveal which group has played the biggest part in your background – as mentors, as support, as the group you crossed or your last resort. Whatever the case, they reflect how a part of you views humanity, or first viewed them, and that will effect every encounter from then on.

Each of the Missions has a hierarchy, however loose, and those in a higher position can call on resources from those beneath. For the purposes of generating your persona, we assume personas start at

the lowest level (Level One). If you want to start at a higher level, talk to your Dealer and look at Chapter Six. Their only mechanical effect for starting personas is they will inform your first Memory (see Step Seven).

<b>Major Draw</b>	<b>Mission</b>
0-3	The Boots of Humility
4-6	The Belt of Truth
7-10	The Armour of Righteousness
11-14	The Shield of Faith
15-18	The Helm of Salvation
19-21	The Sword of Wrath

## **The Boots of Humility** ♀

*We are here to be forgotten*

The Boots believe that falling is an ending. For an angel to give up their supernal nature is to make a decision to become mortal and of this earth. Angels can't become humans completely but they can do whatever they can to fit in where they can and hide where they cannot. That doesn't necessarily mean not using your angelic powers, but it does mean using them subtly. Humans were not meant to have their history distorted by powerful, otherworldly beings; they may need help from time to time but they don't need to be led like sheep or sheltered like children. Indeed, the very fact that angels can fall is proof that this is God's plan for angels: to become one with their creation by becoming part of it. With God gone and the supernal world with her, it is now undeniable that this is the right course – for the time of angels to pass and humans to replace them. Anyone trying to do otherwise is really only trying to feed their own ego.

## **The Belt of Truth** †

*We are here to record them*

An angel's job is to create and to preserve what has been created. Angels are not just the builders of the world but keepers of its memory; not just the shapers of reality but students of the rules that underlie that shape. Belter see their purpose as unchanged below as it was above but by falling they are even better placed to study, understand and record the mortal world. They are historians and scientists, building the ultimate database inside the ultimate computer to produce the unified theorem that answers all possible questions and resolves all the mysteries of the universe, including why it exists at all, and thus, perhaps, create God anew from the answer. Now that She herself has gone, creating God or understanding Her from the total knowledge of reality is surely the only thing worth pursuing, whatever the cost. Even if it means going public. Or destroying all other Missions so they can't keep messing with the experiment.

## **The Armour of Righteousness** †

*We are here to stand alongside them*

Falling is about walking with the humans. Not becoming them, or standing over them, but working with them as allies. If there is teaching to be done, then it should be done by example. The Armourers believe they should be paragons of virtue as well as staunch and unflinching champions. And champions trust their allies. Refusing to work with humans in the war against demons is like trying to

fight one-handed, especially here, on earth, where the mortals know the territory. In many ways, the angels of this faction are the most traditional, and the most reactive; ironically it is the angels who least care about any *specific* duty to humanity who have ended up most interested in working side by side with humans. For Armourers, though, their “keep calm and carry on fighting demons” attitude is not just falling into the default. They believe staying the course matters all the more now that God is gone – and could come back at any moment. Trying to run things differently now is risking losing the whole game.

## **The Shield of Faith ⊕**

*We are here to save them*

Humans do need allies, but they need more than just fellow warriors. They need defenders. Teachers. Guides and prophets. They need to be cared for like plants in a garden, their bodies, minds and souls tended right down to the roots. The Shield consider themselves the greenhouse. That means working with much more structure than any of the other groups, and their go-to tool has been schools of thought, cults of instruction and of course organised religion, working with human examples or starting their own. Nowhere else have they found a better way to provide supernatural support and spiritual nourishment at the same time. Through history, religions have been countermanded and perverted into horrific violence and oppression, but humans continue to need faith to understand the world, and to shield them from its savagery. To deny them this would be unimaginably cruel. Now that God is gone, the Shield are all humanity has left. This is the Shield’s time to shine and their world church will arise.

## **The Helm of Salvation ▲**

*We are here to build them a better world*

God’s law made it very clear: it was forbidden for angels to direct humanity and human society as angels. The implication: such behaviour was to be left to the Fallen. Angels fall so they can lead humanity, and you can only lead from the front. To be humanity’s hope, the helm must be sitting on the highest thrones, being the governors and politicians, the kings and the priests, the policy-makers and the trend-setters. Though other Missions scoff, the Helm are not show-ponies: they’re not here to be popular, but the more power they can gather the more they can bring about a better world for more people, more quickly. They are also not here to oppress or punish those who disobey them, but a just world demands order. With God gone, they are the only meaningful power left, and can finally make the world as just as it should be. Any angels trying to mess with them will quickly discover that they have their finger on the trigger of a gun made of earthly power.

## **The Sword of Wrath \***

*We are here to win the war*

Demons and monsters and evil angels and who knows what else are literally trying to destroy the world. The purpose of falling must surely be to fight demons. Why fight a battle anywhere but the front lines? Humans may or may not get saved on a given day, but they are unarguably helped by the total extermination of all enemies of creation. That doesn’t mean that humans are acceptable casualties. Nor does it mean that the Swords are berzerkers or madmen. They are capable of being strategic, measured commanders, but they are always focused on the war, and total, absolute victory. Nothing else is good enough; anything else means assured surrender or destruction. The Sword have always been the first to the barricades and the last to lay down arms but now that God is gone more and more

are thinking that they have the right of it. And the Sword are tired of dying for those who refuse to join their ranks.

### <sidebar>**Obvious Parallels**

There are some very obvious connections between certain Aspects, Domains and Missions. Behemas are drawn to mastering the Domain of Protection; the warlike Aryeh are naturally suited for warlike missions like the Armour and the Sword; the soldiers of the watcher Sandalphon make perfect members of the Belt. This is to be expected: the Dominions and Missions rose out of the nature of angels. It doesn't mean that unusual groupings never occur. The Belt need Aryeh willing to strike for knowledge or soldiers of Raphael to help keep human scholars safe and well. Protection is important to the forthright speakers of Isha. Angels are complicated beings. They don't always end up where even they expect, or belong. Sometimes the least expected combination is the perfect fit.

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## **Step Five: Describing Your Relic, Dominions and first Miracle**

*“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of their power be of God”*

- Second Corinthians, 4:7

Angels have access to great power just by being angels – they can fly, they are hard to damage and their fiery flesh allows them to shoot forth sparks of flame. But beyond this lies the true power of their Miracles, gifts that let them shape creation to their will. These powers are limited in scope for each individual, as each angel only has control over so much of creation. These categories of scope are called Dominions. Each angel, by virtue of their Herald, is given charge over a Dominion, an element of creation that they can command. In theory, an angel of a Dominion can achieve anything that power would grant. In practice, only the highest of archangels are true masters of their powers; it takes great time and effort to become so.

When angels fall, their Dominions are taken from them. All their miraculous powers, apart from that linked to their Vessel, are torn away and poured into their Relic – and their Relics lock those powers away, unable to be used. Now that God is gone, Relics are coming back to life. For even the most powerful angels, the processes of mastering their Dominion must begin anew.

Angels begin with one Dominion, from their Herald. They may also, at their option, choose a second. Whether they do or not, they still only begin with one Miracle, which may come from either Dominion. A brief discussion of Dominions is given here to help guide your choice. After choosing your one or two Dominions, you then determine the nature of the Relic that contains them, and then the Miracle it contains. You also need to note down your Relic's signifying card.

Over a series, angels will find their Relics awakening and their power growing until they have many Miracles under their command. Your Dealer might want to run a campaign where you start with no Miracles, or have already reattuned to several, perhaps of a higher power, but the default is one, at Level One. The full details of Miracle creation is provided in Chapter Four; you can go through that process and build one Level One Miracle, or jump into the game quickly by generating one randomly from the tables on page XXX.

## **Dominions**

*“She's happy...up there? In heaven?”*

*“That's not my area”*

- Huey and Michael, *Michael*

In order to shape creation into infinite forms and beauty, angels were given Dominion over forces and facets, dividing the universe up so each angel could focus their art to the pinnacle. Actions derived from the power of a Dominion are called Miracles. Angels can master Miracles from the Dominion indicated by their Herald, and one other of their choice. The second choice can come from any other Herald's Dominion. Select your one or two Dominions and note them down.

Much more is covered about Dominions and Miracles in Chapter Four. The eleven Dominions to choose from are as follows. Just as there are other Heralds, there are other Dominions.

<b>Communion</b>	The power to connect with the minds and hearts of others
<b>Countenance</b>	The power to overcome the senses and deceive the minds of others
<b>Excelsis</b>	The power to increase the strength and power of angels and mortals
<b>Fire</b>	The power to unleash the fire that is the true form of an angel
<b>Healing</b>	The power to heal the minds and bodies of yourself and others
<b>Intercession</b>	The power to move yourself and other things at a distance
<b>Lightning</b>	The power of the sky and its storms
<b>Passings</b>	The power over the passage and ending of mortal lives
<b>Protection</b>	The power to protect yourself and others
<b>Shaping</b>	The power to make, change or break the things of mortals
<b>Witness</b>	The power to see all the things on earth

## Relics

When angels fall, they find themselves constrained by a Relic. This object becomes part of them, although not of their flesh. The Relic is a chain, a fetter, a grounding rod that – until God departed – prevented angels from using their divine powers on earth. It also contains a direct link to the supernal world, so acted a permanent remembrance of what it was like to be in the heavens. For some, this was an extremely painful reminder, which is why so many sought to destroy their Relics or escape them.

Until God departed, Relics could never be given away or removed. Now, they can. Yet they remain a distinct connection to their original owner, and contain almost all their owner's supernal powers. This makes them extremely dangerous. Angels guard their Relics with their lives. Others hide them where they can hopefully never be found, but of course without them they cannot create Miracles – the Relic must be held to work. An angel without its Relic is not powerless (see the sidebar) but is likely outclassed by all opponents. The risk of wielding a weapon that can be stolen and used against you is a constant consideration.

Relics are typically portable. The item was designed to go with the angel everywhere, so has to be something that can travel. Of course, portable does not always mean "legal". Relics can be portable themselves but become inaccessible because they are part of something larger or buried or hidden. In other much more rare cases, the Relic is itself something too large or heavy to be moved. These are known as Loci (singular Locus). In either case, Relics are designed to be durable. Like angels, they don't age and not easily lost. A Relic is never something alive, nor is it something ephemeral or easily dispelled like a soap bubble, nor is it something intangible like a piece of music or Wednesdays. On the other hand, all things are possible; in an infinite universe who knows what strange Relics might exist.

Angels do not choose what their Relic is, although theories abound that is some aspect of their nature made concrete. As a player you may choose, or draw from the table below for ideas.

### **Major Draw Relic**

- 0 Your Relic is something large or part of something large. A place (a Loci), a building or a piece of furniture. You still have to be touching it to use it.
- 1 A weapon or part of one
- 2 A piece of armour or part of some
- 3 A coin or piece of currency or element of trade
- 4 A piece of jewellery or ornamentation
- 5 An item of clothing, accessory or part of one
- 6 A tool or implement or something used in construction
- 7 An image, sculpture or other work of art
- 8 A natural object, either polished or unfashioned
- 9 A symbol of faith
- 10 A symbol of membership or fealty
- 11 A symbol of rank, achievement or status (low or high)
- 12 A memento of a time, place or experience
- 13 A toy, game or puzzle, or part of one, or something from a hobby or pastime
- 14 An item of communication – an inscription, a letter, a message, a book.
- 15 An item of science or technology
- 16 A replacement body part or sign of medical repair, or a medical tool
- 17 A powder, liquid or gas (contained somehow)
- 18 A package or container, or part of one
- 19 Food, drink or something for cooking or serving them
- 20 Something that was once was, or was part of, a living organism
- 21 Draw again, without replacing The World. Your fetter is as suggested but from a very exotic culture, a time far in the past or even far in the future, or has some supernatural nature or element to it.

### **<sidebar>The Powers of Angels**

All angels can manifest parts of their true form even in their vessel. This means they can extend their wings and fly. Their claws can scratch like knives. Their physical form is made of fire, allowing them to shoot forth small flames, and that same form is much more resistant to harm than mortal flesh. All of these are available without their Relics, and are as natural to them as walking are too humans. They do however attract attention. Much more of these powers is explained in Chapter Three.

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### **Signifier**

For mechanical purposes, each player's Relic has a tarot card of the Major Arcana that is connected to their Relic. Draw randomly from the Major Arcana and note your drawn card. Redraw if you get the Devil (15) or the World (21) as these have other mechanics associated with them. When your Signifier comes up in play, your Relic will reveal a reclaimed Miracle. See Chapter Three and Four for more.

### **Step Six: Descriptive Touches**

Once you've figured out the broad strokes and mechanical elements of your character, you can fill in the details about their appearance, background and personality. This section is optional, and has no

mechanical representation. Use as much of it as is useful and inspiring for creating your character, discard whatever gets in the way of that creativity.

## Age and Experience

*“So the Civil War – what was that like?”*

*“I don’t know. I was in China.”*

- Cara and Cain, *He Never Died*

Angels aren’t alive. They don’t eat, sleep or breathe, they don’t hunger or thirst, they can grow weary with exertion but they do not tire out. They don’t grow their hair or their nails, and they never age. But they do evolve and change, and - every now and then - they learn. Although just like humans they can go through a lot and never learn a thing. So although angels may have fallen to earth at very different time periods we assume they all have the same amount of skills and powers. Your persona’s age then is a descriptive element. Choose any time in history, or draw on the table below to find when you fell to earth. A sampling of the civilisations present at that time are given to suggest your persona’s history.

Note that the mechanics of the game are about memory; if you create an angel who only fell recently you may have less range for flashbacks than others in your game. Many groups may want to have limits on angel ages to make sure all shared back stories are similarly entwined: a Band of angels always reminiscing to the days of Ancient Rome will leave the one who arrived in the 1990s with little to offer. Which is not to say that such a series could not be entertaining. All that matters is everyone feels they have equal participation in the story and across characters. Talk to other players and your Dealer before deciding your arrival date.

To allow space for some memory, we assume all personas arrive before the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Very new angels do exist in the setting but are not good choices for personas.

### Major Draw Arrival

0 **The beginning.** The dawn of creation. The time of early man, neanderthals and other pre-humans, and their ancestors. Megafauna dominate the earth. A time of primal chaos and angelic creation.

1 **The humans arrive.** Around two to three hundred thousand years ago, homo sapiens becomes the only Homo- genus left alive. Fire has been invented. Humans live in large co-operating tribes. Stone tools are highly innovative and specialised. Humans have religion and primitive language.

2 **10000-5000 BCE** Dogs and cows are domesticated. Agriculture begins, and humans then develop pottery and alloys. The first large structure appears at Gobekli Tepe in Turkey, and cities slowly follow. Much of this history is unknown, but oral tradition preserves records of Indigenous Australian culture and early Polynesian culture.

3 **5000-2000 BCE.** Large civilisations appear in Sumer and the Indus Valley, and rise into empires. The Old Kingdom of Egypt, Kerma Culture in the Sudan. The steppe cultures appear in Eurasia and are the first to domesticate the horse. The Pueblo and Oshara culture develops in the Americas.

4-5            **2000-1000 BCE.** Peak of the Bronze Age. The Middle Kingdom of Egypt, the Vedic States of India, Shang Dynasty of China, the Minoans and early Mediterranean cultures. Babylon and Assyria. The rise of the “Sea Peoples” and the Bronze Age collapse.

6-7            **1000-300 BCE.** The Iron Age begins. The New Kingdom of Egypt, Height of Ancient Greece, Persian Empire, Zhou Dynasty of China. Olmec, Maya, Nasca, Adena and more in the Americas.

8-9            **300 BCE – 400 CE.** The Age of Empires. Alexander’s Greece, Rome, the Achaemenid Empire, the Maurya in India, the first Qin empire unites China, and the Silk Road connects them all. Height of the Maya and Toltecs in Andes. Aksum Empire in Ethiopia, Kush in central Africa.

10-11         **400-800 CE.** The Fall of Rome. Hellenic States and Western Roman Empire fall into chaos. Byzantine and Sassanid Empire rise from the ashes. Heian dynasty in Japan, Han dynasty in China, and the Guptas lead India into a Golden Age.

12-13         **800 – 1200 CE.** Age of Religion. Islamic Golden Age, stretching from Eurasia to the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires in Africa. China under Tang Dynasty has another Golden Age. Buddhism reaches Japan and the Nara age begins. Khmer Empire in South East Asia. Dark Ages in Europe.

14-15         **1200-1500 CE.** Middle Ages in Europe with the kingdoms of Franks, Celts and the Holy Roman Empire – and the Crusades. The Turkish Empire grows in Asia. The Mongols invade China. Great Zimbabwe is built in southern Africa. Feudalism reigns in Japan, Europe and the Aztec Empire. Polynesian Tu’i-Tonga Empire founded, Cahokia built in Mississippi.

16-17         **1500-1700 CE.** Modern History Begins. Exploration, world trade and European expansion: the Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch establish empires across the globe. The Renaissance and Reformation in Europe, and the religious wars come to an end. The Turkish empire morphs into the Ottoman Empire, while China is ruled by the Ming Dynasty. Mughals rule in India, the Kongo and Ashanti Empires rise in Africa.

18-19         **1700 – 1900 CE.** The Age of Thought. Humanism, the Enlightenment, political and industrial revolutions. American and French Revolutions. Russian, Ottoman, Prussian, British and French Empires take what the Spanish and Dutch can’t hold onto, then fight each other. Colonisation and slave trade at its peak. Zulu Nation in Southern Africa, Japan moves into the Meiji Restoration.

20             **20<sup>th</sup> Century.** The Age of War. Two world wars leave Europe and its empires shattered. Out of the ashes capitalist American empire rises to clash with Communist Russia and China. Mass media, mass transportation, the information revolution and total surveillance. The rise of plutocracy under multinationals, plundering Africa, South America and the Middle East.

21             **Broken.** Draw twice without replacing The World. The first is when you fell, but you remember nothing until the latter time period. Presumably something terrible happened.

## **Angelic Work and Historical Impact**

*“That was right about the time I invented standing in line”*

- Michael, *Michael*

All angels were part of shaping creation and its inhabitants. To help flesh out your character, you can determine which part of the world they were particularly responsible for. Perhaps they invented knees, or Norway, or the concept of fear. And although angels were forbidden from altering human history, being present on earth and among humans made it impossible to not become involved in some way. Humans and their history are so fragile, and the slightest incident can end up causing a huge impact. Perhaps you only made one indiscretion in a life of hiding, or perhaps this is just the most memorable occasion in a life of “accidental” involvements. Perhaps this was something you did before you fell – or maybe it caused it: you had to come down to explain yourself properly, or fix the mess you made.

These two things can of course overlap. You might have invented the very idea of monotheism and explained it to the Akhenaten in 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE Egypt, leading humans to your idea. On the other hand perhaps gravity was your idea but you were busy negotiating the treaty of Nerchinsk between China and Russia while some other angel was using an apple to make things clear to Isaac Newton.

### **Minor Draw Angelic Work**

- Swords        You created a specific plant or animal or biological concept. Choose which.
- Staves        You created a specific piece of geography or the environment. Choose which.
- Coins         You created one of the fundamental principles of physics, chemistry, science, maths or logic, or an invention from them. Choose which.
- Cups         You created an emotion, thought, abstract concept, belief or idea. Choose which.

### **Minor Draw Historical Impact**

- Swords        You were instrumental in preventing, mollifying, inflaming or causing a natural disaster, cataclysm, apocalypse, plague, war, uprising, pogrom or some other suffering
- Staves        You were highly influential on, friendly with or actually were a historic figure or celebrity
- Coins         You guided, inspired or conducted a famous act of exploration, scientific discovery, invention, new idea, concept or philosophy, or great work of art
- Cups         You inspired a legend, horror story, folklore, myth, religion or religious schism, or are the solution to a great unsolved mystery

## **The Vessel and the Semblance**

*“His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.”*

- Daniel 10.6

In heaven, angels are beings of pure celestial light. When they descend to earth, whether temporarily or permanently, they enter a Vessel. The Vessel is a crystallised form of their explosive, fiery nature, that captures their various aspects and reflects them in terms that make sense in this reality. It varies between angels but from Isha it has the basic shape of a human, from Behema it has horns or a crest, from Aryeh it has claws and teeth and from Neshet it has wide wings across its back. The Vessel usually stands between six and seven feet tall and radiates light from the fire burning within. That light crowns the head in a halo, and when the eyes open, there is nothing but blazing white orbs.

It is a sight that makes mortals mad.

Over this, angels wear what is called the Semblance. This is a projection, a sort of three-dimensional, solid ‘hologram’ that projects over the Vessel. The Vessel is not chosen by the angel, it is an instinctual

defence mechanism, activated automatically. In almost every case it is an image of a human but there are stories of angels who found themselves in the bodies of cats, dogs and other, stranger things. The Semblance is based on whatever surrounding humans look like when the angel first manifests, matching approximate body size, skin colour, and generic costume. Nothing that cannot be worn appears, nor anything unique or identifiable. To fine tune their appearance, angels adopt a Guise (see below), use the Miracles of Countenance, or are forced to acquire human costumes.

The Semblance is not perfect; it is a costume, a best guess of what humans look like. Clues to the angel's identity and true nature often shows through. Also, as a costume created by an outsider, the image has quirks that, if studied, might reveal it as an imitation (see Marks, below). However, it is an image that is impenetrable to mortal means; no non-supernatural investigation can reveal an angel's nature if they wish to remain hidden. Even parts of their "body" will maintain the appearance under the image if studied; Semblance blood and skin and hair appears as human under a microscope. It is not human of course, and supernatural rituals can indeed unlock the supernal potential in this "matter", so angels are constantly hunted for those who would like to steal a lock of their hair, a feather of their wings or a vial of their blood. Angels do not drop hair or skin cells like a living thing does.

The Semblance remains intact when the angels use their inherent gifts or perform Miracles. As such a lot of angelic flight looks more like free running or parkour, as they skip up and down surfaces with no visible means of support. Angels often go out of their way to add such manoeuvres to help maintain their cover with onlookers. They also tend to carry obvious blades because it allows mortals to justify the slash wounds of their claws, and the appearance of a flaming sword. The recent disappearance of the sword from human cultures has left angels bereft of their go-to accessory and like aging nostalgics, many still insist on carrying their blades, sure they will come back in style.

Angels can break the Semblance at will but humans find it disturbing and the omnipresence of cameras and surveillance makes it extremely unsafe. Every demon, cheap mortal sorcerer or petty tyrant dreams of capturing an angel, and leaving any trace is unwise. Thus angels who wish to "reveal" their divine nature to humans do it in secret. And even there, to avoid damage to the human brain, they usually only reveal some of their nature, or modify it with Countenance. Humans prefer wings and a halo, and see claws and horns as demonic. Angels constantly find themselves forced to choose between lying to humans, or being viewed as enemies, and neither sits right with them.

Angels can of course possess items and wear other clothes, but they can cause complications – and are limited by the Three Laws (see Chapter Five). But as angels move through ages and across the world they need to adapt to their local climes. So a Semblance of full costume would be unhelpful, and the Semblance is usually mostly or fully naked. Since so many angels fell in the Middle East in the Bronze Age, the loincloth or lap-lap is the most common dress.

You can use your arrival date to suggest your Semblance's appearance, or get ideas from the tables below.

## Gender

*"For spirits, when they please, can either sex assume, or both"*

Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Angels don't have a gender; like every other part of humanity it is a performance, a costume they put on. Some become extremely attached to their costumes and it becomes a sense of their identity. Some

never quite get the concept or refuse to learn or have a limited desire to match the dominant culture's gender language. Androgyny and undefined gender appearances are common. This is discussed more in Chapter Five.

### **Major Draw Apparent Gender**

- 0-7 You present as typically masculine for your culture
- 8-13 You present as androgynous, undefined or non-binary for your culture
- 14-21 You present as typically feminine for your culture

### **Age**

*"I was old when the Pharoahs first mounted*

*The jewel-deck'd throne by the Nile"*

- Lovecraft, *Nemesis*

Angels don't age, and their need to fit in means they usually not only adopt a middle age appearance but also a sense of timelessness; they tend to have faces that could be twenty five or sixty five. Others can be more accurately placed.

### **Major Draw Apparent Age**

- 0 **Child.** 12 years or under. You are disturbing to mortals as your experience and knowledge belie your appearance.
- 1 **Teenager.** Some places, things and events will be off limits to you. Others will welcome you where adults are not welcome.
- 2-4 **Young Adult.** You will still be seen as inexperienced, but you can drink and vote.
- 5-8 **Twenties.** Western popular culture views you as the pinnacle of human existence.
- 9-12 **Thirties.** A commanding presence.
- 13-15 **Forties.** Knowledgeable and mature.
- 16-17 **Fifties.** "Over the hill" and out of touch.
- 18-19 **Sixties.** "Past it". An old nag who needs to be put out to pasture.
- 20 **Seventy or older.** People will treat you kindly but patronisingly, or would rather pretend you don't exist at all.
- 21 **Ancient.** You seem so old you attract attention again. People may believe you are mystical, supernatural or extremely wise – but perhaps also extremely fragile.

### **<sidebar>Costume**

*"Word of advice: lose the trenchcoat. Cos as it stands it's less brooding angel and more pedophile chic"*

- Lucifer, *Lucifer*

Angels have trouble with clothing and make-up. Again, as visitors, it never comes naturally to them. Even after centuries, they have trouble judging cultural rules and signifiers and make choices seemingly at random – or opt for one simple outfit and never vary. They also approach costume as an art of fitting in, so they often wear their Guises constantly, as a simple shorthand. If they are in the Guise of a doctor, they might wear their scrubs and stethoscope everywhere they go. This means jobs with publicly visible uniforms like soldiers and police are popular Guises. Outside of those, the modern quintessential angelic garment is the hoodie. The coat hides the wings; the hood the horns and halo. The trenchcoat is also popular but is considered very last century by any angel who cares about such things. Every time a bell rings, another angel is being informed that trenchcoats are for goths now. Some angels, of course, are still struggling with losing the toga or the persis. Speaking of die hard

traditions, for the longest time angels carried swords out of necessity of both disguise and safety and to establish their rank in society, and old habits die very very hard among unaging celestials.

In heaven, angels represented themselves always truthfully, so their form would reflect their crowning Aspect and their allegiance to their Herald. On earth, they find themselves compelled to do the same, and for their Missions as well, no matter how much they know disguise is important. It is not always immediately obvious, but it is ubiquitous. The Behema may keep his bull horns on his truck's bumper, perhaps; the servant of Michael may have the symbol of the spear tattooed on his back, the angel who follows the Helm may have a penchant for stylish hats; they are hidden but look long enough and the pattern is unmistakable.

Also, because they often have something unusual or ill-fitting about their costume, appearance or behaviour, not quite understanding human customs or forms, angels often find it safest to hide among the queer community, or other such subcultures where strangeness is less interrogated. Few angels make it as stockbrokers; you will find more in the circus or theatre, in communes and asylums, among sex workers and street artists, and of course among the poor, the outcast, the criminal, the heretical and the misshapen: anywhere where human eyes are unwilling to look.

## Mark

*"You're not perfect. You're an angel, not God"*

- Mark Gordon, *Highway to Heaven*

Angels creating a Semblance are artists painting a picture of humanity without ever seeing it. As such every angel has a quirk which suggest no necessarily of their true nature but simply that they are not truly human. This is known as their Mark. Randomly generate one or choose based on these ideas.

### Major Draw Mark

- 0 You are covered in scars or are disfigured or deformed
- 1 You have different coloured eyes, or your skin or hair changes colour dramatically
- 2 You teeth are entirely ornamental; you cannot eat anything solid
- 3 You levitate a centimetre off the ground, all the time
- 4 You have no genitalia and no secondary sexual characteristics
- 5 You have no hair whatsoever
- 6 You have no eyelids, and cannot blink or close your eyes
- 7 You don't bleed or sweat unless you concentrate on doing it
- 8 You can't breathe in any way
- 9 You constantly emit a tiny noise, not from any orifice
- 10 You have a long prehensile tongue
- 11 You can't think complex thoughts in your head, so must use an external monologue all the time
- 12 Your wings are not invisible and have to be covered by a coat or similar.
- 13 You have a tail. It makes sitting down uncomfortable.
- 14 You are missing joints or have way too many.
- 15 You have a halo or visible horns
- 16 Your body temperature is hot or cold enough to make touching your skin or being near you uncomfortable
- 17 Your fingers end in claws or your toes end in talons (or pads, or webbed feet)

- 18 Your gravity is off, regardless of your volume. Either you weigh almost nothing and can be blown aside like paper or you are weigh up to a tonne and cannot easily be carried.
- 19 Your semblance needs some earthly substance to survive, and not a typical human food
- 20 Your memory doesn't work instinctively; you must consciously commit things to memory or you lose them at the next sunrise.
- 21 You have an animalistic habit, such as walking on all fours, perching like a bird, cleaning yourself with your tongue or thumping your chest.

### <sidebar>**Telling Their Own**

Unless an angel has Dominion over Countenance, or is using other means to disguise themselves, a successful Simple Test (see Chapter Three) will tell an angel if they are looking at another of their kind. The hints of the halo, the way they carry themselves, the sense of being out of place or poorly fitting in are all strong tells; also, angels tend to know each other and run into each other a lot. Sometimes you can't tell what gives it away, but you just get a feeling. Spotting demons is much the same, in that they look like angels, but they smell wrong. A smell of brimstone that burns the nostrils and stings the eyes comes off every demon – although humans seem to be immune to it. In both cases they have to be looking directly at the item or celestial being and no more than a few feet away, with no barriers in between. The naked "eye" is required – viewing over technology doesn't work.

Relics are even harder. They are often so small that it is hard to pinpoint their nature, especially among a noise of other signals. They do not scream out their nature and in a room full of objects, figuring out which item has an angelic sense to it is a painstaking task. To be sure, only direct touch is sufficient. As an example, the British Museum owns eight million items of which only one percent are on display at any time. Research is important. Too many angelic heists have left a trail of bodies and exposure only to leave with a not at all supernatural item.

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### **Guise**

*"I don't do much of anything any more but when I did, I did a bit of everything"*  
- Cain, *He Never Died*

As society became more complex, it was not enough to just appear human to be able to walk amongst them. So angels developed the art of the Guise. This is another costume, that appears on top of the Semblance, although it is much more than just clothing – they acquire a societal identity, a place in a culture and a hierarchy. After long experience with a wide variety of human cultures, angels typically shape their Guises as careers, occupations, callings or social positions. Not enough to pass any real scrutiny, but enough to fit in.

A Guise is tied to society not individuals. It gives you things like a house and a job and a birth certificate and a bank balance. It comes with no personality or character or backstory: the house will have average furniture, the bank balance exactly thirty six dollars and twenty seven cents. Nobody will remember you from a conference or when you sold them a car unless you actually go there or sell the cars. Some angels live up to their cover and go to their jobs every day. Others just throw it on whenever they remember.

Angels have little sense of disconnect between the virtual world and the actual world: both of them are made out of earthly matter and equally a pretence. So their Semblance has adapted to advancing society. If they create a Semblance or a Guise that would likely have an online presence, it will do so,

to a minimal requirement. Likewise, they appear to have legal and financial documentation as would be appropriate for a human of that age and occupation.

Anyone studying lots of angels' documentation would find them suspicious in that they lack any statistical outliers or aberrations. They are all average and uninteresting. Angels aren't idiots but they aren't typically imaginative. It's hard enough blending in without trying to be sufficiently random as well. Any meeting of angels will have more than its fair share of John Smiths and Jane Messengers. The shoes will all be size ten for men, six for ladies.

Guises are not Memories: unless Memories are added, *they provide no skills*. They can however provide situational bonuses in the form of Blessings applied to Tests where they know the right protocol to fit in and not be noticed (ie Moving tests but never Knowing tests). If you want to actually be able to act like your Guise should be, use your first Memory (see Step Seven) to provide that skill.

## **Mortal Connection**

*"I found out she's an angel*

*I don't think she knows I know.*

*I'm worried that something might happen to me if anyone ever finds out"*

- They Might Be Giants, *She's An Angel*

Angels don't trust humans. They don't understand what they do and why they do it, and that makes them dangerous and unpredictable. And yet, without human example to learn from, they cannot fit in. Without understanding humans, they cannot help them. So many angels reach out, albeit sometimes in desperation, or with hesitation, or resentment. Stumbling in this foreign land, they find a human to help them assimilate, though the relationship may be strained and fraught. There may be other mortals in their lives, of course. But a significant person to start things off will help shape your character, and give the Dealer ideas for plots and developments.

## **Major Draw Mortal**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 0  | Your lover   |
| 1  | Your ex-lover  |
| 2  | Your boss  |
| 3  | Your employee  |
| 4  | A colleague  |
| 5  | Someone who shares fealty with you eg you are both cops, or fought in the same war, or follow the same sports team |
| 6  | A waiter or bartender  |
| 7  | A servant, janitor or maintenance worker   |
| 8  | A stranger you see every day, such as on a bus or a park bench   |
| 9  | Someone who believes you are someone else (maybe you lied to them, maybe they assumed)                             |
| 10 | Someone who suspects or believes you are a supernatural being  |
| 11 | Someone you suspect or believe is a supernatural being   |
| 12 | Someone who is teaching you something  |
| 13 | Someone you wish to teach, inspire or mentor   |
| 14 | Someone you watch from afar but have never spoken to   |
| 15 | Someone you idolise, or is idolised by others  |
| 16 | Someone whom you care for and keep alive   |

- 17            Someone who has taken it upon themselves to care for you and keep you alive
- 18            A rival or competitor (although perhaps the antagonism has faded)
- 19            Someone you are trying to save or protect
- 20            Someone you are planning to kill or destroy
- 21            Someone who, perhaps because they are very poor or very rich has no one to talk to but you

**<sidebar>Character Generation Example: Dr Banda**

I decide to make an autocratic angel, who feels himself quite superior, but otherwise I go in blind and decide to take random results. For Aspect I get Behema, which fits: he is long-suffering. For Herald I get Sandalphon, with dominion over Witness. He has little tolerance for humans because he can see through all their lies. His Mission is the Sword of Wrath. I decide he’s had his fill of humans; he’s seen all their lies and can’t be bothered with them any more. His destiny is to kill demons, and humans are a distraction. I decide not to draw for reason for Falling, it seems pretty clear: to get closer to the demons he wants to fight.

For his Relic I get a 21 – something from an exotic time period – and 16, a medical tool. I’m not sure what to do with that so I go on to other factors. In Descriptive factors I find out he appears young, but was born before the time of Sumer and Egypt, and something about his manner makes me imagine a doctor. I decide that he’s a young handsome know-it-all medico, and has been one forever. He was a doctor in ancient Atlantis, and his strange tool is a medical device that is somehow five thousand years old but was of a technology the world believes did not exist back then. It’s a stethoscope made of narwhal horn. Drawing Swords and Coins for background, I decide he invented the heart itself, and was the first to teach humans about their hearts and what they do, which is why he is so condescending: he had to teach humans everything. The young doctor fits with his disdainful manner: he is a smug GP who has no time for patients lying to him or ruining their health. I decide his Relic’s first power will be a polygraph: while held against the skin, the doctor knows whether they are lying or not.

For his Mark I get a long prehensile tongue. I decide this means the doctor keeps his mouth tightly shut behind a rictus grin. For his Mortal Connection I get an ex-lover: affairs of the heart indeed. I decide Banda slept with a co-worker and all of a sudden being invisible at the hospital has become impossible. Looking on the internet I find that Banda was an ancient Sumerian name meaning young and proud, and Dr Banda is complete. He presents as a north African gentleman in his early twenties, handsome and proud. A few of his less kind colleagues call him Dr Bandaid, given to throwing his patients a solution as quickly as possible. He has other concerns: surveying the emergency room and the morgue for signs of demonic attack, so he can find his enemies. But his encounter with another doctor at the last staff party has put all of his work in jeopardy.

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**Step Seven: Remembrances**

*“Tell him that we drank wine together in Babylon”*

- Neil Gaiman, *Sandman*

Angels are loners. Out of habit, out of nature, and out of a survival instinct. But like all expatriates, they know people from the old country because they can’t avoid seeing them around the same places. Eventually, after centuries, they become something like friends with the angels they keep running into. Like human friendships, most of this is built on shared experiences. Remembrances. The angels the

other players will be playing will be their closest friends on this earth, and they will share memories with them.

Angels can't learn the way humans do. There's no part of their brain that turns the specific into the general, the repeated into the instinctual. So every time they need to do something, they have to go back over when they learnt to do it. As in most RPGs, personas in **Relics** have abilities and skills which allow them to manipulate the world around them, or to do so more effectively. In this game, however, every such skill is also associated with a memory. Some memories are created during play, as described in Chapter Three. Your starting memories provide your starting skills. Creating these is done collaboratively, with all the playing group present.

### <sidebar>**A Band of Angels**

The English language records many collective nouns for an angelic assembly: a host, a choir, an exaltation. Angels themselves have settled on *band* as their word of choice for a small group of angels working together. Those angels of the same Herald are typically called a *choir* or more military terms such as *legion*, *armies* or *march*. They use *the host* to refer to all of their kind on earth, and *the horde* to refer to demonkind.

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Each player, taking turns around the table, introduces their persona to the group. Next they describe a Memory they have of themselves. Lastly players assign memories to their fellow players, describing an event their two personas share, in two stages. First each player describes a Memory their persona shares with the persona of the player on their left. Then, go around the table in the opposite direction, assigning a Memory your persona shares with that of the player to your right. Thus each persona ends up with three memories in total.

It is important that this process be done in good faith with a spirit of collaboration. The player adding memories have a lot of power to shape and change the described persona and must take that responsibility seriously. They may not change or make false any previously defined memories, but they can certainly add to and develop them. Also the Dealer and the player of the persona can veto the suggestion, and also make suggestions and additions to the memory to make it the best possible story. So can everyone else at the table if it is helpful, but the player giving the memory is in charge, let them have the stage. Likewise, everyone can help craft the right skill (and again the Dealer may veto if it is too broad or powerful) but the player getting the memory has control.

Some players may find it difficult to think of ideas and we have lots of guidelines below to help build suggestions. Others may feel unwilling to inflict things on other players without "consent" - so much of roleplaying games is about letting people have full control of their characters, and breaking that is unusual and uncomfortable. Developing a conversation about who the personas are and how they know each other first can help get through this tension and make it feel like an act of shared creation, not an imposition. In cases where the players don't know each other well or have limited time to get acquainted to each other and to everyone's persona, an optional rule Dealers may use is to allow each player to create one memory for their own persona. They can introduce their character, establish their backstory and add a skill. Then only add a memory from the player to their left. This removes the sense of "disturbing" an untouched character and can speed things up immensely.

## Building Memories

*“Remember how a highway was built here one day? Later it witnessed Napoleon’s retreat...and still later it was paved over. Today it’s covered with grass.”*

- Cassiel, *Wings of Desire*

Capital-M Memories are the central mechanic of **Relics**. Angels will no doubt share many memories of their intersecting pasts with their fellow angels, but Memories as a mechanic are singular descriptive moments that do two things:

- Provide a skill for the persona
- Create a strong emotional and narrative hook for the persona

Joint memories also create an emotional connection between the angel remembering the memory and the angel who is acting in the memory. This is achieved in part by the fact that the memory comes from someone else: the persona who gets the skill gets it based on the memories of another. To summarise:

**The player who gives the memory describes the scene. The player who receives the memory determines the skill they get, based on the what the scene contained.**

We’ll go through this step by step.

## Crafting the Scene

The scene can be anything the player can imagine, as long as it doesn’t contradict anything already established about the character’s timeline (ie they can’t remember seeing them at the Siege of Troy if they’ve already established they were inventing writing in China at that time). The scene described must be a remembered instance. . It must have some importance to the angel remembering it. For shared memories it has to be something that the persona giving the memory either witnessed or later heard about – so they have to have a reason that they observed or found out about the event, and why it stuck in their mind. It will be told from their point of view, as how they remember it. That means it doesn’t have to be completely reliable. Since it is a memory, the scene does not need to be constrained to one time and place, an angel could remember how another angel slowly brought about the fall of Rome over centuries, for example, or that time they gave another angel bad directions and they ended up lost in the desert for forty years.

Although the memory must be important to the giver, the central figure in the described scene must be the receiver. And although the memory will have emotional resonance to the giver, they are not the principal actor in the scene. They are the passive observer, watching the receiver, who is doing something. It is important that the scene showcase the receiver in this way, as that is the basis for choosing a skill.

## Choosing the Skill

Once the scene is described, the player of the receiving persona gets to choose the skill. Just as the giver can describe any scene they wish, the skill chosen is entirely up to the receiver. They cannot contravene anything said, but they can think expansively in how they interpret it, especially if the scene covers a long period of time. Being lost in the desert for forty years might suggest a wilderness survival skill but it could just as easily point to skills in keeping up the morale of your fellow wanderers.

The definition of a skill in **Relics** is deliberately very wide. It means anything that an angel might be able to do, and/or be able to do better. Chapter Three discusses the nature of skills at length (see page XXX) and provides a list of a hundred examples to give you a good starting point (page XXX). Do not be afraid to think creatively, however, or express things flavourfully; during playtesting we had characters with skills such as “Knows Where the Bodies Are Buried”, “People Trust Me Easily”, “Preventing People From Escaping” and “Covering My Tracks”.

Skills do however have a Domain they are associated with. So that players cannot apply a skill to every possible situation, they are anchored to one of five areas, four of which match the Masteries of the Aspects. A skill is linked to either Striking, Enduring, Moving, Speaking or Knowing. More on these, again, in Chapter Three (page XXX)

A good memory will place the persona central to the scene, taking decisive action, and will thus naturally suggest a skill. Players are however encouraged to talk about intent and interpretation and find the best fit for both players.

#### <sidebar>**Recording Memories**

If you’re using the persona sheet provided, there are clear places to (briefly) describe the Memory, remind you who recalled it, and a place to list the skill you chose. If it’s just in text, we write the Memory, followed by the name of the angel who gave it, followed by the skill, which is underlined, like this: *Brought about the fall of Rome, Yeshua, Planning (Knowing)*”

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## The First Memory

Your first memory you get to give to yourself, which allows you to establish every part of the flashback. Ask others to suggest the skill; you get final choice but they may see things in the flashback you may not. Your first Memory can be anything but the easiest route to inspiration is your Mission. What encounter or choice drew you to that group? Was there a mentor who brought you in? Was there some human that formed your view of them or cemented your expectations? Perhaps the first human you met? Or perhaps the last human you met: if not from your Mission, you make take inspiration from your Mortal Connection, or indeed your Guise.

#### <sidebar>**Memory Creation Example**

*Lami has created Horace, a Neshar of Sandalphon who has been recording the passings of the earth since the days of the dinosaurs. John has created Biblios, an Isha of Gabriel who believes in protecting humanity with the Shield of Faith. Biblios fell to earth in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and sees Horace as a mentor figure. It is John’s turn to provide Horace with a memory.*

*John decides that there is tension in this mentor relationship. He describes a scene in 1942 Germany. Biblios is putting on a German uniform and preparing false documents for himself and a family, tonight he will drive them safely to the border to escape the death camps surely coming to them now their Jewish heritage is exposed. Suddenly Horace appears behind him, pinning his arms and dragging him into a cellar. Horace slams the door and locks it, ignoring Biblios’ screams that the family will die. Lami writes down the memory as “Prevented Biblios from saving a Jewish family in 1942 Germany” and decides his skill is “Subduing People (Striking)”.*

When it is Lami's turn he decides to explain his side of the story. He describes Biblios as an idealist, who couldn't see all the ends. Saving that family would expose Horace's plan to build an underground railroad of his own. The exposure would leave hundreds unable to be removed and hundreds more dead as the nazis rooted out the scheme and punished the city in general for one transgression. He says after he let Biblios go free the next day, Biblios set himself to helping the German people rebel on a countrywide level to help end the war. This was through planning and organising rather than raw charisma so John decides the skill is "Inciting Rebellion (Knowing)". He believes Horace saved his life and others, but still smarts about how he chose to do so.

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IMAGE TO GO HERE OF MEMORIES ENTERED ON CHARACTER SHEET

### **What Makes A Memory**

"We go back. I knew him from before the big bang"

- Gabriel, *Prophecy 3: The Ascent*

During play, creating memories gets easier: the persona getting the Memory will already have a skill they want in mind and you'll be able to build your Memories on everything that's gone before, both in that session and the series. Creating a Memory at the very start of the game is much more intimidating: you have no prompts of shared history, and yet you want these founding remembrances to spark juicy, dramatic game play. Here then are some ideas to help.

### **Shared Time and Place**

Whether both of you knew it or not, the design of Memories means that in most cases the two personas involved happened to be in the same time or the same place. Even if the memory was passed on second hand, then someone the angel knew was at that time and place. Angels are loners and their timelines vast. When their paths intersect, something important is usually going on.

Look at their angelic history. Compare timelines and find out when the two of you were likely to have met, what time period that was and who arrived first. Angels who fell earlier often act as guides to new arrivals. You can also do a random draw on the Arrival table (page XXX) to get another time period (drawing until you get one the two of you share) and then consider all the events going on at that time. Finding ideas for that in the vast tapestry of history does depend on you having a strong knowledge of history, but the internet is immensely helpful here and we've provided a large guide to get you started in the Appendices (see page XXX). Remember that good dramatic hooks have conflict and angels have poor understanding of human events: therefore it is very easy for angels to end up on the wrong side of history or on opposing sides.

These kind of Memories can leave misunderstandings that become unspoken, open wounds. For example, one day in Berlin an angel spots another of their kind loading Jewish children onto a train heading to a concentration camp. They pull back behind the corner, wondering if they were spotted by the other. Questions abound, but how do you bring it up? A great hook for a Memory is a thing you don't understand, or that hangs in the air – the elephant in the room. Memories of the last time we met can provide instant story when the series begins, as suddenly that long lost encounter must be resolved, or at least quietly tip-toed around. Remember that memories can be unreliable and inaccurate because they are not omniscient; these memories don't necessarily condemn one angel to be the bad guy. Rather they set up the angst of misunderstandings, which is the heart of so much drama. Consider Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* where very much indeed is made out of a misconstrued observation from afar.

As well as being on the opposite sides of human history, there is much in angelic Missions that drive conflict. If you share a Mission with the angel receiving the Memory, you can imagine when one of you introduced the other to that group, or some task you performed together in it. If you do not share a Mission, then all of them have reasons to dislike the others. The same goes for Aspects, Herald and Dominions; one angel perhaps easing a dying man's pain with the power of Passings might conflict with a servant of Raphael keen to heal. An Aryeh might have beef with an Isha for talking that time when striking was the better option. The Guise and Mortal Connection may also suggest conflict centred around the same time and place, and angels naturally feel exposed when other angels know too much about their mortal dealings. Yes, you know about the waitress that smiles all the way to her eyes when your angelic friend walks into the diner, every since he stopped that robbery one time. Yes, she is in love with you. Yes, something has to be done about that before it goes too far...

### <sidebar>Using the Tarot

Playing roleplaying games and story games is all about coming up with ideas. It's an exhausting process and few of us are able to turn great ideas on and off like a tap. Anything you want to use to help with that is a good idea, be it a random google search, turning on the television, or looking at a random page in a book. Sitting on your table is of course a great source of inspiration if you use a tarot deck with individual images for each card, like the Rider-Waite-Smith deck. Cut the deck and see what the card says to you. Random inspiration can be the most powerful because it jumps the brain into places it might not have gone, forcing new ideas instead of old favourites. Don't be afraid to take the first idea, no matter how crazy. Sometimes those are the best.

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## Focus on the Pain

Memories are emotional things; that's what makes them stick in our mind more than every other thing we see. So rather than focussing on time and place, you might like to think of the emotion first and then build the memory around that. It can be simply a feeling like love or heartbreak, or it can a stronger hook to it than that. The following tables can suggest ideas, and the prompts are discussed further below. You can combine the two table suggestions or use them on their own.

<b>Major Draw</b>	<b>Memory Emotion</b>
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0-1	Love
2-3	Anger
4-5	Fear
6-7	Joy
8-9	Sadness
10-11	Disgust
12-13	Surprise
14-15	Admiration
16-17	Trust
18-19	Betrayal
20-21	Confusion

<b>Major Draw</b>	<b>Memory Prompt</b>
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0-1	The first time we met...
2-3	It was terrible when...

4-5	We almost died when...
6-7	I owe them a favour because...
8-9	They wish I had never
10-11	We always fight about...
12-13	We always fight over...
14-15	The secret I keep from them is...
16-17	The secret they keep for me is....
18-19	The lie we agreed upon was...
20-21	It was different back then because...

### **The first time we met...**

This memory gives the player a sense of how their persona presents themselves to others, as well as something that might set the tenor for that whole relationship. First impressions matter so much. This memory also lets the other player pass the memory back, describing the same situation from their point of view, which might be totally different.

### **It was terrible when...**

This is a painful or distressing memory. Bad memories stick with us much more than good ones, and bind us together in ways happiness never can. It doesn't mean something bad was done by the angel, it could be to someone else, but it left both angels damaged.

### **We almost died when...**

Facing death and great danger, like facing pain, forges friendships in a way unlike anything else, and can inspire us to find hidden strengths. This memory also gives you something to blame each other about (who caused it) and/or a shared enemy (who put you both in danger).

### **I owe them a favour because...**

Debts force characters together. Especially if that debt can never be repaid. Or maybe they just clean up your messes, and the favour is perpetual – an unbalanced relationship that never balances out. Don't do this the other way where they owe your persona a favour: it's much more fun to compel your own character. It's a gift to you as you always have a dramatic foil to react to, and a gift to them (and the Dealer) as they have an easy hook to drag your character into scenes.

### **They wish I had never...**

This is a very slight but important change from the above. There is the same sense that your persona did something that made their persona feel bad, but in this case, you are unable or unwilling to balance the scales. Maybe you had no other choice, or maybe it's something that can't be set right. Again it is better to compel your own persona but this reverses: if you can't think of something you did wrong, tell them how they wronged you.

### **We always fight about...**

Conflict drives drama, and conflict comes from disagreement. What you fight about is also what you care about. It could even be something trivial like whether baseball is better than cricket. Perhaps that points to a moment in your past, or is a cover for some other conflict, or is just a fun little character tic.

### **We always fight over...**

The difference here is this is about competition. It's not who is right and who is wrong but both of you want to the best. Or have the most, or be the first, or win the love or affection or support of someone else. Competition is a big driver in television narratives, and shouldn't be overlooked.

### **The secret I keep from them is...**

There's something they should know, but you haven't told them. Why? Tell the players, of course. You can reverse it and list the thing they won't tell you, or they may explain that on their turn anyway. Also remember that the scene is about them, so your secret can't be too much about what you did. If you committed the crime they were arrested for, tell the story of their bold escape.

### **The secret they keep for me...**

They know something about you that you don't want them to say to others. This is another reason you owe them a favour, especially if it costs them to keep it a secret. What do they have on you? You could leave it and work it out in play, just knowing they keep your secret is enough for now, that can still set the tone of a memory. It's also possible that although you know what the secret is, your persona has no idea the other angel is keeping it for you. You might think nobody knows. But someone does. Maybe more than one someone.

### **The lie we agreed upon was...**

We took an oath not to mention what really happened. We have our cover story and we're sticking to it. Being bound in a conspiracy is a tie that binds and then chokes and cuts. To see the other reminds you of the lie. And it grows every time you look into your pasts.

### **It was different when...**

Relationships change. Once, it was different. Maybe you were lovers, maybe you shared a passion, maybe one was the student and the other the master. But now, not any more. Even if things are better now, there's regret for what was lost and can never be regained.

## **The Extra Step: Building the Group**

*"What's the point of being an angel if you can't help a brother out?"*

- Lucifer, *Lucifer*

Shared Remembrances built connections to the other angels of your city and in your past. But for stories about groups to work the group needs a strong reason to stay close together and collaborate. They need a shared focus. The Dealer may already have an idea as the structure of the series (see Chapter Nine) but otherwise you should work together to create this element. It will give the Dealer a clearer view of what you'd like to see in the series too.

The importance of a strong reason for the group to hang together cannot be overstated. Angels are diverse creatures and – crippling loneliness aside – are not nearly as given to socialise as humans. Players often give their personas countless reasons to fight demons, find Relics and save the world without thinking why they would do it as a team. It might even be worth doing this step first in some cases. The simplest and easiest solution is to have a strong, well defined purpose of gathering together. Some examples are listed here to get you going.

### **Just A Social Occasion**

Angels are not nearly as social as humans, but they are alone on this planet, and much more so now that God is gone. There's comfort in being around people like yourself. It can desensitise you to the reality

of where you are, but it also stops you going insane. Angels can be so desperate for this they will even seek out angels they despise, just to have a sense of the familiar. Many angels invent formal rituals, gathering at certain times in certain places. They might not talk, they might just agree to sit and watch the sun rise or feed the pigeons in the square, but at least they're there, among their own. This might be city-wide thing or smaller gatherings for closer acquaintances. This isn't loaded with plot hooks but rituals matter, and when someone is in trouble, they know they can go to the meeting and at least find others who will listen or understand. That comes with the reverse expectation that if someone comes with a problem, you have to help.

### **Safety in Numbers**

Angels live dangerous lives. They are surrounded by enemies, and don't even trust other angels. Gathering together in numbers is a way to stay safe in an uncertain world. A few extra people around gives you – at least for small pockets of time – a chance to relax, knowing that there's at least one other pair of eyes watching the door and checking the exits. You don't even have to like them, just being around them keeps you safe: like a herd of buffalo, maybe the demons will kill someone else, not you. Maybe there's a moment of detente from internecine squabbles if there's a place you can look each other in the eye. Maybe you'll be able to tell from who doesn't show up where things have gone wrong. If everyone stays close, everyone lives longer. Again, formal or ritualised gatherings may be part of this: taking a count of everyone on a regular basis. Angels are few enough but wander so far that a census is worth taking every century or so. Again, this means when numbers go down, or the wolves circle, angels must act.

### **Study Group**

Angels like to watch the world. For some it is a hobby, like bird watching or collecting butterflies. There's a thrill in studying individual specimens as well as charting population patterns. Then there's the need to increase the body of knowledge; even after thousands of years among us, large aspects of human life and world concepts remain mysteries to them. Even more mysterious is their own history and mythology, and the nature of their own existence. Understanding mortal and angel existence is the first step to being able to protect that existence, or at least stop it driving off a cliff. Research and study requires resources, access and agents on the inside, ideally going unseen. This is much more dangerous and hard work than birdwatching. As with real life politics and intrigue, intelligence gathering can tilt in a split second from boring book-keeping to a deadly game of thrones, and having a specialised team at you can rely on at that moment makes all the difference. It also helps if people can work shifts: somebody can watch the mating rituals of the couples across the road through the binoculars while the others get the coffee. That duty is what keeps a group together to share in the discoveries.

### **Search and Retrieval**

Relics of fallen angels were designed to be dormant, all their power sealed off unless severed from the host angel. Now that God is gone, that's no longer true. Finding lost or stolen Relics now provides a great pathway to enormous power. Stopping the wrong people from finding them is an important part in keeping the world from descending into chaos and nightmare. Tombs need to be raided, arks need to be raided and casinos need to be heisted. This however requires a wide array of skills and knowledge and someone to watch your back, not to mention someone to help you remember where you were when you last saw your own Relics. Finding your own is important partly because it's part of your soul and because no angel wants to be the one whose Relic ends the world. Angels are not natural archaeologists so they've had to be fast learners – or seek outside help. But when you're dealing with things this

valuable, you can trust only a few, and to earn that trust, nobody works outside jobs. That makes for a tight knit group. And one rife for betrayal when a job goes south and it's every angel for themselves.

### **Seek and Destroy**

Those agents, infernal or otherwise, who are trying to gain the power of Relics to rule or destroy the world need to be found and stopped. As do all enemies of angels. The cold war is supposedly over, but the thaw is slow and some enemies prefer still prefer to work in the shadows. This means finding the wolves among the sheep is no simple task. Angels attempting this often take on the Guise of police, intelligence agents or private investigators to better track their prey, and as cover for their pursuant actions. Like finding Relics though, they need a wide breadth of skills and abilities, and somebody to watch their back. Angels crazy enough to try to find and eliminate their enemies seek out like-minded allies and bonds of loyalty forged in these battles last forever. There are plenty of angels who want the war to stay cold or to freeze solid altogether, and they will come for angels messing with the status quo. This group of angels can afford no allies but themselves.

### **Win the War**

A more pro-active version of the above is to start – and finish – the war against the demons and the forces of darkness. Rather than waiting for any to show up, these means gathering weapons, recruiting allies, establishing bases and supply lines and then clearing neighbourhoods and cities, one by one. This is a global task beyond just a small handful of angels but they could start a movement, or be rising stars in one led by their various Missions. Going from a group of elite soldiers to generals leading an outright hot war across the globe would be the basis of a great epic series. Part of that war, or a series of its own, could be the struggle to make your Mission ascendant across the globe, which involves convincing all the others to abandon theirs. There is more than one war to win. War is hell they say but the bonds formed in it are unlike any other; angels going to war will be bound to each other against the entire universe.

### **We Help Humans**

The Christian and Islamic idea of angels spreading God's message and ushering humans towards heaven is not based on fact, but angels were charged to care for the world and its inhabitants, and have a special kinship for the things they find most like themselves. They take their role in existence to be not just to protect the sheep from the wolves but to take care of all aspects of the sheep's lives. Some seek out caring professions: soldiers, spies, police, emergency workers or doctors, others provide private services as local vigilantes, crime fighters or private investigators. Some work on problems as a whole rather than just specific instances: running charities, community groups, schools, orphanages, halfway houses, drop-in clinics and youth hostels. Still others prefer to just wait in the shadows for chances to play good Samaritans, perhaps tending bar or flicking through police scanners to find people in need. Rumours of small teams of angels being dumped in Miami by the CIA or cruising the Los Angeles underground in a black van are probably exaggerated.

### **<sidebar>The Last Time We Met**

Flashbacks are a great way to build a shared purpose. Your Dealer might ask you to do this by focussing all your starting Memories on a single time period and/or event. Of course, that event might also describe why you haven't met again until now, or why your old reason for meeting changed. A great way to start a series or a session is with group flashbacks, going back to memories the whole

group experienced. The Last Time We Were All Together or The Reason We Promised To Gather Again make very strong memories to begin a game.

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## **Save the World**

It might seem redundant: fighting demons, finding Relics, winning the War – are not angels always saving the world? But this isn't just something that *might* happen in your plot, but your explicit reason for gathering together. That means you only gather when the world is about to end. That adds a sense of urgency and immediacy to every single game session, every story you tell: if you are together it means the world is definitely at stake. It also changes the relationships between you. The individuals you see only when the world is about to end are people you trust, but might also hate seeing. The group of you gathered in one place means terrible things have already begun, and more suffering is on its way. You have a bond laced through trauma and tension; your associations seems to exist in a different reality to the other world, that one where existence isn't hanging by a thread. When the threat is over, you dissipate because you don't know how to socialise in other terms. But you only dissipate when the threat is done.

SAMPLE CHARACTER SHEET GOES HERE (DR BANDA)

*Of all the things you'd expect to find in a Zurich bank vault, a man in an SS uniform glaring at you with burning red eyes would probably be relatively low on the list. But there he is, gaze like twin embers fixed on the angelic intruder who's come to so rudely relieve the bank of what he's guarding.*

*"You seeing this?" Ironheart mutters under her breath.*

*"Seeing. Not liking," Yuurei says through the earpiece. "Whatever you're going to do about him, do it fast. I can't keep the bank locked out of their systems for long."*

*"This was supposed to be a simple job. Intel said nothing about this bastard." A mildly accusatory tone crept into her voice.*

*"Hey, I went over this place with a fine-toothed comb. You saw how he just materialised – honestly, I'd be willing to bet he's only there because you are."*

*"Comforting. Any suggestions?"*

*"You're the Aryeh. Stab him a lot. Or see if he'll go away under threat of stabbing."*

*"Right. Good plan." Ironheart circles warily, the burn on her face throbbing as she watches the man watching her. Demon – no doubt about it. The burn never lies. "Hey. Buddy. This doesn't have to end with you being pounded into dust. Take a walk."*

*"Such confidence," the demon hisses, his German-accented voice like escaping steam. "As much as I would love to leave, I have been bound here. They have my Fetter. So if you want your prize, you'll have to come through me to get it. I do hope you try – I haven't tasted angel blood in such a long time."*

*"I won't deny a dying man his last meal." Ironheart runs her hand along her blade and it erupts in flame as she leaps to strike.*

*The demon ducks to the side as the sword comes crashing down, striking sparks on the tiled floor of the vault. With a guttural growl, his hands sharpen into black talons, ripping through the fabric of his gloves, and he slashes at Ironheart's quite-ruined-enough-already-thank-you face.*

*Ironheart raises her sword in a flash, blocking his strike with the edge, and he howls in pain, right before she brings her knee sharply into his gut. He staggers and she's on him, blade blazing with holy fire as she cuts him clean across the face. "You're out of practice," she observes. "Been down here too long?"*

*"I'll smash you to shards and eat them!" the demon-nazi screeches, leaping again with claws outstretched – only to lose them as Ironheart's sword slices too fast to see, biting through the wrists, cauterising the stumps in an instant. As he drops to the ground her boot is on the back of his neck, and she stomps his face into the floor before silencing his agonised screams with a sword point directly through the spine and into his black heart.*

*As the demon ash settles, Ironheart steps up to the large deposit box. "I swear, if your guy gave us the wrong key I'll gut him myself."*

*“You’ll have to get in line behind Adra. Hurry – the security people are trying to get me out of the network,” Yuurei says, her voice strained. “Grab the thing and go.”*

*Ironheart slots the key into the lock and mutters a silent prayer of thanks to God – wherever she is – as the box swings smoothly open. “...Wait. Damn it, no!”*

*“What? What’s wrong?”*

*“It’s not in here! The Spear’s not in here!”*

*“What? Ugh... Adra’s going to be so mad. Anything we can salvage?”*

*“Do we want Nazi gold?” Ironheart asks, staring down at the stacks of gleaming ingots, all embossed with the seal of the Third Reich. “Because I’m looking at a fortune in Nazi gold.”*

*“Fortune in Nazi gold buys a lot of guns, and a lot of guns is a lot of dead demons. Grab as much as you can and bounce – ah, hell!”*

*“What now?”*

*“I’m locked out! Security’s gonna be on you in two minutes!”*

*Ironheart sighs and draws her sword again as the alarms begin to blare. “They’re never simple jobs, are they?”*

## CHAPTER THREE: PLAYING THE GAME

*“If all men were angels, we would have no need of law”*

- James Madison

**Relics** is a game designed to simulate a world and a story being told in that world. No rules set can be so extensive as to model everything you might encounter while exploring a world this big and imagining all the things you can do in it. Therefore, in any cases where the rules seem absent, you should make something up, using the rules you have as guidelines. The Dealer and the players should make a decision, and move the game forward.

Much of the game does not *need* rules. You describe what your persona does, and the Dealer tells you what happens. However, in situations where the outcome is in doubt or can create dramatic tension in a scene, the rules come into play. Cards drawn from the Tarot deck are used to determine the outcome. For the most part this will be done with Simple Tests. For more dramatic or more drawn-out encounters, a Complex Test will be used. This chapter takes you through these elements and the rest of the game rules.

As mentioned in Chapter One, we’re using the Fugue system in this game, which first appeared in *Alas Vegas*. The system is available under the Creative Commons. We’ve made some changes from the original, and we’ll point those out as we go. It doesn’t matter if you’ve never heard of the Fugue system, everything you need to know is contained in this book.

### <sidebar>**Informal and Formal Play**

In most games, players only interact with the game (and the game’s setting) in formal ways. No amount of legal arguments made by your character in Monopoly can stop you being sent to jail if you land on that space. Roleplaying games are different. Players can and often do spend long periods of time engaging with the game and the story without using mechanics and don’t need any rules intervention. Some roleplayers prefer to spend as much time as possible in these modes of play and see rules as an intrusion. Others prefer lots of formalised rules play. Similarly each group has their own preferences about how often they move between these play modes, and how much each informs or directs the other. Some people like to have the imagined story call up the mechanics, others like to work the other direction, using rules and random results to call up story; most people use both at some point.

Every group and every player can be different, and the rules of a roleplaying game should be adjusted to the players. Time and intuition will allow everyone to find the right balance and flow. In other words, use the mechanics as and when your style of play wants them, ignore them otherwise. We trust you.

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### **Can I Do It?**

The chief function of the rules in **Relics** is to decide whether a persona can or cannot do what they intend to do, and perhaps how well they can do it. There are some times where this is easily decided. Some things are generally impossible: a persona cannot simply unmake the universe (although in

certain cases, maybe they could, but mostly: no). Other things are trivial: a persona can walk down a street.

There are also things that are impossible without knowing how. Nobody without lengthy medical training can perform brain surgery. On the other hand, someone with no training whatsoever might be able to drive a car. Maybe. Slowly. Poorly in traffic. Deciding when an action is automatic, only possible with a skill, or can be *improved* with the possession of a skill is one of the primary duties of the Dealer. And it is an art, not a science. We provided guidelines on this choice but no fixed rules that can cover all situations.

As a general rule: err on the side of allowing personas to attempt actions. If it seems unlikely, add a Blight (see below). This is because attempting something with a random draw is exciting and involving, drawing attention to the player and their action. Any failure that is produced will also be blamed on luck, not the fiat decision of the Dealer. It also means that in the few times the Dealer demands a skill before the test can be made, the personas will be more willing to spend their precious Memories. (see page XXX)

If it still seems unlikely, the next option is to make a plan. A persona with no training cannot perform brain surgery. But they can find a brain surgeon who can. And then convince him to act in their interest. Or, since this is **Relics**, excise the memory of that skill out of the surgeon's head, store it in a Relic and give that Relic to an angel. In either case, instead of the story ending with the "impossible", we get a new scene. So when you do say no, always follow up with "unless you find a way", and throw the ball back to the players.

## Assumed Actions

*"You're keeping me alive because you don't know DOS?"*

- Izzy, *Prophecy 2*

In roleplaying games, there are always actions that personas are assumed to be able to do. However, in **Relics** and other Fugue system games, this is not a straightforward issue. In some Fugue games, the personas have lost their memories, so much of what players might expect they can do, what adult humans can normally do, has become elusive to them. In the case of **Relics**, the personas are very much inhuman creatures, which means much of what humans can do is strange to them. They cannot be expected to know what the average person in the street might know. Here are the basics:

### Angels can:

- Speak one human language.
- Read and write the same language (unless the Dealer says otherwise).
- Navigate through modern human society without losing their minds or being killed by unexpected threats (eg not wander onto train lines, try to make friends with speeding cars, eat urinal cakes etc).
- Understand basic human concepts like how humans eat, excrete, sleep, have sex and interact with other people and the general behaviour they use to operate in society, and copy these concepts and behaviours with enough success not to be immediately seen as alien elements.
- Read human body language well enough to recognise basic intent and emotional mood of others.
- Physically attack someone with their fists and claws.
- Use a phone and a computer (although not very effectively).

- Interpret anything beyond their time scale through an understanding of human cultures of the past (eg cricket might be new, but everyone gathering to watch sport makes sense).
- Figure out how to use simple technology where you push a button and something happens, like a toaster.
- Wear clothes that matches what most people are wearing around them (on top of their Semblance).

Unless other rules in play say otherwise, **Angels cannot:**

- Know how to speak or how to learn to speak a foreign language.
- Drive a car.
- Fire a gun or use any other kind of weapon.
- Find specific places in a city, or a place that would provide a specific thing they need.
- Make use of cultural and civic concepts and technologies that are commonplace to humans (they know what buying and selling is but might not understand an ATM, needing a bus pass or how to get the soda out of a snack machine).
- Understand the purpose of specific, complex or subtle human actions or societal structure (eg why people get married, how banks work, what looks impressive to people who like muscle cars).
- Understand culturally coded information about concepts and structures (eg they know what a phone number is but not that certain digits will indicate a mobile number or a landline or an international call)
- Know how to get useful information off a computer or a phone
- Use a phone to do more than call or text
- Cook anything without a microwave and detailed instructions.
- Tie their shoelaces properly

The narrative purpose of not being able to do things is to emphasize that angels are eternal strangers on earth. It is supposed to be dramatic, interesting, a little humorous and maybe just a bit frustrating, so as to drive angels to seek out human companions to help them. It is not supposed to be boring, agonising, bathetic or to make a game an exercise in bad jokes about trying to solve the puzzle of the mysterious soda machine. Dealers should work hard to find this balance, players should let Dealers know if the balance comes unstuck.

Of course, most of the things on the ‘cannot’ list can be done with a test, seeing if they can intuit the solution. The Dealer can apply Blessings and Blights depending on how arcane the activity.

Angels can also do some special actions which players might not assume. They have four specific supernatural powers that mortals lack.

- **Fire.** Angels can create fire from their flesh. Their blood is slightly pyrophoric and with a flick of their claws across flesh, a tiny flame will appear. It won’t spread without more fuel however. They can also heal their wounds in fire. Cutting themselves to heal their own wounds doesn’t work.
- **Might.** Angels are far more resistant to harm than mortal humans. This is modelled in them having four wound levels, whereas humans have just two. They also don’t get sick or age, and can take a human punch without flinching.

- **Flight.** Angels can fly. Not fast, but at about a mortal walking pace, and enough not to die from most falls. They can also get a buffet from their wings to “jump” their own height quite easily. With their wings hidden, they look like parkour masters.
- **The Semblance.** Angels can appear to be entirely human and move amongst humans without notice. They can drop it at will, but it tends to cause mass panic and worse, no matter how much you say “Fear Not”.

Each Aspect also has their own Miracles, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

## The Simple Test

*“It would be nice once just to guess, instead of always knowing”*

- Damiel, *Wings of Desire*

Before any test is made, it is important that the players and the Dealer alike agree on what is being tested. Everyone should be clear on who is involved (which player or players, and which characters controlled by the Dealer), what the active participants are broadly trying to achieve, and what forces might be acting against them. You also should have a rough idea of what success and failure will look like. There’s no need to go into detail – that comes after the Test. Intent is what matters.

*Example: Ironheart is trying to get into an event. “I shove everyone out of the way” the player says. The Dealer hesitates. “Are you barrelling forward, knocking people to the ground?” The player recants: “No, no, I just meant, I move forward quickly, I don’t want to slow down, but I’m not flooring people. Nobody gets knocked over. Maybe if I fail somebody does.” Now everyone understands the intent and the desired outcome.*

Once the intent and goals are established, the Test begins.

The simple test of Relics is very simple: The Dealer shuffles the deck and deals the player one card.

If it is a Minor Arcana, then consult the value of the card:

- If it is a seven to ten, the test is a Grudging Success.
- If it is an eleven/page or higher, ie a court card, it is a Full Success.
- If it is six or lower, the test is a Failure.

If it is a Major Arcana, then:

- If it is the Devil (#15) it is a Dramatic Failure
- If it is the World (#21) it is a Dramatic Success
- If it is one of the player’s signifiers, then a Miracle may occur (see below)
- Otherwise, put the card counts as a ten, and thus is a Grudging Success.

If a Major Arcana is drawn and a Miracle does not occur, the Dealer may also decide something strange or supernatural happens.

INSERT THAT AGAIN IN A BOX HERE

There are two things that can alter the Simple Test: **Blessings and Blights**, and **Aspects**.

<sidebar>**Differences with the Fugue System**

**Relics** makes a few small changes with Simple Tests from the Fugue system as it appears in *Alas Vegas*. First of all, those rules call these tests Skilled Actions. They have no fixed difficulty: the Dealer will set one, between 3 and 12, which the draw must equal or exceed. They have no levels of success, just success or failure. Major Arcana are successes when Skills apply, rather than drawing extra cards. Complex Tests are known there as Contested Actions.

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## Blessings and Blights

Certain powers and conditions in the game will give actions Blessings or Blights. Blessings are advantages, assets or some extra quality being added to the action. The most common source of Blessings is an appropriate skill for the task in question, provided by a Memory (see page XXX). Blights represent the opposite: complication, hindrances, or some lacking element making the task more difficult. Blessings and Blights cancel each other out. If you have both a Blessing and a Blight, the test is a normal test. You can have up to two Blessings and up to two Blights. If a situation would ever create three or more Blights on a test, consider it impossible; if a situation creates three Blessings, consider it something that can always succeed (as a Full Success, see below).

**For each Blessing applying to the test, draw an extra card and take the best of all cards drawn.**

**For each Blight applying to the test, draw an extra card and take the worst of all cards drawn.**

When doing multiple draws, multiple Major Arcana effects can be triggered. See “A Miracle Occurs” (page XXX) for more. Always draw all cards available for the Test rather than stopping once you have a success as later draws may trigger these kinds of events.

## Aspect

If you are doing an action that **matches your aspect** – Striking for Aryeh, Enduring for Behema, Moving for Neshar or Communicating for Isha – the suit drawn in the test also matters. If you draw the **corresponding suit** – Swords for Aryeh, Staves for Behema, Coins for Neshar, Cups for Isha – then the result is considered a Full Success. As these are broadly defined activities, the Dealer will be strict in interpreting them. Trying to make your point by punching someone doesn’t become Communicating or Moving the argument forward: it’s Striking. The physical activity being performed is what matters.

## Dramatic Success and Dramatic Failure

If the World (number 21) is drawn, then the action is always a Dramatic Success. If the Devil (number 15) is drawn, then the action is always a Dramatic Failure. These only apply to player draws. For the most part, the Dealer does not draw but when they do they ignore all such cards, and all Major Arcana.

## Interpreting the Result

Once a card is drawn, that result must be interpreted in play. Here are what the various outcomes imply to the action’s outcome.

### Dramatic Failure

The goal of the action was not achieved and things have got worse as well, beyond simply from failing to execute the action. In improvised narrative terms, this would be described as the *No-And* result.

*Example: Naomi runs after the fleeing angel and tries to follow through busy traffic. She draws Judgement, then the Ace of Cups – she doesn't just fail to get across the road, a car jack-knifes around her and crashes into another. Screams fill the air.*

## Failure

You fail to get the outcome sought. However, all is rarely totally lost. You cannot simply keep trying the same action and hope for a success, but if you significantly alter your resources, conditions or circumstances you may be able to make another test. Alternatively, there may be another solution. In improvised narrative terms, this would be described as the *No-But* result.

*Naomi tries to reach the injured person in the car wreck. She makes a draw to reach through the flames, but draws a 4 – she can't bear the pain. She decides to instead run into a nearby house in the hope of finding towels or blankets to extinguish the fire.*

## Grudging Success

The action succeeds...just barely. Or with a consequence or qualification. You reach the outcome you wanted essentially, but not entirely, or not without price. Players and Dealer should work together to find entertaining qualifications or sacrifices to apply. In improvised narrative terms, this would be described as the *Yes-But* result.

*Naomi makes a draw to find a blanket as fast as possible in a strange house, and draws an 8. Naomi's player decides she finds the blankets but someone thinks she's robbing the house and chases after her into the street. She'll lose precious seconds explaining herself.*

## Full Success

Everything goes well. You get what you wanted, with no conditions, qualifications or added problems. In improvised narrative terms, this would be described as just a *Yes* result.

*Naomi is grabbed from behind by a civic-minded person trying to stop a believed thief. Naomi makes a draw to point out the exploding cars as the motivation for her actions. She gets a seven of Cups. Normally this would be a Grudging Success but as she is Isha, it counts as a Full Success – she is communicating and Cups is Isha's suit. Her assailant immediately understands and follows her out to help.*

## Dramatic Success

The action succeeds, and then some. The result is above and beyond what was sought or even expected. An extra benefit is gained or a lucky break goes their way in addition to getting what they wanted. In improvised narrative terms, this would be described as a *Yes-And* result.

*Naomi throws the blankets down onto the car so she can extinguish some flames and reach over the hot metal to the trapped person. She draws Temperance. Neither the player nor the Dealer can think of a way to do that in any particularly spectacular or more amazing fashion, so instead the Dealer looks at the figure pouring water and decides that the heavens open and it begins to rain. All the other fires go out, and everyone is out of danger.*

## Draw Then Narrate

Some roleplaying games have the player describe what they are doing, sometimes in great detail, before they add a random element, so that the correct rules or difficulty modifier can be applied. This is the opposite of how things are done in **Relics**. Players should describe their basic intent, or what they hope to succeed, and let the nature of the success level produced from the card draw suggest how the action takes place. Once the card is drawn, all the players and the Dealer are expected to work together to describe a satisfying and exciting outcome that matches the success level.

## Not Everything Is Grudging

For more detail in scenes, there are the rules for Complex Tests, below. However, there are times when you may want less detail. Not everything is so important that a Grudging result is going to be particularly interesting, nor a Dramatic one for that matter. In these cases, the Dealer can simply look for success – a 7 or higher (or a Major Arcana when a Blessing applies, or the right suit when the Aspect applies) is enough to achieve a Full Success.

## Optional Rules: Interpreting the Tarot

When seeking inspiration for descriptions of action, the players and Dealer should feel free to be inspired by the art on the card itself. Some cards even have a unique descriptor on them as well as their title or number, which can also be used. Alternatively, each of the cards are associated with an interpretation used by those who practice cartomancy. This can also be used for inspiration (see *Alas Vegas* for more on this). Art and interpretation can also be used to inspire the Dealer or players. If you're not sure what the next scene might be, draw a card and random and free associate.

## Optional Rule: How Long or How Much?

Another use for the Tarot deck is to generate a random number. Drawing any Minor Arcana will give a number between 1 and 14, drawing a Major card gives a number from 0 to 21. If the Dealer thinks an action should succeed but can't decide how much time it should take or how many resources it might require, they can generate this randomly. Select a denomination of time or resources and the number drawn indicates how many of those are required.

*Example: The persona need to talk to a mortal who is in hospital after a demon attack. The Dealer draws a nine and says "There's been some complications and possible infection, he'll be in hospital for nine days."*

## Scene Resolution or Action Resolution

Movies and TV shows are broken up into scenes, and a game of **Relics** is no different. A scene is not any particular given length of time; in fact a montage scene can cross a great deal of time. A scene is defined by the fact that it's about one singular part of the story. A scene is usually made up of lots of different actions. For example, a scene involving breaking into a museum might involve the action of sneaking past the security system, climbing the walls, picking the door locks and so on. A scene involving a conversation might be broken into several separate attempts to convince people, back and forth. Any Miracles that don't last for a specified length of time such as a minute or an hour last a Scene.

Basic Tests can be used for scenes or for actions. It is up to the Dealer to decide which they prefer in different situations. Both of the above examples could be simplified to one simple draw that governs how the whole scene turns out, regardless of how many actions are described. Alternatively, each action could be governed by a separate draw from the deck. Sometimes, for dramatic effect, a critical scene with back and forth interplay is best represented by blows being dealt back and forth with individual draws, but equally, a critical scene could hang on a single draw, building suspense and tension.

Alternatively, the Complex Test can model this back and forth in a single interchange.

### <sidebar>**Memory Chips**

Players have access to a shared pool of Memory Chips. These will be discussed in greater detail in the Memories section (page XXX). Players can spend these Chips to acquire Memories, but they can also use them after a Simple Test that resulted in a Failure or Grudging Success to instead make it a Full Success. The Chip does not then produce a Memory and is discarded. You cannot do this if you draw the Devil. You also cannot do this in Complex Tests.

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## **A Miracle Occurs**

The first time during a session that a player draws their Signifier during a Test, a Miracle occurs. It must be a Test in a scene in which they are involved, and it only occurs once per player per session. Drawing the specific Major Arcana card causes two things to happen: firstly, the persona achieves a Dramatic Success on the Test. Secondly, they gain a new Miracle for their Relic. Rather than break up the action determining the specifics of this new Miracle, the Dealer and the player should make a quick determination of something that would help achieve the goal of the action. At the end of the session, the fine details can be determined. You can ask other players for ideas but unlike Memories, you get full control.

The persona does not need to be directly acting in the current Test as long as they are close by and critically involved in the scene. In this case they might not be able to win the test directly; they can simply choose which side they want to win and they will. The power described should help this victory in some way. Whether they are the one doing the action or not, the power doesn't have to be directly related to the action being performed; it just has to be helpful in some fashion.

*Example: Anubis, a Behema of Raguel has just been thrown through the window of a house by an explosion of demonic fire. He draws to see if he lands safely, but given the speed he left the building the Dealer gives him a Blight. He draws a 2 of Swords and The Chariot – his Signifier. The Dealer says Anubis lands on his feet, in a dramatic pose. His gold necklace glows as the burning pieces of house fall around him – and then the flames extinguish. Anubis' player jots down “extinguish flames” as a note. At the end of the session, he works to craft a new Miracle: Only the Coals, which lets him quell any fire he can see.*

If The World or the Devil is also drawn in the Test, ignore them – the Miracle is the trump card. Note that this means that when Blights apply, you **do not select the lowest card** – the Miracle occurs and the Dramatic Success occurs regardless of other cards drawn. However, if The World and The Devil are drawn in a situation with no new Miracles then Blights will cause The Devil to be chosen and Blessings will choose The World.

Once a new Miracle has been granted to a persona in a session, their Signifier just signifies a Full Success. If the Dealer agrees, it can also provide an additional degree of success, but not of a supernatural level. Things just go the angel's way.

### <sidebar>**Miracles in Complex Tests**

A new Miracle can also be triggered in a Complex Test, also causing a Dramatic Success. See that section for more.

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## But I Didn't Get One!

The randomness of this system means that not every player will get a new Miracle in every session. There are two ways the Dealer can handle this. The first is simply to not allow personas to gain more Miracles until every persona has gained one. Another solution is to “catch up” personas off screen: either between scenes or between sessions. This allows the Dealer to craft more developed plot points around the power and its reveal, wiring them into the plot more directly.

*Example: In the chaos of the exploding house, the demon the band were chasing has escaped. The angels try to give chase and fail miserably. The Dealer says that Kariel despondently plucks at her old violin, only to suddenly get an image of the demon flagging down a cab. Kariel has unlocked another Miracle of Witness.*

## Complex Tests

*“If you are the Dealer, I’m out of the game”*

Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker*

**Relics** works perfectly fine using only Simple Tests. Some players will prefer to keep things uniform and use the same rules throughout. However, other players may prefer to switch to more complex systems to simulate more dramatic scenes or critical encounters. For this, we have Complex Tests.

Complex Tests use a simplified version of the game of blackjack. Blackjack is a gambling game also called pontoon or vingt-en-un (“twenty one”) that’s normally played with a regular deck of cards. All the players play against a single dealer. Everyone is trying to get a hand of cards that add up to 21 without going over, with face cards counting as 10 and aces as either 1 or 11. Going over 21 is called “going bust”. Hands start off with two cards each and players may ask the dealer for more, one at a time (known as “hitting” or “twisting”). Instead of getting more cards a player may choose to stay with the hand they have (“standing”, “sitting” or “sticking”), hoping it is high enough to beat the dealer’s hand. If adding more cards takes you over 21, you have bust and cannot win, otherwise you win if you beat (*not tie*) the total the dealer has, or if the dealer goes bust.

In casino blackjack lots of minor rules are added, such as buying insurance, splitting and doubling down and so forth. None of those are used in Fugue blackjack. There are also no bets made – it is purely win or lose and stakes do not change during play. In a casino a dealer will typically stay with each player until they have busted or decided to stick; in Fugue the Dealer will pass on to each player after each hit. In Fugue, the Dealer’s hand represents the game characters or group of game characters the Dealer is controlling in the conflict. As a such, they may have more than one hand involved if they are controlling more than one character. Alternatively, if it is persona-vs-persona conflict, then they will have no hand but they still Deal to the players involved. There are also some special rules for the occurrence of Tarot Cards; these do not appear in regular blackjack.

Most importantly, each card is turned up one by one, each providing inspiration to describing a beat in the scene, as the conflict develops towards its climax.

## Setting Up The Conflict

Just like with a Simple Test, the players and the Dealers work out what the Test governs and what will be the outcome. If a lot of people are fighting at the same time, it’s a good idea to break it down into smaller conflicts. If three angels are fighting seven cultists, perhaps one of the angels is distracting three of the goons each while the third angel rushes through to attack the high priest. The Dealer can then resolve these as three separate tests, each with their own goals and potential outcomes. The

conflicts are not atomic or isolated though, and even though they are happening simultaneously players and the Dealer can use ideas and outcomes from one conflict to change or inspire the others.

## The Hole Card

If you have a Blessing which aids you in a Complex Test, you get dealt a Hole Card. As with Simple Tests, Blessings typically come from Memories, or from a Miracle. The player can hold onto this card and swap it for any of the cards they are dealt. If you don't use your Hole Card, just discard at the end of the Test.

If you have a Blight which hinders you in a Complex Test, you get a Hole card as well. The Dealer looks at it then deals it face down and you do not get to look at it until the Dealer says so. When they do, they may force the Hole Card to replace any of your other cards, typically to make your hand worse.

In some very rare cases you may have more than one Hole Card, but all such cards will either be positive Blessings or negative Blights. Tests never have Blessings and Blights applied together. They cancel each other out as always.

## The Play

The Dealer deals two cards face down to each participant in the Test. Moving around the table, each player reveals one of their face down cards, and describe what action that corresponds to in the scene

Once all their dealt cards are revealed, they may

- Hit, asking the Dealer for a face up card. Then describe the action that corresponds with this card.
- Swap their Hole card for one of their face up cards (if they have one). Discard the other, and describe how your Blessing gives you an edge.
- If you have at least two face up cards, you can choose to sit. If you do so and you have a Hole card from a Blight, you must now reveal it. If exchanging it for any of your cards would make your hand worse, you must do so. The Dealer may also force you to do this earlier in the play.

Remember that only once all players have made their final decisions does the Dealer reveal their cards and choose to hit or sit.

The play ends when one player has 21 and nobody can match them, or nobody else wants to reveal any more cards. In the latter case, whoever has the highest hand wins. Anyone who went bust cannot win. Going bust can represent being stymied or going too far with an action; either way you are out of the conflict until it goes into another scene. If everyone goes bust on a hand, nobody gets what they want and you reset for another round of conflict. If nothing much has changed, there is no need to re-establish the goals and stakes.

### <sidebar>**21!**

If a character has face-up cards in front of them totalling 21, then the normal play stops. Every other character with a hand in the round can turn over any or all of their face-down cards to try to make 21 as well, or a better version of 21 (see below). Whoever ends up with the highest 21 wins the hand. The outcome is the same but we cut to the chase when a king hit lands.

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The winner of the hand gets to describe the outcome. The effect that can be brought to bear also depends on the nature of the conflict, and just as in Simple Tests, the quality of the success produced. Complex Tests have different degrees based on the nature of the winning hand. Hands in Complex Tests are rated like so:

- Highest hand under 21
- 21 in three or more cards
- 21 in two cards
- 21 in two cards where one card is from the Major Arcana
- 21 in two cards where both cards are from the Major Arcana

For comparisons with Simple Test measures of quality, calculate the difference in degrees between the two results. One degree is a Grudging Success, two is a Full Success, three a Dramatic Success and those above increasingly impressive supernatural and potent outcomes for the winner. Those higher levels can even trump Effect level differences beyond the reach of a Simple Test. (see Success and Scope, on page XXX)

## Ties

The Dealer always wins ties. The personas are trying to beat the odds, and that's what the Dealer represents. If two people on the same side have a tie (or two players are competing using a Complex Test) and you need to know which wins, choose the hand with the highest card. Card rank counts here: a King is worth more than a Queen even if both count as 10 for the hand value, and Major Arcana outrank all Minor. If there is still a tie, the Dealer decides who wins or it is a stalemate as if everyone went bust.

## Card Values in Complex Tests

- Minor Arcana (suit cards) are worth their face value, so the Two of Cups is a 2, the Nine of Swords is a 9, and so on.
- Aces count as 1 or 11.
- Face cards of the minor arcana (Page, Knight, Queen, King) all count as 10.
- If you are doing an action that **matches your Mastery**, you may count cards in the corresponding suit as 1.
- Major arcana count as 10 or the number on them. So the Magician card (number 1) can be played as 1 or 10; and Temperance (number 14) can be played as 10 or 14.

BOX HERE WITH THESE RULES AGAIN

### *Exceptions*

- The Wheel of Fortune (number 10) has to be played as 10, obviously.
- The Fool (number 0 or 22) can be played as 0 or 10. If it is played as 0, it adds no points to the hand but can have narrative results – plus it may be a persona's Signifier, which will cause other effects (see below).
- The World (number 21) has to be played as 10 – it may be worth 21 but cannot be played on its own, it has to be played as part of a hand of at least two cards. However:
- The World and the Fool can be played together, to total 21. This is the most powerful hand in the game (see page 18)

- If you draw the Devil (number 15) you always lose – as a Dramatic Failure. **You cannot swap your Hole Card for the Devil – unless your Hole Card is The World.**
- If a Miracle occurs (your signifier comes up for the first time that session) treat it was a **21 in two cards, where both cards are Major Arcana.** As with Simple Tests, ignore the Devil or the World if they are present.

*Example: Samuel's player Jake is trying to seduce Nassir, a high level art smuggler into giving away too much information, playing a honey trap. The Dealer has given Samuel a Blight because the smuggler has been tipped off that someone is sniffing around his organisation. Jake turns over his first card. It's the Chariot (a ten or a seven). Since they're at a club, Jake interprets this as him asking Nassir for a sexy dance, moving across the floor.*

*Next Jake reveals a 7 of Coins, for a total of seventeen or fourteen. The card shows a man tilling the field. Samuel decides he starts doing the fishing line move, reeling in his catch for a closer dance. The Dealer thinks the fishing line move is a big big risk, so he decides to call for the Hole Card swap. It's the nine of swords, showing an anguished person sitting up in bed. Jake smiles and says the scene cuts to them waking up in bed the next morning, Nassir feeling horrified. Jake now has nineteen, so he decides to sit.*

*The Dealer's card is Strength (a ten or an eleven). The Dealer decides to interpret this as Nassir being a stallion in the sack, so although he regrets last night, Samuel is almost too exhausted to ask questions. The Dealer's next card is the Prince of Cups. The picture doesn't really inspire anything, but the Dealer now has twenty one, with one card as Major Arcana. That is far better than Jake's nineteen. The Dealer decides that Nassir is up first, and although he regrets last night, his regret turns to spite and suspicion. As Samuel sleeps, Nassir steals his clothes, finding his hotel key, wallet and phone, which he will take away to investigate Samuel's real motives and identity. He drops the pants in the stairwell, which is good because the belt buckle is Samuel's Relic.*

## **Ganging Up**

Since the highest hand in a conflict gets to decide what happens, having more people on your side is a huge advantage. This same mechanic can be used in Simple Tests as well, when personas are working together: all contributors draw, and the highest result is the one that takes effect. However there are a few conditions on this. Firstly, no more than three individuals can be on any one side of a conflict. Beyond that, it becomes either impossible to really contribute to the same task and what is actually going on is better represented as several separate conflicts. Alternatively, this can be an issue of effect through Scale, if there are large crowds working together.

Another option is to represent assistance from another as a Blessing applying to the persona making the test. As with all Blessings, you can only get a maximum of two in total. Again, this caps the limit of helping out at three people, unless Blights are also in play.

Conversely, not every crowd needs to be modelled as individuals. Where a group of combatants are trivial enough to be thought of as a single force, the Deal can represent them with one single hand in a Complex Test. This can speed things up immensely and again, simply use the effect of Scale if they have true weight of numbers.

Note that if two people beat one person, that's not two levels of success. The extra odds are in your favour, so the outcomes don't add. Just take the highest.

*Example: Two burly angels rush at a demon hoping the two of them can hold the hellspawn. The demon sits on 19 but both angels manage to get 21 on two cards, and one being a Major Arcana. The Dealer rules the highest of the two is the one with the highest ranked Arcana. That angel describes their three levels of success (not six) as the two angels barrelling the demon down and locking his arms with their weight.*

### <sidebar>**Human Helpers**

A Memory provides a Blessing, and costs a Chip. A helping hand provides a Blessing and costs nothing. Players may quickly realise that a word of advice is a lot more cost efficient than remembering, and start dragging around useful humans with them everywhere they go. *This is entirely within the spirit of the game.* The whole point is angels having to overcome their isolation and rely on mortals. Dealers can insist that angels, because they have memories as opposed to actual skills, are terrible teachers and advisors and the only way to get a Blessing from an advisor is if that advisor is human. They can also allow humans to do many many things without needing a test at all, because they are quotidian: drive cars, operate computers, buy drugs. This gives angels even more reasons to keep humans around. That's a key trope of angelic fiction and a great part of a **Relics** game.

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## **Success and Scope**

All RPGs work under a basic set of assumptions about what players can and cannot do. Often, these assumptions are unspoken, as there is an implied level of capability in the setting, but in **Relics**, godlike achievements are possible. Other systems try to list the extent of capabilities in detail which requires a crunchier system than is used in **Relics**. Instead we use four campaign levels, or **Story Tiers**. In each Tier, there is an agreed sense of what success and failure can mean, how high the consequences can go. If in doubt, use the lowest Tier (Tier One): that is the base assumption of these rules and where we assume most games will start. These Tiers also correspond to the Relic powers discussed in Chapter Four. In general, powers of Relics match the Tier of the story. The Tiers also determine the kind of stories being told. The success levels reflect the scale of those stories.

The four Tiers are:

### **1. Watcher**

*“Kill me? Fried food can kill me. A mugger can kill me. You’re not so special”*

- Gabriel, *The Prophecy 3: The Ascent*

Watcher level characters are new to the world of **Relics**. Although they have a few supernatural abilities, those abilities have strict limits and their use will cause repercussions. The human world does not yet know of the existence of angels and treats such revelations as frightening and strange. The personas have few allies and have to deal with their foes alone, while there are plenty of angels waiting in the wings who could help but want to see what these newcomers do before deciding if they have to be destroyed. Their Relics tend to produce minor effects that could be also done with technology: reducing or increasing damage, healing wounds, communicating across distances, acquiring learnable skills, etc. Watcher adventures focus on building alliances with human friends, identifying enemies and learning the basic rules of the setting in which they live. Watchers face minor, localised threats such as human enemies, the Taken, and lone, weaker demons.

Success in a Watcher story sits within the limits of human ability. Without supernatural aid, bullets kill, fights hurt, and people hit once rarely get back up again. Groups of people are very dangerous, and cops and soldiers win fights every single time over civilians. The world is gritty and fragile. Violence produces tragedy and randomness as much as success. Heists require a great deal of planning and work to succeed. Relationships are hard, painful and as fragile as bodies.

## **1. Keeper**

*“Your orders are to destroy the Fallen and bring light back to this place”*

- Gabriel, *Gabriel*

Keeper characters are established heroes in their local area. They have made a few allies and even more enemies. They have likely attracted the interest of powerful agents who have decided whether to ally with them or work against them. Keepers have begun unlocking the truth about their angelic history and the politics of angels in their city and country. Their Relics, and the Relics they seek, can grant superpowers such as flight or great strength, or deliver or avoid great damage, and the angels can act not unlike comic superheroes, and similarly, hover on the edge of discovery. They fight large or powerful human organisations such as organised crime rings, churches, corporations and government agencies – agencies which have a growing awareness of the supernatural, and which they have begun to study and fight. They mix with and battle dangerous elementals, spirits and celestials of all types.

Success in a Keeper game is more four-colour, and goes beyond the human limit into the cinematic. Bullets can miss entirely, or cut through steel. Fights hurt, but people keep going anyway. Groups of people can be overwhelmed. Cops and soldiers are a hindrance that can be overcome. Violence rarely creates more problems than it causes. Heists are tricky, but elaborate schemes tend to pay off. Seductions work swiftly, and wounds heal fast.

## **1. Sentinel**

*“I do lightning. I do power. And I stop your heart if I look at you the right way.”*

Baal, *The Wicked and the Divine*

Sentinel level characters are the power brokers of their city and their country. They are counted among the important and powerful angels on earth and every other powerful figure and group knows of them and has plans to deal with them somehow. They uncover truths at the centre of creation, unlock powerful, dangerous Relics that can control minds, shatter the laws of physics or mortality and cause world domination or total chaos. They fight those who wish to destroy the world, be they worldwide terrorist groups, rogue nations, archangels, archfiends and the seemingly unstoppable Anathema. If human governments are not working with them, they are fighting them in cold or hot wars.

Sentinel successes are grandiose and powerful. Angel fights can demolish buildings and neighbourhoods. Bullets are as meaningless as the human agents who throw them around. Anything not packing supernatural elements or enormously powerful technology is in danger and cannot effect outcomes. Violence tends to be the ready option, but can cause great aftershocks and collateral damage. Love is forged in a second and hearts broken as quickly. Bleeding just makes you look cooler.

## **2. Vanguard**

*“He soared through the first sunrise and sang his joy to the first born of the world and every living thing learned how to smile”*

- Neil Gaiman, *Sandman*

At this level, the personas are one of the handful of archangels who tower over the existence of the world like gods. They may, indeed, take the place of god(s), and rule the universe or build a new one to start anew. They control the fates of millions, have the fealty of several nations, and fight (amongst themselves) for the destiny of the whole planet. Their Relics can create or destroy universes, blot out suns and alter the flow of time. They can see beyond creation to whatever lies beyond, and deal with the things that might live there, be they ancient leviathans or new and angry gods. They have dinner with abstract concepts and destroy millions with a snap of their fingers. They invented love and use it like an inflatable doll.

The Vanguard level is not designed for long term play; perhaps just a session or two. However it is useful for the Dealer because it is possible in dramatic moments for elements from higher Tiers to be plot points in lower Tiers, as macguffins that drive plot or terrible foes that must be destroyed with enormous effort. Tier 2 events drive Tier 1 scenarios; Tier 3 events drive Tier 2 scenarios and hence Tier 4 events drive Tier 3 scenarios. For more on this see Chapter Nine.

### <sidebar>**Experience**

The game of **Relics** is designed to tell a story about the personas. This may be a short story like a single movie, novel or TV series, following one story arc, or it might be an episodic story with lots of little stories only connected by the personas' lives across them. For the latter kinds of campaigns, the addition of Memories and Miracles over time model the increase in skills of these evolving characters. There is no other "experience" system in the game, nor other traits to improve.

Other games may model a different kind of story, where the stakes and tone rise from the small and local to the vast and epic. This is perfect for **Relics** as angels can go from knowing little of the truth of their world and origins and dealing with limited human threats, to fighting world-spanning battles for the fate of all existence with things that demons themselves are afraid of. Moving across this arc requires the powers that the personas have access to, and the threats they face, and the secrets they learn to change and evolve. To model this, simply increase the story Tier as the game progresses, allowing more powerful actions, higher consequences and more potent Miracles in more dangerous Relics. More on this is discussed in Chapter Nine.

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## **Shifting Your Scope**

Although a given session or series may exist in a given Story Tier, not everything in that story will belong to that single conceit. Indeed, the best way to drive story is including elements from one or two Tiers above. The film *Constantine* operates in Tier 2 but revolves around a Tier 4 plot element: an extremely powerful angel giving birth to a world-destroying anti-christ. Similarly personas and plot actions in a **Relics** session are not irrevocably bound to their Tier. There are four key ways that the action can break into higher Tiers: Success Levels, Scale, Supernatural and Specialisation.

## **Success Levels**

As mentioned in Complex Tests, high levels of victory can allow you to raise your success to a new Tier. Getting blackjack with two Major Arcana is rare enough to imply a victory of a higher scope. A Dramatic Success in a Simple Test can qualify too, if the Test is an appropriate one (not just figuring out the bus schedule). If the players turn up such a result, let them enjoy it; don't damp down the consequences because they seem out of genre. Similarly, if the bad guys get these results, let them off the chain. Let them cause consequences the players were not ready for, things that will never get better.

## Supernatural

The power of Miracles that Relics can create are beyond mortal means. As such they can trump regular concepts of success and failure. Miracles, like Story Tiers are measured in four levels, and each level adds an effective Tier of effect to a success, or, when applied against the personas, a Tier difficulty to a problem. Kicking in a door is doable for a Tier 1 Aryeh, until that wall has a Level 1 Miracle placed upon it to protect it. Of course, angels can bring their own Miracles to bear in much the same way and they cancel each other out: someone powered up with a level 2 Miracle can, all other things being equal, punch through a wall with a level 1 Miracle protecting it.

## Scale

Size does matter. So does time, and sheer weight of numbers. An angel might be able to punch through one wall, but not ten walls – but ten angels might be able to get through ten walls, or one angel might be able to get through if he had ten days to build a battering ram or acquire explosives. Scale represents this kind of large difference in numbers, in preponderance of weight or support. It can also represent a scale of technology: an angel can outrun a human with a simple test, but would find it hard to outrun a car and impossible to outfly a jet – something two levels of Scale above.

## Specialisation

This last category is somewhat of a catch-all. There are cases where objects or processes can be designed or made to be extremely resistant to something or extremely well purposed for one task. Maybe you've studied door construction your whole life so know exactly how to kick down their weak point. Perhaps you studied the layout of the hideout so perfectly and so deeply you knew exactly where the speeding car would come from so you *can* outrun the car when they try to leave that way. Of course, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If you point to this rule and tell the Dealer that you can definitely succeed at something they said you failed at because you obviously prepared for it, they can likewise tell you your target thought of it first and has prepared as well. In other words, don't abuse this. It's designed to make you feel clever, not let you feel untouchable.

These levels can stack: ten walls with a first level Miracle on each of them is a conflation of Scale and Supernatural levels. A Dramatic Success with a Tier 1 Miracle can get through a Tier 2 Miracle. Effect difficulties can cancel each other out as well: you brought a magic ring but they brought an army. However, this is not simple mathematics, and the Dealer always has the final say. A hundred people can't beat up a jet fighter (although maybe they could, in your story, if they all had a plan). Calling in the entire US Marines may not be enough to kill one demon. These are guidelines to help adjudication and produce drama. Dealers should be generous in allowing players to reach beyond their capabilities by pondering if they can bring some aspect of Scale or Specialisation to beat terrifying opponents; don't allow these things to turn your game into a game of who remembered to bring the most barrels of gunpowder.

### <sidebar>**Failure And Tone**

Much of what sets the tone and feel of any roleplaying game is what failure (and success) means. If failure means missing your target entirely as the sword swipes through thin air or becoming a bumbling fool when trying to talk your way out of something, a dramatic scene can swing suddenly to comedy. Sometimes that's appropriate; you get to choose how much comedy you want in your game, and how much ineptness to go with that. Remember that Han Solo manages to be both cool and deadly while also being a bumbling fool. At the same time, players can get sick of falling over their feet and feeling like they lack ability. The solution is for failure to represent stronger opposition and outside factors. You miss with your sword because your opponent is too fast to parry, and a great clang rings out. You

fail at your smooth talking because guards come around the corner and shout “that’s the one!”. These drive new ideas and actions, increase drama and leave the personas with their dignity intact. Choose the failure that suits the tone you want.

This is particularly important in **Relics** because angels can be very bad at very basic things. Failing to know how to use a computer or buy a bus pass can quickly become bathetic and ruin the tone entirely. Bathos can be amazing for generating tension and horror, but only if used delicately and sparingly. Dragging a game to a stop when players are keen to chase the bad guy across the city because they don’t know how to drive is Not Fun or entertaining. Keep such things to early parts of the story where it won’t break the flow. Intensity is the hardest thing to create at a gaming table. Never break it if you can avoid it.

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## Risk

There is one other way that persona may qualify to reach an effect level that would normally be beyond them, or would require a Dramatic Success: risk. All actions taken in the game are considered risky to some extent: a Grudging Success or Failure can produce a cost beyond just not getting what you want. But a persona can decide to increase the risk of what they are doing, so that a Test can produce a greater outcome than might normally be achievable. In doing so, they of course accept a greater consequence if they fail, or a greater cost if they only Grudgingly succeed. An exchange of blows becomes a fight to the death. A chase to grab someone runs into speeding traffic. A simple pickpocket attempt risks arrest by passing police. And so on.

*Example of Effect Levels and Risk:*

*Leviathan has broken into a high security black site and everything is going wrong. After some disastrous attempts to escape, he finds himself trapped indoors, surrounded by a dozen heavily armed soldiers with rifles. The Dealer points out that not only do they have numerical superiority, these guys are specifically selected and trained for their ability to put down enemies of the state, and they love their work. That’s two levels of Effect against the angel walking out of here (Scale and Specialisation). The game is in Tier 2, so that brings it down to one level, but that’s still an indication that Leviathan can’t wing this unless he pulls a hail mary. None of his Miracles seem to apply. The Dealer says if he tries to fight his way out, a Success will involve Leviathan being beaten and imprisoned, and failure will see him killed.*

*Leviathan’s player says “Okay, these guys are trained, but they’re used to fighting regular humans who have a fear of death and pain. I’m going to go all out. I will sacrifice parts of my body and aim to do incredibly disabling attacks by doing so. Enough to give me an edge. So this isn’t about them capturing me, it becomes a brutal, savage brawl with all bets off. A Dramatic Success means I walk out bloody but okay, a Success means I walk out without an arm, a Grudging Success means I make it to the perimeter barely alive and maybe my friends can find me.”*

*“And if you fail?” asks the Dealer.*

*“Then these guys don’t just put a bullet in my head and bury me in a shallow grave, they beat me to angel dust, and maybe they get to use that dust as a weapon – and my Relic too.”*

*The Dealer agrees these are good stakes and allows the draw.*

## Long Term Consequences

Success and Failure can have consequences beyond a single Test or a single scene. For example, failing a Test in a gunfight might result in the cost of having your arm blown off. Winning a Test to gain influence over someone may result in them doing many favours for you. In **Relics** this is represented by creating ongoing Blessings and Blights that can be applied to further tests. In general, success and failure should only apply to the current event. Further consequences should only apply as a replacement for success and failure, or added for Dramatic Success or Dramatic Failure.

*Example: A mortal swings an axe at Ironheart. She gets a success to dodge out of the way, but reflects to the Dealer that she'll take the damage if she can take the axe off the assailant. The Dealer likes the image and it lodges deep in Ironheart's flesh, too deep for her assailant to pull out. She takes it out herself, wincing but now armed.*

*Example: Yuurei is trying to destroy a supernatural computer bug inside her system. She gets a success but tells the Dealer she'd rather find out more about her enemy than destroy it. The Dealer rules that the success can instead be turned into a Blessing to hack her enemy back, while the bug remains in her system.*

*Example: Rahma convinces a surgeon to help her in dangerous surgery on a young child. The Dealer says this will give Rahma a Blessing on the Test to perform the surgery. Later, the surgery is a Dramatic Failure. Not only does the boy die, but Rahma is treated as a dangerous rule-breaker. In future interactions with the surgeon and others in the hospital through the legal and professional fall out to the death, she will have a Blight applied to Tests.*

In general, a regular Failure or Success produces a consequence that lasts for only one Scene. However, the Dealer may declare that the penalty or bonus lasts longer, depending on the situation. Missing that arm will make things difficult until it can be replaced. Dealers are encouraged to favour Blights lasting longer than Blessings. **Relics** is a game of desperate violence and world-spanning stakes; don't expect to walk out of things with just a scraped knee and a handsome eye-graze.

Long term Blights should be fixable by making a successful Test or getting the resources required, or both. For example, finding a large enough fire to cure the damage, and making a Test to withstand the pain of growing it back. The purpose of enduring Blights is to drive new scenes to fix the problem. Similarly the purpose of enduring Blessings should lead to new and fun dramatic situations. The inside man helping them out will give Blessings for a scene or two, then stop because the bad guys have found out the truth. The mechanical bonus didn't just "wear off", a new situation developed.

Since Complex Tests have more levels of success outcomes, they are better used for situations where there will be varying levels of effects delivered. Levels of success can then be "spent" on applying Blights, gaining Blessings, and making those things last longer than just a Scene. However, the rules of **Relics** are intentionally light and freeform, so there are only guidelines here, and the Dealer can change them how they wish. That freedom is important; it produces good stories.

Here are three common instances you are likely to encounter in a game of **Relics** and how the Complex Test might apply effects in the instances of Success and Failure.

### Specific Case: Grievous Bodily Harm

*"Everyone loves you except the haters. Some of the haters have machine guns."*

## Lucifer, *The Wicked and The Divine*

Angels and demons and mortals do often come to blows, and rules for such will be regularly needed. Winning a round of combat means you can accomplish one of three things: escaping from the conflict, wounding your opponent(s), or gaining an advantage over them/removing an advantage they had. For each increasing level of success, add another, or step up how effective each outcome is: escaping from the conflict becomes being able to get far enough away to avoid being drawn back into it, wounding becomes severely wounding and/or killing, an advantage becomes a controlling advantage.

For the average mortal, any two wounds will put them out of a fight, and any two advantages will allow you to control or restrain them. Supernal beings are tougher. One hit is one Blight, two hits are two Blights, and it takes a third hit to knock them down. That's down but not out: it means angels can't perform tests any more. To be dead, they need at least one more hit. Angels also have a Supernatural advantage when it comes to damage. They are made of fire and crystal not squishy bleeding meat so required a lot more to kill them than the average human.

### <sidebar>Group Hits

Three angels rush a fanatical terrorist who responds by opening fire with a machine gun. After a Complex Test all of the angels go bust and the terrorist gets three levels of success against the group. That's all three angels taking three hits each, right? No. That would be nine hits. Three hits are three hits. Distribute them evenly among all the combatants, or burn them all onto one person – Dealer's choice.

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## Specific Case: Breaking and Entering

*“Heaven and Hell are here. Behind every door, every window”*

### Constantine, *Constantine*

Stealing things and performing heists are rarely matters of success or failure but questions of timing. The angels can probably break open the safe, but do they have enough time to get the thing done before the guard comes back or the security system kicks back in? There are two ways to model this. First, the Dealer can run a Complex Test where their hand represents the situation being faced: the guards, the security system, the firewall, the pretending to be invited to the gala ball, whatever it might be. If the personas win, they get what they want before the system that stands against them “realises” they are there and reacts against them. If they lose, they run out of time and will have to adjust their plan or retreat to try again.

Alternatively, heists can be fun to model as a series of intricate steps, planned out in advance. The Dealer can set a time limit of a number of actions that the personas have available before their opposition reacts. Then the personas can run Simple Tests on each of these. A Grudging Success means they use the time allotted for that action. A Full Success means they pass that action *without* using one of their time units, and a Dramatic Success means they can do an extra action on top of their current one, still without using a time unit. But any Failures means they lose a time unit without getting what they want and have to try again or simply move on to the next step without that part of the plan in place. Make sure the players can see the clock ticking down, as that creates immersion and excitement. The last move can be done as a Complex Test, allowing even more tension in that last encounter.

## Specific Cases: Research and Development

*“It’s not the being here that perplexes me. It’s the not knowing”*

Gabriel, *Prophecy 3: The Ascent*

The inverse of time running down is building towards a total. When angels are trying to find a lost Relic or solve an ancient puzzle or anything else that would require a long period of shared labour, this can be modelled as a target number of successes required. This also works for complex organisational problems like establishing a base of operations or a network of contacts or training in a skill or anything that might appear as a montage in a film. The Dealer sets a number of successes needed, usually between six and twelve, and the personas make the appropriate Simple Tests. A Grudging Success completes one step of the process, a Full Success completes two, and a Dramatic Success completes two and adds a bonus to the hoped outcome, an unexpected edge on things. Again, the Dealer should be sure to show these success ‘clocks’ to the players, as watching you reach your goals bit by bit is exciting and motivating. As with the heist, the last move can be done as a Complex Test, allowing more focus on the final dramatic reveal.

### <sidebar>**Masteries and Combat**

Combat is full of people striking each other, enduring blows and moving around as fast as they can. This means players are always going to be wanting to use their Masteries all the time. They’ll argue that attacking someone involves not getting hurt (Enduring) and rushing into position (Moving). While Dealers are encouraged to be lenient, it comes down to intent. If the goal of the combatant is to do damage, then that’s Striking. If they move on the way there, it doesn’t become Moving. It’s only Moving if their clear goal is to change position. Likewise, it’s Enduring if their chief goal is to withstand damage, not deal it.

Additional levels of success after the Test is made can add these other elements, of course: a Nesher rushing into combat who gets extra success levels on his movement can use them to cause damage. However, if you’re trying to cut down a demon with your sword, you’re Striking and only Aryeh angels have the edge.

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## **Memories and How to Get Them**

*“I don’t remember anything from before I was born. I don’t think I’ll remember anything when I’m dead. I think being alive is just remembering.”*

- Hugh Crawford

A major part of Relics is the acquisition of Memories. Every angel begins with an almost blank slate, and over the game, they create their own past, slowly discovering their present so they can build their future. Building Memories is a central mechanic to the game.

A Memory has two functions to serve: a good Memory should provide a clear ability, skill, talent or power that the persona can bring to the fore or use to a purpose in the present, and it should reveal a little more about the character and history of the persona. In the standard Fugue system, Memories are called Flashbacks, an allusion to both the mental condition where memories can tear us back to the lived experience, and the way memories are depicted in media. In **Relics** when a Memory occurs, players may describe them via a flashback, describing a scene and actions – or summarise them as someone looking back on them from now, as they see fit. Memories are less traumatic and less

cinematic in **Relics** than in other Fugue games. They aren't triggered like a traumatic mental replay – unless that is appropriate to the situation and persona at that time.

Building personas is a shared part of playing **Relics**, done by the group together. When a persona gains a new Memory, the Memory is narrated or described by another player. They should also be present in the Memory, but they don't get any abilities from the Memory for themselves. The Dealer and all the players can and should work with the player describing the memory to make it interesting, dramatic and useful, and the power likewise. The player giving the memory has control, however, with the Dealer only allowed to veto if the memory is too strange or inappropriate, or the ability too sweeping or too narrow.

While another player determines the nature of the Memory, the player getting the Memory determines the nature of the skill you gain. Again, this is in consultation with the Dealer, and following the guidelines below. You can specify the skill you are looking for before you are given the Memory, or simply describe the kind of situation you are in and trust your fellow players to give you something you can use. The storytelling conceit is that the need for the skill is a narrative trigger that leads to an explanation of how the character acquired that skill.

The skill must also be tagged to a Domain. To stop skills being applied to every possible situation, they cover a single area. These are the same as the four Masteries – Striking, Enduring, Moving and Speaking – plus also Knowing, for pure knowledge. The nature of your skill comes under one of these five areas. Note that a skill with the same name could be thought of as having different Domains, and indeed, an angel could take the same skill twice to cover different Domains and get more use out of their knowledge.

*Example: Gibborim needs to smuggle a rifle through customs for an important heist in Vatican City. Gibborim has the skill Sharpshooter (Striking) from the time he had to take care of a demonic conspiracy from atop a grassy knoll. He asks the Dealer if he knows the best kind of guns to break into small parts and how to best to smuggle them. The Dealer says that's either a Smuggling skill or a Sharpshooter (Knowing) skill, and just being good with a scope offers no such information on gun running. Gibborim looks around the table for someone to help explain more about that fateful day in Dallas.*

You can get Memories any time, even in the middle of a Complex Action. There's nothing more appropriate to the cinematic universe of **Relics** than looking like you're about to lose and then "remembering" the way forward. When you are in a situation when you need a Memory, you simply announce it, and spend a Memory chip (see below). The Memory is provided by the first player to your left around the table who has not already given you a Memory this session. If seating changes or player absences throw this system into asymmetry, note that a Persona may never have more than two more Memories from any one other persona. Nor can any angel have more than two more Memories than any other angel.

*Example: Amenset went to the New World with Ixel in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the two have reminisced a great deal about that trip. She has five memories from Ixel, three from Wren and four from Brokkr. She cannot add another memory from Ixel as she would then have more than two more than she has from Wren. When her car breaks down on a lonely highway, she looks to Wren for help, wondering if he can remember when she was good at repairs.*

Memories are always written down with a brief summary of the event, followed by the angel who gave the memory, followed by the ability transferred. When writing them in rules, we write the scene, followed by the giving angel's name, and then the skill underlined, with the Domain in brackets.

INSERT ZOOMED IN CHARACTER SHEET GRAPHIC HERE

*Example: Wren remembers meeting Amenset in Westinghouse's factory in Pittsburg, 1878, helping him create engines. Wren recalls that Amenset had trouble concentrating because she had taken a fancy to Westinghouse's pretty daughter. Amenset writes down "Distracted by Westinghouse's daughter, Pittsburg 1878, Wren, Mechanical Engineering (Knowing)"*

#### <sidebar>**Memories vs memories**

Angels have memories, as in the things in their head, and all the things they remember doing. We use the capital-M Memory to refer only to memories which provide abilities to use in the present. Just because these are the ones on your character sheet doesn't mean you don't remember other things, or that other memories are less significant to you. Your mortal wife dying might be visible every time you close your eyes, even if you haven't added it to your sheet yet as a Memory.

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## Memory Chips

At the beginning of each session, the Dealer will place seven chips on the table. Whenever you get a Memory, hand a chip back to the Dealer. When there are no chips left, you cannot gain any new Memories in that session. Chips can also be spent to turn a Grudging Success or Failure on a Simple Test into a Full Success. They do not provide a Memory in this case. To get chips back into the pool, players may, with the Dealer's permission, suggest a Twist (see below).

Although no persona may have more than two more Memories than any other angel, the Memory chips are otherwise unregulated in which player gets to use them. However, the player who asks for a Memory must do exactly that: *ask*. And they may not spend the chip until someone agrees to give them a Memory. If a decision is in doubt and the argument cannot be settled, take a vote and go with the majority, with the Dealer breaking ties. It is in the interest of everyone, however, both in terms of consolidating power and enjoyment of the game, to spread Memories around.

## On Session Length And Player Count

Game sessions can vary a great deal, in both how long you play for and the content therein. Whole sessions can focus on one single in-character argument – or could summarise months of activity. A complex heist one session might require a great deal of Memories, while a showdown with the villain, while epic, might only require sword fighting skills. To accommodate this, Dealers are encouraged to increase the amount of available chips when necessary or carry chips over between sessions so that games with few Memories are balanced out by more the next time. Chips can't carry over for more than two sessions, and you can never have more chips "banked" than the number of players.

The figure of seven is based on sessions normally lasting about four hours. Your games may be shorter or longer; to get an estimate of how many chips to use, multiply the number of hours your games last by two, and subtract one. If this number is less than the number of players, then use the latter figure.

## Twists

Players may get more Memory chips placed in the pool by adding a Twist to the story. This is a new event, situation or detail, described by a player, which provides a significant disadvantage to the current situation the personas find themselves in. If the Dealer agrees, the event or detail is added and a chip added (or returned) to the pool. The Dealer may also have a Twist occur, if they think it is necessary for the story to progress. They add the element and add a chip to the pool.

*Example: Ixel, Wren and Amenset are chasing an imp, a savage proto-demon, through the streets. The imp flies down into the train station. Ixel's player looks at the diminishing pile of chips and has an idea. "What if I chase the imp onto the train and it leaves the station, so I'm cut off from the others?" The Dealer likes how this ups the stakes of the fight, and allows the Twist. Later, Ixel catches the imp and cuts it down with his sword. The Dealer thinks that the imp would be a great way to link the personas to the next act of the story where they encounter the imp's master. He puts a chip in the pool and says that although Ixel thought the imp was dead, after reuniting with his fellow angels they discover it somehow regained enough strength to crawl into the train tunnels, trailing blood behind it.*

## The Rashomon Job

The power to narrate another character's history opens up the possibility of messing with your fellow players. Resist this temptation, or they will certainly do it to you. If you want to have a game about messing with each other that's perfectly fine (and not in any way against the spirit of the game) but that should be agreed upon before starting play. Otherwise, work together for a good story. That means drama and conflict, not being a jerk.

Players can and should build on what's come before in memories and may reveal or add to particular scenes. They may not contradict anything that has been already established in a memory but revealed or added information can change the tone of a past memory, or its interpretation. This also provides a much more fun and entertaining way to adjust other persona's memories: by offering a different viewpoint. In this way a Memory offers insight into both the described and the describer.

*Example: A previous Memory about Leviathan has established that in Renaissance Italy, the Medici family sent ten men to kill him, and they failed. In a later session, Elysia, another angel in his band, describes rushing into a church crypt where Leviathan is busy defiling the grave of a powerful Medici family member in his frenzied search for a Relic. Now we see why Leviathan was so passionately wanted dead. Leviathan writes down "Removing an item from a Medici coffin in a delicate and totally appropriate way, actually, Elysia, Graverobbing (Moving)"*

## What is a Skill?

The nature of the skill provided by Memories is deliberately left open to encourage creativity and flexibility. However, they should not be defined too widely. Players, in their nature, will always try to use skills in ways beyond their original scope and definition, so always err on the side of making them narrow to begin with.

The Memory itself will provide a guide to shaping the skill: it must be a skill used in the scene specifically, so it must be something that can be demonstrated in action. However, it also needs to apply to the current circumstances as well. If you can only ever think of using it in the flashback situation, then it is too narrow. If it seems like it doesn't really describe the action in the flashback, it is too wide.

*Example: Leviathan fights the City Guard while Elysia slips away into the night. Leviathan's player describes this memory to improve Elysia's sneaking skills, which in the modern day she needs to evade the police. Her first stab at the ability is "Escaping From Churches". The Dealer feels that's too specific. She tries "Defying Civic Authority Figures". That's too wide. The Dealer asks for more description of the scene. Leviathan's player describes a shadow moonlit night, Elysia darting through alleyways with footsteps echoing on the cobblestones. The Dealer suggests that sounds like "Losing Pursuers". Then, realising that players could use this to apply to a speedboat chase or dodging cybersecurity, he amends it to "Foot Pursuit". Elysia writes down "Escaping the City Guards that night in Florence, Leviathan, - Foot Pursuit (Moving)"*

Dealers feeling generous can of course let skills be used expansively by simply applying one or two Blights depending on how much the player wants to "stretch" the definition. But with their extensive backstory to draw on, it's usually easier and more interesting to ask for another Memory. It also makes for richer characterisation. Our weaknesses define us more than anything.

*Example: Amenset sailed the ocean many times in the golden age of exploration, joining Columbus on his journey to the New World and Nelson at the Battle of the Nile. She wants to use her Seamanship skill to see if she can predict the weather for the next day, arguing that all that time would have given her a natural sense of when storms or winds were coming. The Dealer decides this is possible on a Simple Test with no Blessing. Later, Amenset needs to know what kind of fish might have inspired the story of Jonah in the bible and suggests that while sailing the world there was a lot of fishing going on. The Dealer suggests it is possible but since she never worked on a fishing boat, he applies a Blight. She decides instead to ask the table for a memory of working in ichthyology.*

## Skill List

Although skills can be anything you want, some players will be greatly helped with suggestions. Here's a list of a hundred possible skills to get your started.

Academia (specify)  
Analysis  
Animal Handling  
Antiquarian  
Archaeology  
Archery  
Art (specify)  
Athletics  
Awareness  
Bargaining  
Blend in  
Brawling  
Bribery  
Bureaucracy  
Business  
Canvass  
Climbing  
Computers  
Construction

Convince  
Cooking  
Crafting  
Cryptography  
Culture Knowledge (specify)  
Deduction  
Design  
Demolitions  
Discipline  
Disguise  
Drive  
Electronics  
Etiquette  
Fashion  
Fencing  
Finance  
First Aid  
Forensics  
Forgery  
Gossip  
Gymnastics  
Hacking  
Handguns  
Humanities (specify)  
Hunting  
Insight  
Inspiration  
Interrogation  
Intimidation  
Intuit  
Investigation  
Language (specify)  
Law  
Leadership  
Linguistics  
Local Knowledge (specify)  
Lockbreaking  
Logistics  
Longarms  
Lying  
Martial Arts  
Management  
Mechanics  
Medicine  
Motivation  
Mythology  
Navigation  
Negotiation  
Notice

Occult  
Oratory  
Perform (specify)  
Pilot (specify)  
Politics  
Psychology  
Pursuit  
Rapport  
Repair  
Research  
Ride (bicycle, horse)  
Science (specify)  
**Scrounge**  
Seduction  
Sense Motive  
Sleight of Hand  
Stealth  
Streetwise  
Surveillance  
Survival  
Swimming  
Tactics  
Teaching  
Teamwork  
Tracking  
Trade (specify)  
Tradecraft  
Weaponry  
Willpower

#### <sidebar>**Memories Are Always Skills, Even When They Aren't**

Often, the skill you want to acquire is not necessarily a “skill” that a human could learn through research or practice. “Knowledge of the Streets” for example, can represent access to a series of informers, contacts and acquaintances, which, when tapped, provide information. Another angel might want “Access to Police Files” so the angel creates a memory of someone in the police station who regularly helps them. Although the memory that is created is a person, the skill must be phrased as a skill. That stops the player from trying to use the same person to let them hide a body in their house. That would require a different memory, it's a different skill. This stops the system from being abused and lets you build on these memory details – the cop who slips you access to police files is going to become more nuanced when you find out why he'll also help you hide a body.</sidebar>

### **Optional Rule: Expert Skills**

Possessing a skill from a Memory indicates a substantial familiarity with that ability but does not make success guaranteed. Players may want to have their personas possess great mastery over some abilities, so much so that failure is rare if not impossible. Players can take a skill a second time, with a different Memory providing the same ability provided by a previous one. In this case underline it twice on your

persona sheet. From then on, in Simple Tests where this skill applies, Failures count as Grudging Successes and Grudging Successes count as Successes. In Complex Tests, gain two Hole Cards, where both, one or neither can be used. If a Blight applies to a situation where the Expert Skill applies, the Expert Skill counts as having two Blessings, one of which is cancelled out by the Blight leaving one Blessing remaining.

## Optional Rule: Temporary Skills

*“The very best part of memory is it’s mostly about forgetting”*

- Odin, *American Gods*

The **Relics** system is built with the idea of personas getting one or two new skills per session. This also assumes a six to twelve session campaign, with each persona ending up with between ten to twenty skills each at the end. For longer campaigns or simply to keep each persona feeling unique, Dealers may choose to cap the number of skills an angel can have at eleven. In this case, players should also be allowed to have temporary skills. At the end of each session, players may look at the skills they gained and choose to make any of them non-permanent. The Memory remains part of their history and is not discarded. However the skill was not something particularly key to their character so is forgotten as a key aspect to their identity. In this way, personas can have strong recurring skills that very much reflect their nature and abilities and passing temporary ones to help them out in a jam.

### <sidebar>**Bindings**

Just as angelic Miracles can be contained in a Relic, so can Memories. Angels can fragment their minds and pass their experiences into these items. Doing so is not always as fatal as it is for Miracles if only Memories are imparted. It requires a night and a day of concentration and a Test with at least one Blight to do so without going insane, but then the Memory, and the skill with it, can be transferred to others as simply as passing the Relic to another. The angel forgets the memory entirely unless they too are holding the item. In modern day this has proven useful for angels needing to pass sensitive information between their numbers, or protect themselves by removing information others might kill them for. Ancient Relics often come with skills as well as powers, or just skills, when such things seemed greater gifts to mortal hands. The Greek myth of the Sword of Peleus that would grant its wielder sure victory, and the Irish myth of the Salmon of Knowledge may both have been about Relics full of Bindings.

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## Memories vs Miracles

*“I like it here. I even learnt to drive.”*

- Gabriel, *Prophecy 3: The Ascent*

Just as angels acquire Memories, their Relics acquire Miracles. These Miracles provide incredible supernatural powers that the skills from Memories cannot match. They are not however remembered in Memories as their powers have only just reawakened on earth.

Since Miracles can perform the supernatural, they could be seen as outclassing Memories: why learn how to pick a lock when a Miracle could open any door? There are several reasons to prefer a Memory, however, such as:

- Miracles always have a cost, condition or limitation (called a Trammel)
- Miracles tend to be noticeably supernatural
- Miracles tend to attract other angels and demons

- Miracles are always tied to a Relic, an item which can be lost or stolen
- Miracles cannot be added when needed, they are acquired at random moments

A smart angel, therefore, does not put all his eggs in one basket. There are some angels who do, however, devote all their efforts to recovering and harnessing their lost supernatural powers, and care not for mastering anything of the mortal realms. Powerful angels who never learnt “local” skills tend to need lots of local helpers and acquire them willingly or unwillingly when necessary. You can always spot an angel who has devoted everything to supernal power: he dresses like a bronze age king and gets run over by the bus.

*“I don’t like doctors,” she said for the third time. “And, well,” she paused, taking a moment to stare into his eyes so he knew she meant the next words as a personal insult. “I’d prefer an English doctor.”*

*Dr Banda did not blink, not because the casual racism was nothing to a man with skin as dark as his who had lived in northern Europe for centuries, but because he typically forgot to perform this human function when he was concentrating, as he was now on the patient’s chart. 58, female, shortness of breath, dizziness. History of high blood pressure.*

*“My daughter, she should have said,” she added, as if that ended the matter on her part. Dr Banda nodded. He understood that humans had Relics too; objects that they swung around as weapons but cursed as traps; things that kept them alive yet they resented so much they dragged them behind them like spiteful children with unwelcome burdens. Unlike angels, humans usually kept other humans as their Relics.*

*“I was born in Brighton, madam,” he added in an off-hand manner. It was a lie but Dr Banda was not above some mocking cruelty. He pulled his ancient hearing tube from an unseen pocket – his own personal Relic – and blocked out her sudden bleating as he listened to the drum beat of her heart. It was a fine instrument, made from marble carved before Egypt had Pharaohs. It had been used by Banda to hear the beating hearts of men when men still believed they were made of dust. A century ago tubes like his were still used around the world, but now the modern stethoscope had made this tried and tested device seem medieval.*

*“Oh, oh no, what’s that thing, that’s not a, ooh, it’s voodoo, get it off” she dribbled. “Nurses, doctors, oh, Shirly, where is she, oh my godfather” Behind it was that beat. That perfect. Perfect. Beat. “If you’ve given me some disease I’ll sue you, I ask you, what is this, you can’t be using no tribal medicine, that’s not-”*

*“Your heart is in excellent condition for the most part, Mrs Marten,” he said in what he called his Big Booming Doctor Voice. “That is as it should be, for it is such a perfect device, if I do say so myself.”*

*Mrs Marten heard the knife edge behind the voice and for the first time in her life, she was worried. She was often discomfited, she thrived on it because she could use it, harness it and send it out into the world to get what she wanted, and so discomfit wormed around her skin like the layer of pork fat and cheap sherry wormed around her arteries. But she was a stranger to actual concern. Nor had she really known fear before. Certainly not the screaming alien fear she felt as the flesh fell off Dr Banda’s hand like it was sand, leaving a giant hawk-like claw behind.*

*“This is good news for the girl upstairs whose heart is very weak,” he said, as he pushed the dagger-claws through Mrs Marten’s chest like a piston, splintering and bending her wobbly ribs with ease. “And your eyes, the blood vessels are poor from the drinking, which would explain why you will die before the blood pressure kills you, but yes, your eyes will give another child sight, I expect. And your kidneys may save another.”*

*Mrs Marten gave no answer as her head slumped down onto Dr Banda’s wrist, pink saliva running into the torrent of blood rushing down between her knees from the hole he was digging in her chest. “I couldn’t speculate on where your other parts may end up. But I do believe you can still hear me, so I want you to know, your heart, most of all, is in good hands.”*

*“I have simply decided, as its creator, to take it back from one unfit to own one.”*

# CHAPTER FOUR: DOMINION AND GLORY

*“And behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of days. And there was given to him dominion and glory”*

- Daniel 7:13-14

God so loved the world that She could not bear to see it empty. So She gave to her children the power to shape the world and the things that live on it. These powers were known as Dominions, rulership over aspects and elements of the world below. When the angels fell, that power was locked seemingly forever into the chain that held them to the earth: the Relic. Now that God has gone, Relics have begun to spark back to life, and the time of Miracles is at hand again.

Of course, not all Relics have been inert throughout history. More about those are discussed later in the rulebook. First we look at building the Relic of your persona.

## **Crafting Your Relic**

*“The Lord said to Moses: ‘Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I shall dwell amongst them’”*

- Exodus 25.8

Relics are powerful and mysterious. Some have changed human history and created myths older than time. Even minor ones can change lives and rewrite destinies. Each one has a unique story and a unique collection of Miracles. Relics are not merely a collection of powers; just like your persona, they have their own story to tell. But they are also a collection of powers, or Miracles, and to build them we build up this list of these.

A Relic can have any Miracles from the Dominions that an angel can access. This need not follow any overarching theme or logic: the Tarnhelm of Germanic myth, for example allows its wielder to turn invisible, change shape and teleport great distances (Dominions of Countenance, Excelsis and Intercession, respectively). On the other hand, a Relic can have a singular theme, like the Holy Grail healing wounds, raising the dead and eventually curing a country of a terrible blight. A theme may emerge over time for a given Relic, or it may not; either way it should be the product of an evolving story. Better to have a power that has a memorable origin than one that perfectly matches a theme or predetermined idea.

By being open to new ideas and creative flow you can take a laundry list of powers and give them an inherent sense, and story, and gravitas. Your Relic may end up with just as big a persona sheet as your angel.

## **Acquiring Miracles**

Unless the Dealer says otherwise, personas begin with their Relic possessing one Level One Miracle (see below for more on creating this). Subsequent Miracles are acquired when the persona's Signifier is drawn in play. This only occurs the **first time** the signifier is drawn that session. Unlike Memories, the Miracle is then defined by the player of the persona who gained the Miracle. They can also describe how the new Miracle manifests. When this happens, the Test is won as if a Dramatic Success (or twenty

one in two Major Arcana cards for a Complex Test). This is also covered on page XXX in the core rules.

To keep up the momentum of the scene, don't worry too much about getting the details of the Miracle specified. The level system here will help give good guidelines, and there's always the chance it did something unpredictable and unusual on that first manifestation so fine tuning can always wait. Likewise, cool and evocative names will not usually spring forth on cue. Describe the strange effect, then get back to playing. Everything else can wait. Never sacrifice the excitement of play for any other concern.

Ask the other players for suggestions, but ultimately you're in control. Don't be afraid to be showy. Miracles are the driving force of the game and the true power of the supernal realm. They should be dramatic and entertaining, even at first level.

*Example: Rachel has an amulet that can become extremely hot when she holds it and concentrates on it (Fire, Level One). Some police come to her door investigating a murder and are asking a lot of questions about her manufactured identity and failure to own any possessions. Rachel's player is making a Simple Test to bluff through the questioning when the Wheel of Fortune turns up, her Signifier. She says that as if reacting to her fear, the amulet shoots forth a blast of fire, not enough to kill anyone but enough to send the police running in panic. Since it doesn't do any significant damage, the Dealer agrees this fits the power Tier. We pick up the action as Rachel flies away, looking for a new cover.*

There may be no reason in the scene for the power to manifest then and there, or for the persona to have any need for a power. In this case, the player can describe a power that does not manifest, or manifests somewhat unseen, laying in a secret that can be revealed later. They may even, with the Dealer's permission, leave it somewhat undefined, letting the Dealer reveal the truth when a more opportune or narratively satisfying moment comes about.

*Example: Lucy has a sword Relic that can cut through any mortal substance (Shaping Level 2). During a blaring argument with his mother, Lucy draws the Star, the sword's Signifier. Lucy's player says that unseen to all, the sword blazes with holy power when Lucy is angry. She suggests it is some great power to pierce through reality. The current series is about breaking open the Gates of Heaven to find God, so another player suggests that this could be something that could cut through those Gates. The Dealer agrees but will add some conditions and restrictions that must be dealt with first, to make it more dramatic, and they'll work that out after the argument ends, because the scene is going so well. The Dealer also suggests that instead of nobody seeing it, one character does but chooses to keep it a secret. Amenadiel's player jumps at this chance to have a secret, because he loves that kind of drama.*

Dealers and players alike should also feel free to create ideas for future Miracles beforehand and between sessions. In the moment inspiration can be the best source of the truly unexpected, but there is much value in the long-prepared delight as well.

### <sidebar>**That's My Fetish**

Relic is a word that angels have taken from human tongues. They have other words for their singular item. Fetter and shackle refer to the cage it places around them. Icon, idol, token and simulacrum refer to its symbolic and miraculous power. Fetish was also a common term but angels have stopped using that one recently as its meaning has shifted all of a sudden.

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## **Building a Miracle**

*"Your time on earth is affecting you dear brother. You're changing"*

*“My life is change. The same thing over and over – that’s your boring motto”*

- Amenadiel and Lucifer, *Lucifer*

Miracles may be incredible but they follow rules. Every Miracle is made up of five components: Name, Dominion, Level, Effect and Trammel.

### Name

Miracles need to feel *miraculous*. And they can’t do that if they are just an effect, a thing that they do, or a game ruling. Names have power inside our heads. Take the time to give your Miracle an effective, descriptive and evocative name. As you add Miracles to your Relic, they may be part of the same “name”, however, just slightly different applications or they may each have new names.

*Example: Azazel has a Miracle called Fury of the Heavens which causes lightning to strike the ground. Later, he adds a Miracle with the Effect of summoning a storm. He decides this is part of the Fury of the Heavens Miracle, and doesn’t need a separate name – the name refers to two powers he can draw on as needed.*

### Dominion

Angels have access to at most two Dominions. One is granted to them by their Herald, and they may master one other if they have the time and patience. It is said that originally, each Herald guarded their Dominion as a secret, gifting its power only to those who followed them in battle, but over the millennia the angels mixed and learnt many crafts. When creating a Miracle to add to your Relic, it must come from one of the two Dominions you possess. Although it is possible for Miracles from different Dominions to closely mimic the effects of others (an artefact of the days powers were unrestricted), each Miracle comes from one Dominion only. Choose which one and note it.

### Level

Level measures the strength of the Miracle. This is a number from 1 to 4. By default, the level is equal to the Story Tier the game is currently in. Tiers are explained in the previous chapter (page XX). The Tiers are:

1. Watcher
2. Keeper
3. Sentinel
4. Vanguard

Your Dealer will let you know which Tier the story is in. Occasionally, the Dealer may give out a Miracle of a different level than the Story Tier. In either case, the Dealer determines the level of the Miracle.

### Effect

Every Miracle has an effect upon reality, determined by its Dominion and its Level. At the very minimum, a Miracle will provide a Blessing to a Test. At higher levels, they can divide the Red Sea or turn the sky as black as cloth. Effects need to be specific and descriptive, creating a predictable outcome in given circumstances. The Dealer may let you extrapolate on that a little, but if you want to add greater levels of Effects or different kinds of them, you will need another Miracle.

### Trammel

Angels do not have unlimited power. Miracles have limitations in how far they can reach and how much they can do. Partly, this is described by the Effect. However, all Miracles must have at least one Trammel limiting its power with a restriction or cost. Angels can add extra Trammels to Miracles to gain access to larger Effects. The narrower the condition or greater the cost, the more Effect you can achieve. Trammels come in Levels. Level 1 Trammels can permit a Level 2 Effect to be performed as a Level 1 Miracle, Level 2 Trammels allow a Level 3 Effect as a Level 1, and so on.

Base level or mandatory Trammels are considered of 0 level. The simplest base Trammel is that the power can only be used once per scene; if no other restriction is listed, assume this is the base Trammel on the Miracle. See the Trammel section on page XXX for more on this.

*Example: Maoz's player wants to add a Miracle to his ring that lets him knock down doors. He suggests once per scene he can smash down any barrier with a punch. The Dealer feels that knocking down walls feels like a Level 2 Miracle, even once per scene, so suggests doing such a thing cause a wound to the angel, leaving him unable to repeat the Miracle until he heals. This combination of two Trammels Maoz's player agrees that this fine.*

Powers are written with their name first, then their Dominion and Level in brackets, followed by their Effect and Trammel.

*Example: Maoz rights down FIST OF GOD (Shaping 1) Effect: Can break a mortal-sized hole in a wall in a single punch. Trammel: Once per scene, causes a wound*

## **Nickel and Dime**

The Miracles system is not designed to be number-crunched. Not only does this leads to uninteresting results, it halts the action of the game which is no fun for anyone. However, it is perfectly reasonable to make sure player and Dealer alike feel the power is appropriate and interesting and useful. Players should feel they got something worthwhile and what they wanted for their persona, and something that does not steal any thunder or screen time from other personas or players, or that can break the game or the story somehow. Work towards compromise, making choices that are dramatic and interesting and lead to good stories, not to finding ways to defeat whatever threats the Dealer presents with casual disdain. And as mentioned, leave as much crunching as possible to after the game or after the scene. Dramatic tension is extremely hard to produce in a game played around a table with cards and pencils; don't ever break it for something as petty as number crunching a power.

### **<sidebar>Duty, Honour and Glory: How To Be A Good Roleplayer**

Players are playing a game. They like to win, and sometimes, they don't like to sweat doing so. Dealers are telling an exciting story. They want to make their players exultant, but also full of suspense and terror and even, sometimes, despair. Balancing these goals is hard. Great books have been written on ways to do this, and you are encouraged to peruse them all. But a simple rubric to remember when it comes to adjudicating what Miracles can accomplish, or allowing the Dealer to adjudicate them, are the rules of Duty, Honour and Glory.

Duty means you owe a Duty to the story as if it were real and important and worth telling. That means accepting its world and its people as real things and taking them seriously as your character would. It also means accepting the tropes and structures of the genre and tone of your game, and working within them, not against or outside them. Even – especially – when those tropes and tone make your character's life harder. When you do your duty to the world and the story you and your group are creating, you respect the rules of that world and that story, its truth and its power, and the story grows because of it.

Honour means honouring your fellow players, and the Dealer particularly. That which they attach significance to, you must honour as well. If someone's persona is built around picking locks, it does not honour the significance of that if you kick down every single door, or if the Dealer makes all doors unlocked. Similarly, if the Dealer presents a powerful and significant threat, then it requires you the player to honour the level of that threat with a commensurate response. Defeating the vampire king by flicking open a blind does not (typically) honour the nature of the encounter and its meaning. When they come bigger, it must be harder to make them fall.

Glory works as a kind of opposite to Honour. If the struggle is great, and is honoured by being felt and suffered, then it also important to rise above it not just by inches, but to the stars. Tales are designed to be full of verve and greatness, and you do no favours to yourself or your fellow players to hide your light under a bushel or narrow your scope. While accounting for Duty and Honour, think big; beyond just hitting them with your sword. Paint pictures of victories that are epic and poetic, that resonate beyond this time and space, that mean more than just flesh and steel, that are above the plebeian or the banal. You have an infinite budget and all the time in the world. Take a breath and paint a masterpiece, tell of heroes with a soaring voice.

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## **Power Levels and Story Tiers**

As discussed in Chapter Three, games of **Relics** operate either within a single Story Tier or move across several Tiers as time goes on. The power level of Relics is assumed to match the Tier level of the story. Unless the Dealer says otherwise, Tier One stories will involve personas' Relics gaining Level One Miracles, Tier Two stories they will gain Level Two Miracles and so on. Higher power Miracles can and should appear in the story to drive action and plot, but will not be available from Signifier cards.

At the start of every session, the Dealer should clarify the power level in play. For starting personas we assume they are at Tier One.

## **Miracles At the Beginning of A Series**

If a game of **Relics** begins at Tier One, personas begin with Relics containing one Level One Miracle as described in Chapter Two. For games beginning at higher levels, personas should begin with one Miracle of a level matching the Story Tier, and two Miracles of every level below that.

### <sidebar>**Don't Wimp**

In the world of improv, wimping is a term for choosing safe, limited choices for the character or plot to keep yourself from engaging with the scene as much as possible. Dealers risk making the same mistake with Miracles. Narrative is a precious and fragile thing and it is easy to see it in danger of falling over if personas get their hands on Miracles that let them remove all challenge. However, Miracles have built in limitations in their Trammel: they've already paid. So when describing effects, don't try to restrict, undermine or soft-sell the effect of a Miracle. Miracles are one of the few times in the game that personas can do amazing, powerful things and feel like the strange, inhuman and mighty beings they are.

Let them.

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## **Miracle Effects**

*“I’m waiting for the Miracle, there’s nothing else to do.*

*I haven’t been this happy since the end of World War II”*

- Leonard Cohen, *Waiting for the Miracle*

The rules below outline examples of Effects that suit each power level; generally first then for each Dominion. Trammels are dealt with in the following section. Finally there are random tables which let you generate a completely random Miracle at the desired level. You can use them as they are or as inspirations for your own creations.

### **General Effects by Level**

#### **Level 1 - “Useful”**

Level 1 Miracles accomplish what might already be possible without a Miracle, but in ways more spectacular or convenient. They are noticeable unless the angel is clever to hide them.

Effects can:

- glimpse the future, the past or the minds of living things
- create unlikely good or bad fortune
- damage someone no more than a shot from a gun or a cut from a sword
- reduce as much damage as dealt from a gun or a sword
- become immune to specific kinds of damage or attack for a short period of time
- close a wound or cause a bad one to become critical
- become master of a real-world talent, ability or skill, to the peak of human capacity
- gain a rare or very powerful skill, talent or ability
- create a believable illusion or sound
- affect the emotional state of mortal
- move a small handheld object a short distance at a low speed
- alter the environment in small ways such as making dirt into mud or lighting a dark scene

#### **Level 2 - “Powerful”**

Level 2 Miracles always suggest the supernatural is at work. They are frightening and disturbing even if they produce beneficial effects and are the kind of things that make police and soldiers nervous as hell. They also tend to be heard about by other supernaturals in the area.

Effects can:

- accurately see portions of the past or future
- read the minds of mortals and gain limited control over them
- incapacitate or stun someone
- inflict significant, debilitating or lasting damage to someone or something
- resist or withstand significant, debilitating or lasting damaging effects or situations

- grant a mortal skills, talents or abilities no human could ever possess
- break the laws of science in limited ways
- create, alter or destroy actual objects or conditions in objects, up to the size of a mortal human
- significantly alter the environment or add new elements to it
- move large, heavy objects and/or living things a large distance
- perform any Level 1 Effect on a large group of people, or over a sustained period of time, or without some restriction

### **Level 3 - “Devastating”**

If they happen around people, Level 3 powers will be up on Twitter within minutes and likely appear on CNN. Half the people will run for their lives, the other half will run towards it in wonder. Cops and soldiers will open fire with extreme prejudice and the National Guard may be called. Every angel in the city, if not the country, will know something big is going on.

Effects can:

- travel into the future or past, see them clearly and edit them in a limited fashion
- enter the dreams, mind or memory of a mortal or an angel and edit the content
- gain total control over the actions, thoughts and emotions of a mortal or an angel
- kill a mortal or angel
- survive typically lethal attacks like beheading or immolation
- do lasting, crippling or critical damage to large things such as buildings or vehicles
- create or destroy large or complicated objects, significantly larger and more powerful than a mortal
- move things as big as busses long distances and/or at extreme speeds
- move at enormous speeds, travel enormous distances or inflict effects from enormous distances away
- significantly break or bend the laws of science
- gain total control over the environment, altering it extremely or tuning it exactly to your needs
- perform any Level 2 Effect on a large group of people, or over a sustained period of time, or without some restriction
- gain or grant a Level 1 Effect permanently, or a Level 2 Effect permanently with some restriction

### **Level 4 - “Apocalyptic”**

This is apocalypse stuff. The world watches – when it isn’t panicking and rioting and looting. Nothing will ever be the same again after a Level 4 Miracle goes off.

- kill thousands or millions
- destroy whole cities
- become immortal, invincible and unaging
- have nigh-godlike abilities or grant them to others

- create, destroy or remodel enormous things or areas to your whim
- rewrite the laws of science forever
- rewrite the past to create a new future
- move beyond the restrictions of time and space
- create dimensional portals and travel between them
- destroy or become gods
- perform any Level 3 Effect on thousands of people, or permanently, or without a thought

## Effects By Dominion

*“He can turn himself into a stranger /  
They broke a lot of canes on his hide”*  
- Tom Waits, *“Black Wings”*

The following sections provide examples of Effects for each of the Dominions. Each Level lists several examples, not one single Effect. The eleven Dominions are:

<b>Communion</b>	The power to connect with the minds and hearts of others
<b>Countenance</b>	The power to overcome the senses and deceive the minds of others
<b>Excelsis</b>	The power to increase the strength and power of angels and mortals
<b>Fire</b>	The power to unleash the fire that is the true form of an angel
<b>Healing</b>	The power to heal the minds and bodies of yourself and others
<b>Intercession</b>	The power to move yourself and other things at a distance
<b>Lightning</b>	The power of the sky and its storms
<b>Passings</b>	The power over the passage and ending of mortal lives
<b>Protection</b>	The power to protect yourself and others
<b>Shaping</b>	The power to make, change or break the things of mortals
<b>Witness</b>	The power to see all the things on earth

### Communing (Gabriel)

Communing is the art of sending messages and sharing sensations. The effect is stepped down a level if the message is sent not mind-to-mind but through intermediaries, technology, clues or omens. Gabriel was of course the archangel of communion, but this Dominion is extremely common among all the angels. For thousands of years many angels saw their role to primarily be one of delivering God’s message. This is why they are happy to accept the nomenclature of angel – it comes from *aggelos*, the Greek word for messenger.

Level 1: Send a few words from your mind to the mind of anyone you can see, share an emotion with a large group of people, whisper to everyone in a crowd

Level 2: Broadcast a clear, lengthy message to a crowd, share a complex, specific memory with anyone you can see, talk back and forth with several people without using voice

Level 3: Make a whole city have the same dream, send a terrifying or commanding message to a crowd, communicate with different people anywhere on earth simultaneously for a long time

Level 4: Permanently link many minds, speak to the entire world, directly commune with God or the equivalent

### Countenance (Metatron)

Angels can command the senses of mortals and make them see fantasies and nightmares. Countenance begins with the face of the angel itself, allowing them to appear as a burning bush or a white bull or talking badger, but masters of Countenance can shine glorious images across an entire sky. The more impervious to seeing through the illusion, the higher the level of Effect. Trammels typically involve how much you must concentrate to maintain the image.

Metatron's soldiers were the masters of these visions. They were charged with being the heralds of great events, to use their Dominion to add pomp and circumstance to things the angels wanted mortals to pay attention to. Nowadays nobody does pomp and circumstance any more: it is considered gauche as well as dangerous. Those with power over Countenance feel disused and forgotten, and ache for a chance to really show off their gifts.

Level 1: Make a small handsized illusion, make what is actually visible appear larger, small or hugely distorted, appear as a stranger to someone who should know you

Level 2: Make an illusion as big as a person, make a complex illusion that moves and convinces all the senses, make an illusion that appears terrifying or dangerous so it must be avoided, appear to look like someone known to you

Level 3: Make yourself look like anyone or anything, make illusions as large as whole buildings or environments involving several elements, permanently change how a target sees a certain thing or how a certain thing appears

Level 4: Create massive illusory worlds that can imprison many people for a long time, create complex ongoing illusions of several humans that operate undetectably without your conscious control

### Excelsis (Azrael)

Angels can possess great might, and grant that might to others. In the strange way of the Almighty, it is easier to give such might to mortals than for an angel to possess it themselves – the Effect steps down a level if you are giving it away. Mortals have always been fascinated with strength, and the powers of Excelsis are among the most sought after and more commonly found in Relics. Of course, mortals usually abuse this power, and angels, stripped of these gifts, cannot stop them. Those of Azrael's ranks, therefore, tend to be very wary about giving their gifts to mortals. It's ended badly so often. Then another bully comes along and they think maybe just one last time they will make a human strong. Maybe this time it will work out okay...

Level 1: Grant the target strength, speed or flexibility of an Olympic athlete or equivalent, increase intelligence or skill to that of a great mind in the field (experience not guaranteed), operate at substantial human strength beyond when that strength would normally give out.

Level 2: Grant target superhuman strength, endurance, speed or flexibility – strength sufficient to easily lift cars, speed able to outrun cars, fighting skill of a martial arts master, supreme intelligence or tactical ability, make Level 1 abilities last longer or grant them to yourself or a group of individuals

Level 3: Grant physical capabilities that defy biology or physics, grant abilities of other animals or creatures of fantasy, grant Level 2 abilities to yourself or large crowds of people or make Level one powers permanent

Level 4: Give super physicality permanently to several individuals or to millions for a short time, grant godlike capacities

### Fire (Uriel)

Fire is the heart of every angel, the blood in their absence of veins, so many are called to master it on earth. Uriel's Dominion is therefore very common among angels, and Uriel was always happy to give it. Uriel created the sun itself so the whole world would know the greatness of fire. Uriel is a giver. And fire is the gift that keeps on giving. Some angels find it hard to stop burning once they've begun. And fire is a blunt instrument, it tends to consume everything. Sometimes, lower powers are better. Well, safer. But children of Uriel aren't known for subtlety.

Level 1: Start a small fire, control or shape an already existing fire, cause first- or second- degree burns

Level 2: Start a large fire at a distance, throw fiery missiles, cause sustained heat like a welding torch, shape fire into rough shapes, cause severe burns

Level 3: Throw fireballs, explode cars and buildings, burn people to death, shape fire into useful objects

Level 4: Burn cities to ash and bone, scorch the earth from the sky, the full Sodom and Gomorrah

### <sidebar>**The Power of Aspect**

The Aryeh have the power to craft a fiery sword. The ability of the Isha to speak truth is a power that seems to be under the province of Gabriel. The greater gift of flight of the Neshar could be Excelsis and the Behema might have gifts of Protection. Angels have no answer on this issue; it's possible the original Aspects were created by archangels of certain Dominions. Angels are after all fragments of their progenitors. Aspect powers are Miracles in every way, and they can be put into Relics in the same manner. This means that any angels seen throughout history could just be humans using Relics with these powers.

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### Healing (Raphael)

Of all Miracles, it is for Healing that mortals most pray. The rough justice of the natural world brings death and deprivation without rhyme or ruin and for thousands of years no wisdom could unlock much of the why or the how. And so the mortals sought the tender mercy of Raphael and her soldiers. In the last century things have slowed down but still they are called for every day. Every angel with Dominion over healing has to have a strategy to deal with the constant need they see around them, and the fact that saving everyone is impossible. Some are callous, some bargain, some are drive themselves mad.

Relics of Healing are few but valued above all: the suffering caused by those keen to possess the Holy Grail is a flashing warning sign of how far people will go to escape infirmity and pain.

Level 1: Healing light wounds, speed up healing, stop bleeding, keep someone alive, avoid or pass through sickness

Level 2: Heal serious wounds, stop critical wounds from killing you, cure lasting afflictions, send diseases into remission, spread healing across a large group or time period

Level 3: Pull people from the jaws of death or beyond, cure whole populations of an illness, remove a plague or pestilence

Level 4: Become immortal, defeat death, heal millions

### Intercession (Barachiel)

After healing and supernatural might, mortals wish for intercession. Let it not be me, they cry. Let the sword hand miss me as it falls. Let the car turn left not right. Where the angels of Exaltation are stingy and those mastering Healing are guarded, the swift angels of Intercession tend to be as capricious as Fate itself – assuming they are not, in fact, Fate itself. Knowing they cannot be everywhere, they enjoy being in the unexpected places. Turn the corner and you may be surprised by a follower of Barachiel. They are always like that: popping up where you least expect, when you least expect, and getting in the way. Intercession is not just about moving small things at the right time, after all: it also allows moving things and individuals at great speed. Can't see the Barachiel angel? Look over your shoulder.

Level 1: Move to a spot you can see, move a small item you can see to somewhere else you can see, move at sprinting speed without effort

Level 2: Move at the speed of a car or a train, move medium-sized objects at similar speeds, knock people down or over at a distance, cause damage by moving things or yourself swiftly

Level 3: Move as fast as a speeding bullet or jet plane, intercept or catch speeding bullets, move instantly to somewhere you've been before, move cars and trucks around at throwing speeds

Level 4: Move instantly anywhere in the world, to a particular person or place on a map, in time to stop a split-second attack, move faster than sight or thought, move fast enough to move between atoms

### Lightning (Chazaqiel)

Rainmakers, stormbreakers and now the whole world runs on their power – masters of lightning tend to be cocky bastards who know the world falls at their feet. Theirs is the sky and the sea and all the air between, and now every device that hums, whirs and beeps across the land. The Valkyries, the Thunderbird, Zeus's thunderbolts – there is no end to the poems and songs sung in the memory of the dealers of Lightning. Other angels are less impressed – it's flashy, but it's not as powerful as mortals think. The dangers of lightning for most of history meant few mortals craved such powers from Relics and it is only in the last twenty years that most Lightning Relics have been crafted and used to tempt by demons. Only now when electricity is the gatekeeper of power and information have mortals truly wanted to hold it in their hands. And like flashy car salesmen, Chazaqiel's soldiers are so ready to make you a deal.

Level 1: Slowly shift the weather in a limited area, create atmospheric effects like small sparks, moisture, dryness, move electricity around to power or charge a small device

Level 2: Rapidly shift the weather within a few kilometres, summon a thunderstorm and exert some control over lightning strikes, create heavy downpours and darkened skies, power a large device or residence, throw electricity into a target enough to damage or break it.

Level 3: Direct lightning strikes into anyone you can see or into crowds of people, power a city, create waves big enough to crash ships and rains heavy enough to cause rising flood waters

Level 4: Scramble the whole world's navigation systems with aerial electricity, power the planet, call up tsunamis, cyclones and sharknados

### Passings (Raguel)

Nobody likes the Angel of Death nor her soldiers. They keep to themselves as a result. Few mortals pray for death, even for their enemies: they'd rather have the power to cause it with strength or see it coming with prophecy. But death is real in this world, and Raguel did not create it, she simply took it upon herself to care for it, for it must be as sacred as anything else. She and her followers are fine being hated or ignored, they do their work regardless, keeping the dead and the living worlds apart and the system operating as expected. Since God is gone and heaven closed, this public service has a question mark hovering above it but getting quietly on with the job is what those of this Dominion do best. No questions asked. Just keep the dead dead, and nobody has any need to ask questions. Of course bringing them back is perfectly possible as well, but it causes so many problems. Demons of Raguel, however, love causing problems...

Level 1: Gain information about recent deaths and how they happened, slow down or speed up natural death or decay processes, deaden something you can hold in your hand

Level 2: An object or plant you can touch dies or decays, get a sense of impending death or give that sense to another, rush someone towards death or the edge thereof, get a sense of whatever was present before it died or decayed or what it will be like when it does, hold someone back from death

Level 3: Kill with a touch, gently or roughly, hold back the passage of aging in individuals, know the end of lives and outcomes of plans, cause great systems or machines to wind down and die

Level 4: Create a new Black Plague, blight world grain belts, greatly speed up the heat death of the sun, stop time from moving

### Protection (Michael)

Michael's symbol is the spear, for he is a warrior, but his divine purpose is to fight as a protector. His soldiers treat their Dominion very seriously, as the alpha and omega of Miracles. Forget Healing; it is the duty of angels to stop the blows before they fall. They see the world in black and white, the attack and the defence, the damage done and the damage prevented. The Level of Miracle determines that calculus: how much force gets deflected and how much gets through. As with Excelsis, it is easier to grant this to others than to do it on yourself, but even so it is never enough. So Michael's children constantly hunt for more power. At any cost.

Level 1: Make a target immune to or strongly resistant to a particular kind of damage in concentrated amounts or for limited times, stop a punch, a sword swing or a glancing shot affecting the target, protect someone from cold, heat or continuous conditions

Level 2: Deflect or reduce the damage of any bullets and stabs you can see coming, provide immunity to a broad spectrum of damage for an entire scene or longer, pass Level One Effects onto yourself.

Level 3: Allow a target to ignore massive damage, extreme heat and enormous destruction, deflect sustained machine gun fire, explosions or similar, provide Level Two protection to hundreds of people at once, or make that protection last for years or a lifetime.

Level 4: Be impervious to any harm, survive being thrown into the sun, the earth's core or the vacuum of space, pass similar powers to millions permanently

### Shaping (Tzadqiel)

Soldiers of Tzadqiel were quite happy when the Matrix came out; it gave everyone a grounding in their basic philosophy in a world that's forgotten Platonic forms. Once you know that the spoon isn't really there, it's easy to understand how you can tap into the projection of the spoon and shape it into something else. The greater the power the larger amount you can change and the more significantly you can change it. You just have to reach in and alter the underlying code. Masters of Shaping are the nerds of Miracles, at play in the greatest sandpit. Originally all angels could shape and they built the world but now most are happy to leave it to the experts.

Living things are much harder than dead things, and organic things much harder than inorganic. Angels have always had trouble with life.

Level 1: Change something you can hold in your hand, change its temperature, appearance, consistency or configuration or operation

Level 2: Change something you can carry, change solids to liquids or liquids to gas, shift things enough to cause them to break or fall apart, perform level one changes to living things

Level 3: Change the nature of huge objects: house collapse, engines explode, lakes freeze and tarmac melts. Make dramatic changes on smaller volumes like water into wine, sand into glass and air into chlorine gas.

Level 4: Rewrite the physics of certain atoms, reduce entire cities to rubble, turn the air to fire and humanity into glass

### Witness (Sandalphon)

It was given to angels to see all the things upon the earth, hence their plethora of eyes. Once, as with Shaping, all angels saw everything, but there was only so much of it all they could stand. Every grain of sand and every sparrow's fall is a lot to take in. Now only a chosen few have the time and inclination to truly Witness creation. Although primarily about sight, this Dominion also bends noise and smell, all information to the eyes, ears and nose of the angel. The further it has to travel, and the more corners it turns along the way, the more power required.

Level 1: See things that are far away or very small, see around corners or behind you, see in other light spectrums, notice and remember tiny details, see the actions of someone of the previous few seconds

Level 2: Clairvoyance of things beyond walls or several kilometers away, locate someone who you have seen before, see into technological devices or the information stored within them, see the past movements of someone or something over the last few minutes, see the future very briefly or faintly

Level 3: See like a spy satellite into any place in the country, see what anyone you can name is doing right now and track them as they move, see the past movements of people or objects over the last month or the future for the next hour, track examples of a certain thing or person

Level 4: Track every human alive, document entire lives, see everything that has ever happened in a place or to an object

### <sidebar>**The Lost Dominions**

Remiel, the Voice of God, spoke of times to come, spoke with authority of a future set in stone. To him was given the Dominion of Prophecy, and for many years he and his soldiers were happy to share it with mortals. But noone, neither mortal or angel, truly wants to know what's coming, and the gift of Prophecy brought its professors nothing but suffering. Slowly, they grew silent, until one day they vanished altogether. The best guess is this happened sometime in the early part of the first century CE but nobody's sure. If any remain on earth to this day, however, they did not warn anyone about God's departure, and aren't coming forward to explain what happens next. Sandalphon's children have flickers of Remiel's gifts, but they are poor imitators of the true master.

Zaphkiel, the Knowledge of God, had the power of Truth. Zaphkiel created an angelic language, a series of glyphs which could express God's nature and will. Zaphkiel's soldiers never fell to earth. Indeed, falling could be described as a severing from Zaphkiel, and his direct line to God. Some believe Zaphkiel was God, or near enough. Echoes and traces of Zaphkiel's work remain, and are desperately hunted down as they, like Remiel's gift, are hoped to provide some clue to the mystery of God's absence. And all the other unsolved riddles of angelic life.

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## **The Trammel**

Angels are not free. Godless or not, there is something in them that rules their destinies. They are bound to their Aspects, their Dominion, their Herald. And their Miracles have limits. There must be a rule, a condition, or a sacrifice before the Effect can be realised. This limit is called a Trammel. The mandatory Trammel is a "Level 0" Trammel or base Trammel. The need to be holding or touching your Relic is also necessary (see page XX) but is not considered a Trammel.

The player can choose one of the following examples or create something similar with the Dealer's input.

### **Base Trammels**

- the angel must concentrate and/or perform a small ritual (eg repeat a phrase, move their hands or body in a particular fashion) the entire time the power is working

- the angel can only achieve the effect a certain number of times a day
- the angel can only achieve the effect once per story scene
- the angel must be holding and/or destroy a certain object or thing to achieve the effect
- the angel must be able to clearly see the target (or target area) without technological assistance or possess something of theirs or know something about them
- a reduced or minor version of a positive effect or reflection thereof (eg giving strength reflects weakness, causing pain causes pain back), returns on the angel or redirects to another target
- using the Miracle creates an uncomfortable side effect on the angel or some other target, causing no more than a wound or a single Blight to tests

## Higher Level Trammels

Players can keep the game simple and only use base Trammels. That means the power levels are always clearly defined and controlled – but it also means less flexibility. To add more colour and complexity to Miracles, angels may achieve higher level Effects by taking higher level Trammels. Each level of Trammel allows an equivalent higher level of Effect; for example a level 2 Miracle with a level 1 Trammel would permit a Level 3 Effect.

Level One Trammels include:

- the angel must be touching the target the entire time the effect is taking place
- the angel must possess a piece of their flesh or blood of the target or have access to a close friend or blood relative
- the angel can only achieve the effect a certain number of times a month
- the angel can only achieve the effect once per session
- the angel can only target certain kinds of mortals or those who meet certain descriptions
- the angel can only achieve the effect if a complex, tiring and noticeable ritual is performed for at least several minutes
- equivalent, reversed or otherwise, effects return to the angel or must be redirected to another target
- the angel must be holding/destroy a large, rare or valuable item
- the angel must sacrifice or injure part of the angel's flesh (the equivalent of no more than two wounds) or kill a small living creature
- the Miracle creates a frightening, painful and/or debilitating side effect on the angel or some other target

Level Two Trammels include:

- must have intimate contact with or intimate knowledge of the target
- can only produce the effect a certain number of times a year (or decade or century)
- can only produce the effect a certain number of times per series
- must prepare a ritual or process for hours in advance, with several participants involved

- must be holding/destroy a priceless, arcane or extremely rare item
- must sacrifice a mortal human life or large creature's, or several lives
- must deal lasting, crippling or critical damage to the angel
- an increased or more cruel reflection of the effect returns to the angel or is redirected elsewhere
- creates a horrifying or agonizing side effect on the angel or some other

Trammels are **not** additive: an angel cannot keep adding Level One Trammels to reduce massive Effects down to low level Miracles. However, a given Trammel could be created by combining those of a lower level.

*Example: Giselle, an angel of Gabriel, has a Miracle called Blood of Bonding. If she injures a mortal and wipes their blood on the forehead of another in the shape of a cross, the two mortals can permanently share thoughts at will. This is two base Trammels – it requires a short ritual to produce (painting the target) and the causing of a wound – so the Dealer declares it a Level One Trammel.*

Trammels can be changed to make the same effect feel different, too. By changing who the Effect can target or the cost required, a Miracle can become quite different.

*Example: Koy Bumba has a leopard's tooth Relic. If he touches it to a willing mortal, they gain the speed and agility of the leopard for a scene (Trammel: Must be given to a willing mortal). If he uses it on himself, he becomes terrible weakened (Trammel: Causes a wound). If he gives the power to another angel, he becomes unable to move (Trammel: Cannot move).*

#### <sidebar>**Once Per Scene**

The most common Trammel is “once per scene”. This is designed to be simple and easy to use. However, Scenes are intentionally poorly defined periods of time, and “once” could be interpreted as starting using your power the moment the Scene starts and continuing until the Scene ends, thus allowing the power to be used constantly. This is not the intention. “Once” here means “for one action”. What is an action? It is something that requires at least one test, or something that would have normally required a test, but does not because of the power. Dealers should be generous here: if an angel uses her powers to become super strong and then the fight turns out to not happen at all, let them keep the power active until they have at least used it for one test. A series of tests can still be one action, or one “story beat”. Perhaps the angel is fleeing from a burning building and is using the super strength to throw furniture and concrete out of their way: that might be several tests but the strength will keep going. However, if a demon turns up in the middle of that escape and wants to fight, the Dealer can say that would be a second usage. Better to run away now and set up the scene later – or modify the power so there's a different Trammel.

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## **Random Miracles**

Creating Miracles from scratch allows you to have the perfect Miracle for your persona and story. Not everyone has an idea to start with, or the time to spend on it. So here are some random Effects at level 1, 2 and 3 for each Dominion. Do a Major Draw and read off the table. Note that these do not have Trammels, even Base Trammels. You'll need to add them, or assume the power is just once per scene. They also need a name.

**Card****Communion, Level One**

- 0-1 You can make your thoughts appear as text on paper or a screen that you can see
- 2-3 Read a printed document just by touching it
- 4-5 You can shout loud enough to be heard by anyone up to a league away (~five km) away
- 6-7 Know the (preferred) name of someone you look at
- 8-9 Understand what an animal is trying to communicate
- 10-11 Speak so only the person you are touching can hear you
- 12-13 Gain the total attention of one person who can see you
- 14-15 Speak to up to a hundred people who can see you, each hearing you clearly in their native language
- 16-17 Speak through (and make ring if necessary) any communication device you can see
- 18-19 Share a memory you experienced with someone you is looking into your eyes
- 20-21 Write a message that can only be read by one specific person

**Card****Communion, Level Two**

- 1.1 Plant a suggestion in someone's mind that you pose no threat or should be left alone
- 2-3 Compel someone to take a directed course of action that isn't difficult or dangerous
- 4-5 Make up to a dozen people dream the same image and up to seven words
- 6-7 Command an animal to treat you as a friend, even if hungry
- 8-9 Change the emotional state of a target from an extreme or to an extreme
- 10-11 Broadcast over every broadcasting device within five kilometres
- 12-13 Gain the total attention of hundreds of people
- 14-15 Speak to several thousand people who are within a few kilometres of you, each hearing you clearly in their native language
- 16-17 Communicate your meaning swiftly and perfectly, and with authority, with anyone you speak to in whatever language they speak
- 18-19 Comprehend any message, writing or imagery
- 20-21 Express an idea so perfectly and beautifully it causes all who see or hear it to weep

**Card****Communion, Level Three**

- 0-1 Compel someone to obey your command to the letter, even if dangerous or deadly
- 2-3 Send a detailed and lengthy message via a dream to several people
- 4-5 Bombard a mind with so much information the person is paralysed or in agony or their head explodes
- 6-7 Bombard an entire crowd with overwhelming messages that leaves them stunned
- 8-9 Command a crowd to follow instructions that aren't very dangerous
- 10-11 Command a large group of animals to follow simple instructions that aren't very dangerous
- 12-13 Gain the total attention of thousands of people, making them unable to look away
- 14-15 Speak to millions of people within a city or state area, all hearing you clearly in their native language
- 16-17 Compel thousands to dream the same dream, of several minutes of complex imagery
- 18-19 Instantly communicate vast amounts of information and instruction to someone who looks into your eyes
- 20-21 Utterly reverse someone's opinion and/or current emotional state

**Card****Countenance, Level One**

- 0-1            Appear to be a cat or a dog (pick one common animal), although you are still your regular dimensions
- 2-3            You can break your Semblance in small pieces at a time, showing off your claws or wings or halo.
- 4-5            Change your skin and hair colour to any colour
- 6-7            Appear to be twice your size but with no change to your potency
- 8-9            Change your appearance to that of someone you can see, but not so it passes scrutiny with anyone who knows that person well
- 10-11         You give off no heat signature nor apply any pressure to a surface unless you wish to
- 12-13         Make any song or music be heard clearly, as if from a loudspeaker
- 14-15         Alter your appearance to be what a person you can see considers seductive or commanding
- 16-17         Alter your appearance to be what a person you can see considers calming or comforting
- 18-19         Your image cannot be captured by technology while you concentrate
- 20-21         If there are two or more people in a uniform or common dress, you can blend in amongst them and avoid notice

**Card            Countenance, Level Two**

- 1.1            Appear to be a large, wild, exotic, or legendary animal
- 2-3            Change your appearance to perfectly replicate that of someone you can see
- 4-5            Become invisible
- 6-7            Appear as a terrifying monstrous being so people flee in terror or stand stunned
- 8-9            Appear as someone from a target's memory
- 10-11         Perfectly mimic someone's voice, fingerprint or some other security element
- 12-13         Appear to be several meters from where you actually are
- 14-15         Appear to be unimportant and not worth noticing, or doing something neutral
- 16-17         Create an image so bright and loud it stuns a crowd
- 18-19         Create an image of something as large as a car or a house, that can fool several people
- 20-21         Create an image large enough to be seen by hundreds in the area

**Card            Countenance, Level Three**

- 1.1            Create a visual clone of yourself or a target that can operate independently
- 2-3            Change yourself to look like someone while they appear to be an imposter
- 4-5            Create an image of hundreds of people
- 6-7            Create an image large enough to represent a massive building, full of people, that feels entirely solid and real
- 8-9            Create images so solid they can be used as what they represent
- 10-11         Fluctuate the solidity of images so people can pass through walls etc
- 12-13         Broadcast an image so everyone within a city can see it or dream of it
- 14-15         Project an image anywhere in the world you wish
- 16-17         Completely countermand a target's senses so they sense only what you want
- 18-19         Create images so horrifying it drives viewers insane or to self harm
- 20-21         Create complex imagery or illusionary environments based only on the memories or imagination of a target

**Card            Excelsis, Level One**

- 0-1            You can hold your breath for ten minutes, and during that time dive up to 100 metres unassisted
- 2-3            Your claws manifest and do damage like that of a mountain lion

4-5	Your hooves manifest and do damage like that of a kicking horse
6-7	You have sufficient manual dexterity to get a desired result on a die roll or coin toss
8-9	You can climb up surfaces like a monkey
10-11	You can meditate for one minute and be as refreshed as if you had eight hours sleep
12-13	Your wings grow large enough to allow you to carry an entirely willing passenger
14-15	You become strong enough to restrain most mortals
16-17	You gain one ability of one animal you can see, commensurate to your size
18-19	You can increase or decrease your mass tenfold
20-21	You can crush anything that fits into your hand until it is in fragments or dust

**Card                    Excelsis, Level Two**

1.1	You can gain the abilities of any one animal
2-3	Your claws manifest and do devastating damage
4-5	You can jump so high and so far it is one step away from flight
6-7	Your wings are large and powerful enough to carry an unwilling passenger or several of them
8-9	Become strong fast enough to outrun a car
10-11	Become strong enough to lift a car
12-13	Gain the ability to speak any language or mastery over one topic
14-15	Gain a supernatural edge to one skill; for example if you have medical skills your healing becomes miraculously good
16-17	Make your flesh or skin as impervious as steel
18-19	Make your body stretchy and fluid enough to slip through tiny cracks
20-21	Shrink down to a few inches or grow to double your size

**Card                    Excelsis, Level Three**

1.1	Make a mortal so perfect in looks or behaviour they become impossible to watch, or impossible not to watch
2-3	You gain supernatural abilities like breathing fire or throwing lightning
4-5	Your wings are strong enough to buffet small weather changes and blow people over
6-7	Your wings are strong enough to lift a tank and carry it off (although your arms will suffer)
8-9	Become strong enough to lift a battleship
10-11	Become fast enough to outrun a jet plane
12-13	Become an instant genius in any field
14-15	Become impervious to a broad category of attack or harm, or extreme limits of a narrow category
16-17	Your flesh becomes as hard as diamond
18-19	Never tire or weaken
20-21	Shrink down to the microscopic or expand to gigantic size

**Card                    Fire, Level One**

0-1	Your skin temperature becomes hot enough to burn to the touch
2-3	Spark a small flame anywhere you can see
4-5	You can cause a fire you can see to burn twice as fast and twice as hot, and move at your direction, provided there is sufficient fuel
6-7	You can create a ball of fire in the palm of your hand
8-9	You can turn your hand into being made of fire

- 10-11 You glow bright enough to provide illumination ten metres away and be seen from a kilometer away.
- 12-13 You can cook food by touching it
- 14-15 Anyone you are touching remains warm and dry in any weather
- 16-17 Make an object so hot its holder will drop it
- 18-19 You can burn any message you want into something that is burnable
- 20-21 Throw a burst of sparks into the eyes of someone you can see, blinding and stunning them

**Card**

**Fire, Level Two**

- 1.1 Throw a ball of fire that does significant damage to a person or object
- 2-3 Shape a fiery blade or club
- 4-5 Make a surface run with a continually burning flame
- 6-7 Cause a tiny fire to explore into a conflagration and move at your will
- 8-9 Turn a limb into being made of fire
- 10-11 Radiate enough heat to warm an entire building or power a large engine
- 12-13 Make something spontaneously burst into flames
- 14-15 Make an object so hot it deals terrible burns to the touch
- 16-17 Shoot fiery streams into the air that can be seen for miles
- 18-19 Launch an object with a powerful explosive like a rocket
- 20-21 Glow so brightly you blind anyone who looks at you

**Card**

**Fire, Level Three**

- 1.1 Throw a blast of fire that destroys buildings and could kill dozens
- 2-3 Shape a massive or complex object out of fire
- 4-5 Transport yourself and others on a fiery chariot
- 6-7 Turn your entire body into a living fire
- 8-9 Travel as a bolt of fire
- 10-11 Power a gigantic engine like a nuclear power plant
- 12-13 Send out a wave of fire the size of a forest fire
- 14-15 Cause explosions the size of nuclear detonations or rocket launches
- 16-17 Melt steel just by walking near it or looking at it
- 18-19 Boil the blood of everyone in a crowd
- 20-21 Write a message in the sky readable from space or an entire hemisphere

**Card**

**Healing, Level One**

- 0-1 You can identify if any poisons, toxins or inedible elements are in food or drink
- 2-3 You can tell everything about the health state of anyone you see
- 4-5 You can dull the pain felt by any one person, as if on strong painkillers
- 6-7 You can repel insects, parasites and infestations
- 8-9 You can repel cold and moisture
- 10-11 You can make anything organic into nutritional, comforting food, or simple folk medicine
- 12-13 A willing target falls asleep and sleeps well for twelve hours or till woken
- 14-15 Take a non-critical injury or illness from one person and transfer it to another willing target
- 16-17 Kickstart the immune system of a living thing. This can also be used as an attack.
- 18-19 Stop a wound from bleeding
- 20-21 Provided medical treatment works twice as well and twice as fast

<b>Card</b>	<b>Healing, Level Two</b>
0-1	Heal wounds that aren't life threatening
2-3	Reattach a body part that isn't a head
4-5	Make someone feel as spry and strong as if they were in their teens
6-7	Heal something abstract, like a relationship, or a system
8-9	Keep hundreds fed, warm and sheltered
10-11	Endure without fatigue for days at a time
12-13	Boost someone's system sufficiently to allow them to perform feats of superhuman strength or speed
14-15	Heal fast enough to endure exposure to the damage, such as walking through fire
16-17	Heal a chronic or life-threatening disease or condition or handicap
18-19	Prevent wounds or damage getting worse until healing can be applied
20-21	Provided medical treatment works ten times as well and ten times as fast

<b>Card</b>	<b>Healing, Level Three</b>
0-1	Bring someone or something back from the dead
2-3	A large area of land or ecosystem blighted by environmental disaster becomes verdant and lush again
4-5	Instantly cure someone of all injury, disease and sickness
6-7	Stop the aging process
8-9	Keep someone alive indefinitely
10-11	Never tire or weaken
12-13	Heal something abstract like a nation or institution
14-15	Become immune to a broad level of attack or damage
16-17	Heal back to full health despite almost total destruction
18-19	Heal fast enough to endure exposure to titanic damage such as inside the sun or at the bottom of the ocean
20-21	Heal fast enough to be able to perform impossible feats of strength or speed, your body simply repairing the strain

<b>Card</b>	<b>Intercession, Level One</b>
0-1	Operate a simple device without touching it
2-3	Make an object you can carry fly away from yourself, fast enough to annoy but not injure
4-5	Make an object you can see move into your hand
6-7	Move through any terrain at your top running speed
8-9	Move instantaneously to somewhere within twenty meters
10-11	Move instantaneously to anywhere you can see
12-13	Move instantly next to a person you know
14-15	Leap several meters (both up and across)
16-17	Intercept a punch for someone standing beside you
18-19	Dodge a punch or anything moving slower
20-21	You can undo a mechanical lock by finely adjusting the tumblers with your mind.

<b>Card</b>	<b>Intercession, Level Two</b>
1.1	Manipulate an object you can see as if using your hands
2-3	Make objects fly into people doing great damage or incapacitating them
4-5	Pull something out of someone's grip or out of its fixture into your hand

- 6-7 Call an item to your hand from wherever it rests
- 8-9 Move instantaneously to a place you know well
- 10-11 Dodge or intercept blades and bullets
- 12-13 Run faster than a car
- 14-15 Stop time for a split second
- 16-17 Swap positions with someone across a long distance
- 18-19 Perform a single task at twenty times the regular speed
- 20-21 Perform several complex tasks simultaneously without losing focus

**Card Intercession, Level Three**

- 1.1 Move enormous objects with your mind
- 2-3 Hurl things and people as if shot from a gun
- 4-5 Move instantly anywhere in the world
- 6-7 Outrun bullets
- 8-9 Outfly jets
- 10-11 Serendipitously be always where you need to be, just in time
- 12-13 See every outcome slightly before it happens so it can be avoided
- 14-15 Stop time for several minutes
- 16-17 See several minutes into the future
- 18-19 Jump several seconds into the past to alter an outcome
- 20-21 Perfectly predict a series of events to massively cause or prevent some outcome

**Card Lightning, Level One**

- 0-1 You can throw a small spark at anything, enough to restart a computer
- 2-3 You can shock someone you touch, stunning them for a moment
- 4-5 You can increase the electricity in the air enough to cause a small rainfall or extremely humid
- 6-7 You can spark the air around you loud enough to cause a deafening thunderclap
- 8-9 Charge a battery to full or power a device for one use
- 10-11 You can magnetize anything you touch
- 12-13 You can start any engine without the keys
- 14-15 You can overload any small electrical device you can touch, enough to short it out
- 16-17 You can predict the weather, tides and ocean conditions with total accuracy
- 18-19 You can conduct any amount of electricity safely
- 20-21 You can not conduct any amount of electricity if you don't wish to

**Card Lightning, Level Two**

- 1.1 Throw a bolt of lightning, doing significant damage
- 2-3 You can shock someone into paralysis
- 4-5 You can summon a small thunderstorm
- 6-7 You can attract lightning near you
- 8-9 You can power an enormous electrical device or machine
- 10-11 You can overload any small electrical device until it explodes violently
- 12-13 All electricity ceases to flow around you
- 14-15 You can control the weather over a limited area or time
- 16-17 You can cause a thunderclap powerful enough to knock several people off their feet
- 18-19 You can magnetise things so strongly they fly away or towards you at high speed
- 20-21 You can magnetise people so they can't move

**Card****Lightning, Level Three**

- 1.1 You can have lightning strike wherever you wish
- 2-3 You can ride on a bolt of lightning through the sky
- 4-5 You can turn your body into lightning
- 6-7 You can power cities or small countries
- 8-9 You have sufficient electrical control to animate many dead bodies
- 10-11 You can create enormous thunderstorms, twisters and hurricanes
- 12-13 You can cause sufficient magnetic polarisation to throw jets and battleships around
- 14-15 You can control the climate over a large area
- 16-17 You can create thunderclaps loud enough to destroy buildings
- 18-19 You can stop and start hearts with a glance
- 20-21 You can stop electricity from flowing across an entire city or small country

**Card****Passings, Level One**

- 0-1 A small system will run out of fuel
- 2-3 A small system will never run out of fuel
- 4-5 See how someone is going to die
- 6-7 Stun and frighten someone you are touching by giving them a sense of their own death
- 8-9 See the moment of death a corpse
- 10-11 See if anyone died in an area you can see within the last day
- 12-13 Cause any singular non-animal living thing you can touch to die or rot
- 14-15 Cause the gentle death of someone willing
- 16-17 Cause a machine to stop working
- 18-19 See a death that happened due to an item you can hold
- 20-21 Deaden the nerves of a part of someone's body you touch so the muscles are useless and/or they feel no pain there.

**Card****Passings, Level Two**

- 1.1 Age someone or something several years, backwards or forwards
- 2-3 Kill something smaller than a human
- 4-5 Cause a machine or device to break down and fall apart
- 6-7 Find and utilise the weakness in a system causing it to fall apart
- 8-9 Cause several people to grow tired until they fall asleep
- 10-11 Cause people to become exhausted
- 12-13 Cause people to become starved of food, water or other necessities
- 14-15 Speed up the decaying process a hundredfold
- 16-17 Give someone a taste of death enough to damage them severely or incapacitate them
- 18-19 Speak to the dead
- 20-21 Remove all sensation and perception from a target

**Card****Passings, Level Three**

- 1.1 A mortal begins aging in reverse, all the way back to childhood, unless you release them.
- 2-3 Give someone their death in advance
- 4-5 Age someone hundreds of years in seconds
- 6-7 Stop time for a few moments
- 8-9 Speed up faster than time allowing you to operate at enormous speeds
- 10-11 Kill several people
- 12-13 Cause the decaying process to speed up millions of times so hard structures weaken
- 14-15 Find a weakpoint to collapse a building or similar

- 16-17 Summon and command the dead
- 18-19 Break down something abstract like a force or an organisation
- 20-21 Cause large areas of land or ecosystems to collapse and become barren and dead

**Card Protection, Level One**

- 0-1 Your skin is like thick rubber and will resist bruises, blows and scratches
- 2-3 Your skin is like asbestos and insulates against heat and fire
- 4-5 Someone willingly encircled by your wings cannot be damaged
- 6-7 Something you are holding cannot be broken apart or smashed
- 8-9 You can punch through anything given enough time
- 10-11 You can conduct any amount of electricity
- 12-13 You can choose to ignore gravity
- 14-15 You can withstand any amount of pressure or weight
- 16-17 Nothing can pass through the palm of your hand
- 18-19 You can withstand any temperature
- 20-21 If you put your back against something and your feet on the ground, you cannot be moved

**Card Protection, Level Two**

- 1.1 You are bulletproof or blade proof
- 2-3 You are immune to any damage caused by heat and fire
- 4-5 You can project a shield a meter across that is as hard as steel
- 6-7 You can project a shield a meter across made of fire – it is permeable but drives people back
- 8-9 You can draw a circle on the ground that nobody may enter
- 10-11 You can rebound attacks against you with reduced force
- 12-13 You can target a person, weapon or category of weapon, they may not hurt you
- 14-15 You can ensure a wall or structure takes no damage and cannot fall
- 16-17 You can ensure a machine or device runs perfectly forever
- 18-19 Your arm becomes unbreakable and unbendable
- 20-21 You push anyone coming near you back several meters

**Card Protection, Level Three**

- 1.1 You can project a massive wall that is as hard as steel
- 2-3 You can project a massive wall of fire
- 4-5 You can draw a gigantic circle on the ground that nobody may enter
- 6-7 You cannot be damaged by any mortal attack
- 8-9 You can make a building impervious to damage
- 10-11 You can expand a shield around you like a sphere of force that can smash through buildings
- 12-13 Your body becomes unbreakable, unbendable, immovable and able to support any amount of weight
- 14-15 You can rebound attacks back at the attacker with full force
- 16-17 You can ensure a large system or institution becomes infallible
- 18-19 As long as you physical form is not completely restored, you can be brought back to life
- 20-21 You can protect yourself or others from the passage of time

**Card Shaping, Level One**

- 0-1 Making something small change from sturdy to bendy, like dead wood to green wood, steel to aluminium
- 2-3 Change a small generic object you are holding into something very close, such as a pen into a pencil, a spoon into a fork
- 4-5 Make a small amount of liquid you touch freeze solid or boil
- 6-7 Make anything wet you touch extremely slippery
- 8-9 Make anything wet you touch sticky enough to impede movement
- 10-11 Sharpen or dull an edge
- 12-13 Cause a small mechanical object you are holding to become inaccurate, jam or break in some way that takes time to repair
- 14-15 Make a wooden door, glass window or wall as hard as iron
- 16-17 Shape your body into something terrifying
- 18-19 Make a brick pillar as soft as plaster
- 20-21 Break any handheld object you hold into two pieces

**Card Shaping, Level Two**

- 1.1 Drawing the water or air out of a living thing so it becomes weak and unable to stand
- 2-3 Shape your body until it is paper thin or razor sharp
- 4-5 Turn any complex object back into its component parts, or vice versa
- 6-7 Realign elements in a complex object so it explodes violently
- 8-9 Make a large solid object as soft as mud
- 10-11 Turn parts of your body into other substances
- 12-13 Make something soft into something incredibly hard and resistant
- 14-15 Turn a metal into gold or precious jewels
- 16-17 Make your arm unbendable and unbreakable
- 18-19 Alter the levels of permeability of an object or building so you can reach or walk through walls
- 20-21 Alter the solidity of your body so you can reach or walk through walls

**Card Shaping, Level Three**

- 1.1 Remove all the water from a living being so they are nothing but a pile of mineral salts
- 2-3 Shape your body into liquid or gas
- 4-5 Shape your body into fire, or lightning, or steel
- 6-7 Rearrange any substance into a new shape
- 8-9 Turn something from any substance into another substance
- 10-11 Shape whole buildings or landscapes from surrounding materials
- 12-13 Rearrange elements or atoms so things violently explode
- 14-15 Reconstruct the local environment so it becomes hostile eg oxygen becomes chlorine gas
- 16-17 Make your body unbendable, unbreakable, immovable and able to support any amount of weight
- 18-19 Shape some of the fundamental building blocks of reality into new ones
- 20-21 Shape small alternative worlds and move between them and this

**Card Witness, Level One**

- 0-1 You can see people as if through an x-ray, revealing carried metal etc
- 2-3 You cannot get lost: if you take a few minutes to look, you can always intuit a path from one place to another
- 4-5 Your eyes can zoom in to 100x magnification
- 6-7 See as if through infrared, detecting heat sources

- 8-9 Instantly identify the best example of something in a list or series
- 10-11 You can smell almost as well as a dog, detecting trace chemicals in the air
- 12-13 You can see well enough to read a newspaper from a mile away
- 14-15 You can see from all directions at once, so you cannot be surprised
- 16-17 Hear well enough to detect heartbeats and similar information
- 18-19 Hear a single conversation amongst several, as long as everyone is speaking normally
- 20-21 Have an eidetic memory of anything you have seen in the last day

**Card Witness, Level Two**

- 1.1 Reveal to someone something so stunningly true they are struck temporarily blind or weakened
- 2-3 Reveal to someone a terrible emotional truth about themselves that leaves them stunned
- 4-5 See through walls and around corners
- 6-7 Be able to navigate with sonar
- 8-9 Be able to see at any range without loss of information
- 10-11 Be able to see people through an object they are carrying, or through a mirror
- 12-13 Be able to read the emotional state and surface thoughts of someone
- 14-15 Be able to read the dreams of someone
- 16-17 Know someone's deepest darkest secrets and history
- 18-19 Be able to see abstract concepts like illness or rumour
- 20-21 Be able to copy the ability or skill of a living thing you see

**Card Witness, Level Three**

- 1.1 Show someone something so stunningly true they tear out their own eyes or their brain shuts down from shock
- 2-3 Show someone something so terribly true about themselves they rethink their entire existence or become suicidal
- 4-5 Be able to see a person or place you name, or through any person's eyes
- 6-7 Be able to know everything about someone instantly
- 8-9 Be able to borrow someone's knowledge and skills by seeing inside their head and learning what they know
- 10-11 Perfectly copy a person or thing you can see
- 12-13 Be able to copy something you read or see in fiction or media
- 14-15 Know the past movements of someone, over the last day
- 16-17 See the future movements of someone, for the next day
- 18-19 Know where every part of something is if you have a piece
- 20-21 Be able to see abstract concepts like history, success and likely fates

## How Miracles Work

Miracles aren't magic spells. Outside of the Trammel, they don't require a particular ritual or phrase to enact. Angels acquire mastery over Dominions much as humans acquire skills. Bringing this power forth is as simple as a mortal using any natural skill like throwing a ball or riding a bike; likewise with practise and exploration, angels can perform more and more powerful expressions of their skills, in more precise ways.

When angels fall, all this power and knowledge goes into their Relic. It is as if that part of their brain, if they had one, was stored therein. Professing the Miracle is still as if expressing a known skill but must be done with the Relic in hand (or otherwise touching the body). No Relic, no Miracles.

The Trammel also must be considered; paid if it is a cost; obeyed if it is a restriction. God or the rules of the universe appear to be unbendable on this issue. The Trammel is attached to the Miracle itself; the addition of needing to hold your Relic is a separate issue of having a Relic.

## **The Loophole**

Until God left, Relics were inert; dormant. The power was there but unable to be accessed. That was the price of falling; able to interact directly with Creation and appear a part of it, but not be able to shape it with supernal power. The loophole that was discovered was that if an angel could disconnect themselves from their physical body, the Relic would once again become powered. The inert state required both angel and Relic to exist simultaneously. Cut free from an angel, the item becomes a Relic.

There were two ways to accomplish this: the first was to put the angel's consciousness, its "brain" or "soul" (called a *virtus*) into the Relic itself. This is the case with most Relics. In theory, this gives the celestial the power to communicate with the wielder, and in some cases even control them. The Taken are mortals who are consumed by the mind inside the Relic, and they typically become monstrous as a result.

The other method is to simply destroy the angel's corporeal body and destroy the Relic at the same time. This leaves the angel as nothing but a kind of spirit that must possess people, items or places in order to do anything. Once an angel can inhabit something, however, they regain use of their powers. Possessing people and animals is extremely difficult; items are easier but this leaves the celestial back as a Relic. Angels tend to shun this method feeling that taking over others is at best gauche and at worst an invasive crime equivalent of rape. They don't like to ask for permission yet feel unwelcome if they do not have it. Demons on the other hand tend to use this one a lot. They don't need permission, but demons are lazy: they'd rather not fight for control if they don't have to.

It is impossible at first glance to tell one of the Taken, controlled by a mind in a Relic, from a mortal possessed by a demonic spirit. In many ways the difference is immaterial. The main difference is that removing the item will usually remove the threat of the Taken (although not usually restoring them). A possessing demon will typically only leave a host if the host is destroyed – and can then just find a new home.

## **Relic Hunters**

Relics work as a kind of remote memory storage, and that means they can be passed to others. Any angel or mortal acquiring a Relic can tap into the power stored within. Angels and demons alike understand that power is best not simply handed over to any mortal without an instruction booklet. Many times in history angels have trusted mortals to act appropriately and been betrayed. As a result, they often hide the power of Relics so that only those of a certain level of knowledge or access to an arcane code or key can retrieve them. Much of the history of the occult is unlocking puzzles left behind by angels to prevent misuse, with the idea being to restrict usage to only the best mortals. In practice it rarely works out that way. Instead, cabals are formed around the protected knowledge, and even the best intentions go awry.

Theoretically, a Relic can contain all the powers an angel could command when it fell, but angels are not always masters of their Dominion, and even powers that transfer are not always easily accessible by

a new user. The Relic grants access to Miracles readily. In theory, it also grants mastery over the associated Dominions but it is a skill that must be mastered even after being unlocked. Study, practice and contemplation is the long road to easing more power out of Relics. A much easier path is simply to possess as many Relics as possible, especially those containing the most powerful Miracles. And so the history of humanity has been an arms race, as powerful forces fight to find, seize and control the Relics before their enemies do likewise.

Angels try not to get involved, at least directly. Especially since there is a third loophole: destroy the angel and the Relic powers unlock, without an annoying *virtus* in there to tell you to do good. Angels are aware of this and usually try to take their Relics with them when they die, but accidents happen. So does murder. Angels are already targets for their knowledge of Relics, of the supernatural truth of the universe and the power mortals imagine they have; as time went on, it became a better option to keep a low profile and not chase down lost power of friends and foes. Or at least to do so with protection from allies in the Missions, and still with great care.

Now that their Relics are waking up on their own, things are even worse. Relics can be stolen and continue to operate. That makes robbing angels (and/or killing them) a gateway to great power, great power that can be snatched up by anyone. It's depressing enough being an angel without powers; to be an angel knowing your Relic has been stolen (or found after you abandoned it) and is out there causing misery and evil deeds is hard for most to bear. A lot of angels have given up. With God gone, what's the point of fighting, and who are they even fighting for? Mortals who would sell them out in a second? A God that abandoned them?

Angels that give up leave Relics lying around even more, and those who are unaware of the stakes make it dangerous for everyone else. Robbing a fellow angel now becomes an issue of safety. After all, the thief believes they will look after their Relics properly, not just wait for some two-bit mortal magus to steal them off them. Now angels are being hunted like never before, as are Relics, and some of the biggest hunters are angels themselves. Every angel eyes his fellows and wonders if they are planning to betray them, and to whom, in the name of winning a war that might already be over.

### <sidebar>**Voluntary Storage**

When angels fall their Dominions are forced into their Relic. But they can also do this process wilfully. Their ability to fly remains inherent to them, for example, and can be placed into their Relic. So too could the powers of their other Aspects – the fiery sword of Asha or the resistant flesh of Behema. They can do this into other items not their Relics, although they must meet the same criteria. These extra Relics are called Sacrum.

More commonly, angels will store memories – and Memories – into Relics or Sacrum. This can be a way to hide information and secretly pass it around. For example, a powerful Relic could be hidden with another Relic holding its location. Stored memories are known as Bindings.

The practice of attuning an item to an angel so it may become a Sacrum takes a full year of carrying the object. It takes twenty four hours to move a Memory over, or twenty four hours per level of the Miracle. Passing over an entire knowledge of a Dominion can take a lifetime and depends on the scope of the angel's mastery. The art of making Sacrum and storing powers is believed to be part of Zaphkiel's Domain, and having more convenient and powerful Relics that can break these rules (or at least speed up the process) is another reason his soldiers are so sought after. The fact that the rule of

Relics being inert has been broken with God's departure is more evidence that Zaphkiel left when God did.

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*Rachel was dead to begin with.*

*That much was certain. When she'd come out of the coma, she found a letter in her jacket pocket. It read "Your name is Rachel. Forget everything else." It seemed very clear. Someone was trying to protect her. Possibly herself. Well, she'd assumed it was herself, but that might as well have been a stranger. Whoever she had been, she'd erased all trace of it, and maybe that was for the best. She knew she'd been someone so desperate to appear die she had shot herself in the temple while standing on the edge of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as if one death wouldn't be enough. Someone who had previously burned the end of her fingers so there were no fingerprints and let the bullet rearrange her teeth and facial features.*

*Whoever Rachel had been, she had been thorough. It was if she didn't want to die, but be reborn as someone else. Which suggested a hate or fear far beyond suicide.*

*But her past self had made plans for the future. Assuming it was her past self – and the tag on the neck of the jacket had Rachel written on it in what appeared to be her handwriting seemed to suggest she was correct – that past self wanted a new life for herself. She had clearly felt she could have a better life if she erased the past. Clearly she thought she deserved a better one. In all the darkness and fear that came with having nothing, nothing but a jacket and a letter and a pair of jeans to live a life from when she came to in the hospital, she clung onto that last line. She deserved better. She did this to live better. She deserved to live, and live safely. She'd been that thorough not just because whatever haunted her past was so dangerous, but because she loved herself enough to make sure that in her future she'd be safe. Even from herself.*

*But as thorough as she'd been, it hadn't been perfect. Not in her mind. There were memories. Flashes from the accident, of course, but other things. A smell she remembered but could never place. Faces of people that flickered in her mind and made her feel sad and happy at the same time. The time she visited the ruins of the Roman villa in Wales and she knew, one hundred percent, deep down inside her, that the artist's recreation had the bedroom facing the wrong way.*

*There were other things too. Not of her past but that suggested she forgetting might be impossible. Like how her hair seemed to grow so slowly she had to cut it only once a year, and all her new friends couldn't believe it. Or how her eyes never seemed to be the same colour in every photo on her phone. Or the time she stood on a broken beer bottle in thongs and the glass had gone right through the thong and into her foot and she'd bled a transparent orange fluid that didn't look like human blood. Nothing like human blood at all.*

*And she knew then it would only be a matter of time before something made her remember, but it was almost ten years later that the two policemen came to her door and told her they had something to tell her. Her first question was to ask them how they found her then she kicked herself for saying something so obviously suspicious. They said they hadn't been looking for her, but they had found Rachel.*

*"I'm Rachel," she said.*

*No, they explained. Rachel was a girl who, almost ten years ago, had been shot in the face by her husband during a road rage incident on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Somehow her chart and her clothes had ended up on the wrong body. There were photos of her in the same jacket – the jacket Rachel was wearing still then, almost ten years later, wearing it right there in the kitchen when they were telling her it wasn't her jacket.*

*“I’m Rachel,” she said again.*

*No, they said. Rachel’s dead.*

*“I’m Rachel,” she said again, and this time she knew, one hundred percent, deep down inside her, that it was true. “I’m Rachel,” she said again, and she could see on their faces they knew it was true too, now too. She had made it true by saying it. Saying it in a new voice, not like her own, not like any human voice. Not like a human voice at all.*

*And it was true. She was Rachel. And these men, fear in their eyes, were liars, and deceivers. She held tight to the cuffs of her jacket and suddenly there was fire there, fire coming out of the sleeves, fire like a river. The policemen yelled and shouted and rolled on the ground and all she could do was run, kicking out the door, tears pouring down her face. Behind her, she saw the fire catch and her flat burn. People ran into the street and sirens wailed. Soon, the fire would consume everything, destroying ten years of being Rachel, erasing the past. Yet she also knew, as surely as she knew she was Rachel, that she could never erase it truly. There would be no forgetting. Some thing would always show through. Someone would also come looking. Someone would hunt her down. They hungered for Rachel and the things she knew, and the secrets she kept from the days of Babel.*

*And she knew too, that she was not human. She was nothing like a human at all.*