

METRO :OTHERSCAPE



THE MYTHIC CYBERPUNK RPG

POWERED BY:

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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language as well as strong themes of violence, crime, and immorality. Parental guidance is advised.

PRONOUN USE

Where the third person is required, this book refers to characters and players as 'they' and to the MC as 'she'. This is an arbitrary division for the sake of readability; characters, players, and MCs may be of any or no gender.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Signal In The Noise	8
-----------------------	---

CHAPTER 1: //IMAGINE 14

• Enter The :Otherscape	16
» ://Survive This	18
» The World in the Year 20XX	18
» Mythology Weaponized	20
» Tech & Noise	22
» Life in the Megacity	24
» Cyberspace	27
» The Faces in Your Mirrorshades	30
• Your Story in :Otherscape	34
» Who You Are	35
» Who You Roll With	37
» What the Gig is	39
» Where to Go	41
» Where Things Go Down	42
» Source Examples	44
• Key Players	46
» Epis International	47
» New Michigan Motors & Machining	48
» KOCMOC	49
» Veera Bangers	50
» Santa Lucia Academy	51
» The Gordian	52
» Stratosphere Strategies	54
» Cryocharm	55
» Chimaerics	56
» Viral Movements	57
» Philosophy & Religion	60
• Glossary	62

CHAPTER 2: //PLAY 64

» Time to Jack in	66
» #1 Welcome to :Otherscape, Punks	68
• Your Character & Crew	70
» #2 Character & Crew	70
» The Character Card	72
» Tags	72
» Themes	74
» The Crew	75

• How To Play	76
---------------	----

» #3 Playing a Scene	76
» Establishing a Scene	80
» For the MC: Using Challenges & Threats	81
» The Spotlight	82
» #4 Taking Action	84
» Handling Tags	89
» #5 Effects	90
» For the MC: Quick vs. Tracked Conflicts	96
» #6 Consequences	98
» For the MC: Your Arsenal of Consequences	101
» #7 Statuses	103
» #8 Story Tags & Tag Effects	110
» #9 Loadout	114
» #10 Scale	118
» #11 Power Options	121
» #12 Downtime	124
» Cinematic Moments	125
» For the MC: Making the Game Harder	126
» Sample Playthrough	127

• Character & Crew Evolution 131

» Upgrades	133
» Essence	134
» Thematic Transformations	136
» Evolution	140

CHAPTER 3: //CREATE 142

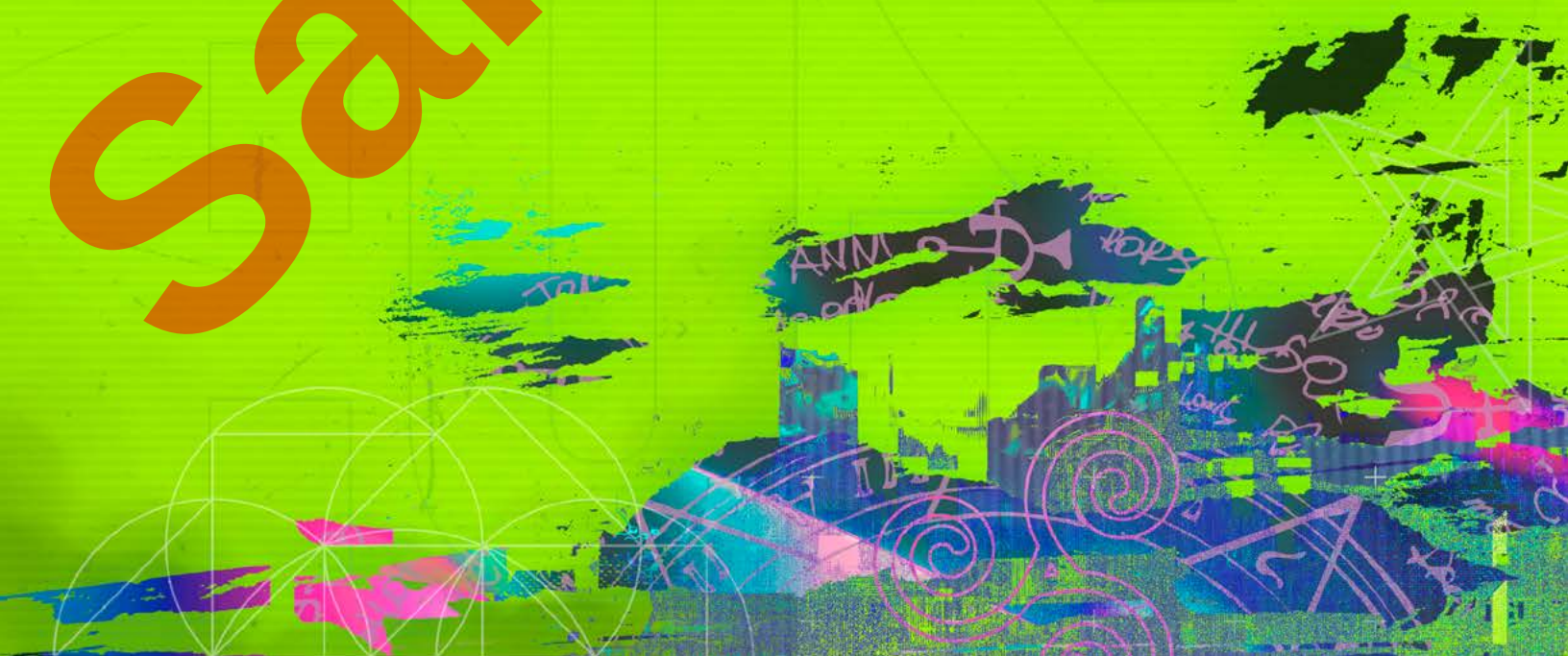
» Make it Your Own	144
» Rapid vs. Custom Creation	144
• Series Setup	145
» Series – Step 1: Choose a Series Concept	146
» Series – Step 2: Choose Your Megacity	149
» Pre-Made Megacities	150
» Series – Step 3: Create Your Characters	154
» Series – Step 4: Pick a Crew Theme	154
» The Crew	155
» Theme Kits	156
» Series – Step 5: A Night in the Megacity	158
• The Megacity Generator	160
» Creating the Megacity Map	161
» Developing the Future History	163
» Example: Berlin :Otherscape	173

▪ Character Creation	174
» Theme Types	175
» Rapid Character Creation	177
» Character Tropes	178
» Custom Character Creation	190
▪ Self Themebooks	196
» Affiliation	196
» Assets	200
» Expertise	204
» Horizon	208
» Personality	212
» Troubled Past	216
▪ Mythos Themebooks	220
» Artifact	220
» Companion	224
» Esoterica	228
» Exposure	232
▪ Noise Themebooks	236
» Augmentation	236
» Cutting Edge	240
» Cyberspace	244
» Drones	248
▪ Loadout: Street Catalog	252
» Access & Perks	254
» Ammo	255
» Apps, Chips & Databases	256
» Armor	257
» Body Attachments & Cybernetics	258
» Cyberspace	260
» Drones	262
» Enhancers	263
» Garments & Fashion	264
» Merc Gear	265
» Source-Touched Items	266
» Vehicles	268
» Weapons	269
CHAPTER 4: //RUN	272
» Push The Action	274
▪ Narrating :Otherscape	275
» Cinematic Considerations	275
» Gritty vs. Cinematic Narration	277
» Hackers, Harnessing, & Ops Support	279

▪ Designing a Series	280
» Gathering Ideas	280
» Mapping Out Key Players	282
» Handling Jobs	284
» Types of Jobs	285
» Designing a Job	287
▪ Creating Challenges	294
» Creating Challenges on the Fly	296
» Creating Challenge Profiles	297
▪ Challenge Database	301
» Civilians & Weirdos	302
» Corps & Cops	304
» Criminals & Mercs	306
» Cyberspace	308
» Locations	310
» Outlanders	312
» Source-Touched & Conjurations	315
» Technologies	319
» Movers and Shakers	321
» Self Power Sets	326
» Mythos Power Sets	330
» Noise Power Sets	332
▪ Starter Job: Strings Attached	334
» Background	334
» Act 0: Meeting the Crew	336
» Act I: Common Threads	338
» Act II: Through the Sludge Zone	344
» Act III: Skeiron Correctional Complex	346
» Act IV: Cell Block Bravo	350
» Aftermath	354
APPENDICES	355
» Challenges & Power Sets in this Book	355
» Themekits in this Book	356
» Tracking Cards	358
» Character Card	359
» Crew Theme Card	359
» Theme Cards	360
» Loadout Theme Cards	362
» Effects	364
» List of Backers	364

In the not so **distant** future,
due to the incessant **NOISE** 🧠 of
technology and post-modern life,
HUMANITY 🧠 has become
so **numb** and apathetic that
spirits of **MYTH** 👁️ and **legend**,
once constrained to the
shadows, can now roam
the world **FREELY**.

These awakened **demons** and **GODS**, bound to ***physical* OBJECTS**, places, and **rituals**, now join the **war** for the **FUTURE** of **humanity**, throwing the world into a bewitched **arms race** and a new era of **TURMOIL**.





SIGNAL IN THE NOISE

A BRIEF GUIDE TO :OTHERSCAPE RPG

WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT?

In *:Otherscape*, you are a **mercenary, operative, or survivor** living in the year 20XX in a dystopian **Megacity**, one of many in a world full of **corruption, pollution, and incredible opportunities**.

You run dangerous **jobs** for your employer – the kind that take an expert: **hijacking, extraction, procurement, security sweeps**. Usually it gets... **complicated**, so you have to adapt. You work with a **crew**: **reluctant associates, hired guns, comrades in the same unit, or found family**.

Life in the Megacity is drowning in the **Noise**, the incessant flood of stimuli of the postmodern age: data feeds, neural sensations, drugs, memories, ads, all of it. New tech changes the rules of the game faster than anyone can process, so people no longer try. They give in to the Noise.

Recently, though, you or someone you know had contact with something inexplicable, a legend or a **Mythos** you thought was only fiction, but proved to be very real. It seemed familiar, like a story you heard when you were a kid. And it was *magic* – it could bend the rules of reality in ways both wondrous and terrifying.

Nobody cares, though, just like they don't care about what the corporations do or what's in their water. Even the extraordinary becomes just another part of the Noise – except for the ones who make it their business. In your professional circles, word is this power comes attached to **Sources**: relics, sacred or accursed places, or some kind of esoteric knowledge. Your employers soon became interested in this new type of weapon, power, commodity, and/or problem – and that's how you got stuck in this mess.

It's a new era of a global mythical arms race, and you're a lost, Noised-up soul smack in the middle of it.



WHAT DO YOU DO IN THIS GAME?

You and your crew have a job to do: clear out an arcology swarming with mythical monsters, steal a Source from a rival corp, or save a freedom fighter from a cyberspace dream. You might pull it off clean, but odds are it will go sideways somehow. It's likely you'll have to take the next job to clear the debt or undo the curse you got yourself into, but if all went well, you might instead have a juicy lead to follow for an even more lucrative job.

But it's not really about the job, it's about you. The things you see, the things you are driven to do, the choices you make – they change you. In an age where you can swear eternal fealty to a goddess or upload your very essence onto a replacement clone body, the answer to the question "who am I?" is an ever moving target. It's up to you to make the choices and find out.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN MY CHARACTER TAKE?

Depending on their abilities, your character could fight, hack, explore, manipulate, spy, summon spirits, tinker with tech, and so on. Sources and advanced tech can give them supernatural or superhuman abilities like casting spells or immense strength.

Your character's abilities, qualities, and assets are defined by four sets of short descriptions, or **tags**. Each of the four sets focuses on a single **theme**, a core aspect of your character, and each tag describes something that your character is, has, or can do, such as *charming*, a *hacking console*, or *sense magic*.

When the time comes to take action, you **count up your tags** that directly help you take that action: The more relevant tags you have, the better the outcome.

Special tags called **statuses** mark transient conditions, such as *wounded*, *mesmerized*, or *firewalled*, describing your character's situation and at the same time increasing or decreasing your ability to take actions related to this description. Statuses have a **tier** that determines their intensity, ranging between 1 (mild) to 6 (deadly or permanently transformative).

HOW DO YOU PLAY?

You and your group sit around the table and play out this mythic cyberpunk drama scene by scene, like a TV show or movie, but you don't know in advance how each scene will end. Each **session** could have a handful of **scenes**. You could play a **one-shot** session or a **series**.

Most of you will be **players**, each portraying one of the protagonists, a **player character** (PCs).

One of you will be the **Master of Ceremonies** (MC), setting the scenes and portraying **non-player characters** (NPCs) as well as all the **Challenges** your characters face: adversaries, hazards, mysteries, and dangerous situations.

ESTABLISH >> ACTION >> CONSEQUENCES

In a scene, your conversation follows a set rhythm:

- The MC establishes (or reestablishes) the scene, presenting new **Challenges** and/or making **Threats** with them, and then gives one of the players the **spotlight**.
- The player in the spotlight describes the **action** their character takes and often rolls the dice to determine the **outcome**.
- Depending on the outcome, or if Threats were ignored, the MC then delivers **Consequences**. Sometimes the player's character reacts to **mitigate** those Consequences.

This sequence repeats itself, cycling through the player characters like a TV show switching between protagonists, until the scene ends and a new scene begins.

TAKING ACTION

Determining the outcome of an action can have three parts or layers – **narration**, **roll**, **Effects** – and the MC chooses whether to use one, two, or all three. Like a director, they choose whether they want the action to be resolved **quickly** or to **track** it in detail, like in a blow-by-blow fight, a word-by-word argument, or a play-by-play hacking attempt. Your game easily switches between the narrative and the tactical, whatever works best for the scene.

- **NARRATION:** For casual or risk-free actions, you only need to describe the action. The MC confirms, and the scene continues. This is often used for actions to **perceive** the scene, **move** around, or **converse** in a low-stakes environment.

UNAGI

TAGS

POWER NEW OPTION WEAKNESS

SCAVENGER

ATHLETIC CLIMBER

SURVIVAL GEAR

CAMOUFLAGE CAPE

LOCAL LORE

PROTECT MY LOOT

SOCIALY AWKWARD

IDENTITY

"I BET THERE'S SOME GOOD LOOT DOWN THERE..."

FADE | ATTENTION

Unagi makes a living scavenging for

- **ROLL:** If the action you narrate is dangerous or dramatic, the MC will ask you to **roll for it**. You determine the action's **Power** by **counting up the tags that help you do the thing**: You get +1 Power for every helpful tag and -1 Power for every impeding tag. You also add the tier of your best status and subtract the tier of your worst status.

You then roll two six-sided dice (or *:Otherscape* dice) and add the result to your Power. If it's **10 or more**, you succeed without Consequences; **7-9**, succeed but suffer Consequences; **6 or less**, you suffer Consequences without any benefits.

- **EFFECTS:** If the degree of success is important, like when facing a tracked Challenge, the MC will ask you to **spend your Power on Effects**. You then get to buy specific Effects for your action, adding or removing tags and statuses from yourself, your opponent, or your allies. You can **Attack** to give your opponent *wounded* or *subdued*; **Influence** them to give them *convinced* or *threatened*; **Boost** yourself with a *warded* status; **Create** an *explosive device*; **Restore** a hexed ally by removing *cursed*; and more.

Each status tier costs 1 Power to add or to remove, and every tag costs 2 Power to add or to remove.

You can also spend 1 Power to **Discover** a valuable detail in the scene or to perform **Extra Feats** that enhance or flourish your described action.

That's it - there is only one kind of roll in this game, and yet every roll is different because different tags come into play, based on the action and the situation. Plus, the variability of Effects means you get to be creative with the outcome of your roll!

HOW DO I OVERCOME CHALLENGES?

In many cases, overcoming an obstacle or a Challenge, such as sneaking past a guard, only requires succeeding with your roll. You don't need to get into the nitty-gritty with every action. This is called a **quick outcome**.

In contrast, the MC can decide to **track** a Challenge, in which case you must take action to give it a **status**. When that status hits or exceeds one of the Challenge's **Limits**, the Challenge is overcome.

Each **Limit** represents a different way of overcoming the Challenge and indicates the tier of status needed to achieve that. For example, the Limit to convince a demonic mercenary commander to stand down is *convince:4* while the Limit to defeat them in battle is *hurt-or-subdue:6*.



Limits can also track any process: the progress of a ritual to seal a malevolent *Source* (*complete:3*), traversing urban ruins (*traverse:5*), or building a new drone (*construct:2*). When the Limit is hit or exceeded, the process is completed, and something important or dramatic happens.

Use Effects like **Attack**, **Influence**, or **Advance** to give the Challenge the right kind of status. In the above example, that would be *convinced-4* or higher, or *wounded-6* or higher, *traverse-5* or higher, and so on.

You don't have to hit the desired Limit with a single status, because statuses **stack**. When you give a status for the first time (e.g., *wounded-2*), mark its tier on a Tracking Card by checking the slot labeled with that tier number (slot 2) and attach it to the target. When the same target takes the same type of status again (e.g. *wounded-4*), mark the slot of the new tier on the same card (slot 4). If the slot is already marked, it overflows: mark the next slot to the right. The tier of the status is the highest slot marked on the card. For example, giving a Challenge *banished-2* and *banished-2* results in *banished-3* (because slot 2 is already checked); the next time you give them *banished-2*, it will push the status to *banished-4* (because slots 2 and 3 are already checked).

CONSEQUENCES

After each action, if it had Consequences or if your crew ignored incoming Threats, the MC will strike back with negative developments that complicate your character's life. The most common Consequence is materializing a Threat that was established, like an attack landing or a spell unleashed. Other Consequences include side effects, exhaustion, collateral damage, and so on.

Optionally, the MC can add negative Effects to the Consequences, giving you statuses that **make things harder for you**, such as *injured-4* or *glitchy-2* or **burning** your tags temporarily. The MC doesn't have Power to spend - they can dish out any Effect, depending on the Challenge you're facing and the circumstances.

Like Challenges, you too have Limits: if you take a tier 5 status, you're so overwhelmed that you can't take actions affected by that status. If you take a tier 6 status, you're either killed or forever transformed by it.

If your character has some capability to avoid or withstand the Effects of Consequences, you can try and **mitigate** them by rolling again and spending your Power to buy them down. This is a defensive reaction roll, which only happens when you take Consequences.

CHALLENGES

Challenges – adversaries, hazards, and dangerous situations – act in the scene using Threats and Consequences, instead of having their own turns. In scenes where the player characters are facing risks or attacks, the MC makes Threats with the Challenge(s) in the Establish phase and then makes good on them in the Consequence phase, if those Threats were not addressed by the player's action. Each Challenge has a **profile** that lists typical pairs of Threats and Consequences that represent their abilities and common interactions with the player characters.

Challenges can also have their own tags and statuses that affect player actions against them or affect player characters ability to mitigate their Consequences. A Neo-Occultist Challenge that is **warded-2** against spells reduces the Power of actions to cast spells against them, and a mercenary with **armor piercing rounds** reduces the Power of armored player characters to mitigate their **gunfire** Consequences.

EVOLUTION

As your series continues, your character grows in two separate ways.

UPGRADES: Whenever you or the MC invoke one of your weakness tags, you lose 1 Power on the roll but mark a box on that theme's **upgrade track**. When it's full, you reset it and gain an **upgrade**: either a new tag or a new **Special**, a rule unique to you.

PERSONAL STORY ARC: Your character has a **motivation** for each theme. Choosing to act against that motivation can lead you to mark a box on that theme's **Decay track**. When it's full, you replace that theme: one aspect of your character is lost while another emerges, dramatically changing the tags and actions available to you and how your character plays.

Themes are divided into **Self**, **Mythos**, and **Noise** and the balance of these theme types determines your **Essence**. Finding new Mythos Sources and/or giving more of your Self to tech and Noise can cause your PC to evolve into a

different type of being, such as a Cyborg, Singularity, or a mythic Avatar, each with its own **Essence Special** rules.

POWER OPTIONS

In *:Otherscape*, you're only limited by what you're willing to sacrifice – power options let you control the narrative in critical moments, at a cost.

Before you roll, you can **burn one of your own tags** to get 3 Power instead of 1 Power for that tag.

You can **push a 10+ roll** by accepting Consequences to get 1 more Power to spend on Effects.

Finally, you can **Go Out In A Blaze**, losing themes or even killing your PC to achieve a specific narrative goal, an option usually reserved for extreme cinematic moments.

YAGA BOY

Ruling her underworld gang with a metaphorical iron fist, not to be confused with her very real metal teeth, the Baba Yaga Mob Matriarch is a force to be feared. Her "Boys" are her eyes, ears, and claws out in the world. Each is a brutal underworld enforcer, spiritually twisted by exposure to the terrifying Mythos of Baba Yaga via their matriarch. This spiritual corruption allows a Yaga Boy to apply their **cruel** status to attacks and other Consequences where they cause pain or intimidation, so mitigating their attacks becomes harder.

— LIMITS

HURT OR SUBDUE 3
TRICK 4

— TAGS & STATUSES

bewitched megapistol, **witch's brew**, **cruel-2**

— SPECIALS

Witch's Potent Brew: The first time the Yaga Boy's **hurt-or-subdue** would be maxed, they can drink **witch's brew** (burn it) to reset the Limit.

— THREATS / » CONSEQUENCES

- » Brandish a huge megapistol or other weapon
 - » Threaten to get violent (**intimidated-1** or **frightened-1**)
 - » Fire upon a group of people (**bullet-wounded-2** to up to 3 targets near each other)
 - » Hit someone with the butt of their megapistol (**bludgeoned-2**)
- » Cackle with glee after a successful attack
 - » Disappear without a trace (Deny Them Something They Want)
- » Sowl menacingly, drawing upon the Baba Yaga's evil (increase **cruel** by one tier)

LOADOUT

You don't track ammo bullet for bullet, or write down every piece of gear you have. Like in a movie, your tags only show important gear or major assets your character owns. Important items you have access to are recorded in a special fifth theme called the **loadout theme**. During the game, you can gain new permanent tags in the loadout theme by trading, crafting, shopping, or finding loot.

Before every job, you **Load Up** and choose one tag from your loadout theme to take with you on this particular job. During the job, you can use this tag as all other tags but when the job ends, you load off again, losing it.

WHAT'S IN THE CORE BOOK?

Ready to start playing? Here is what you can find in this book:

//IMAGINE describes the *:Otherscape* proto setting, a mythic-futuristic world designed with room for you to make it your own, including examples and story hooks for characters, crews, corporations, Sources, Megacities, and more.

//PLAY delves into the game rules, both for players and the MC, including all the options, suggestions, and examples.

//CREATE offers a set of tools to create new player characters, crews, series, and Megacities, with plenty of ready-to-use content, Rapid and Custom creation modes, and a loadout tag catalog.

//RUN has guides and resources for the MC on how to run the game and how to design your own series, jobs, and Challenges – with a pool of Challenges to start from.

Strings Attached is a starter job your group can play on your first few sessions, which teaches the game as you play.

