

PLAYING THE GAME

INTRODUCTION

In Nomine is a roleplaying game – that is, the players assume the roles of characters, also called *player characters* or PCs, who are the “stars” of the story that emerges during the game.

One of the players has not just one character, but many. This is the Game Master, or GM, whose primary function is to arbitrate game play (much like a referee), and who also assumes the roles of everyone the PCs meet – the non-player characters, or NPCs, for short.

The GM organizes the scenario – the background of the adventure. Players announce their characters’ actions to the GM, who (after considering both the rules of the game and the story’s plot) tells them the results of their actions. When the GM and the players want an impartial arbitrator, they may roll dice to resolve conflict.

The game isn’t so much a simulation as a story. The game mechanics, which consist of nothing more elaborate than rolling three dice, have been purposely kept simple. Since the average character has incredible, celestial potency, the rules could not precisely simulate “real” events and remain even remotely simple. Instead, the rules provide guidelines to determine what might happen in a variety of circumstances. The GM and the players must decide the details for themselves.

THE CHARACTERS

What Are They?

Characters are the most important elements in the game. Like characters in a story, each has unique feelings, motivations and capacity for action. Most of this information is recorded on a character sheet.

In the course of play, the players make decisions for their characters, choosing what actions they will take. These actions move the story forward, as the GM tells the players the results of those actions.

Turn to the blank character sheet on p. 26, and compare it to the sample on p. 37. As we build the sample character on the next few pages, we will go from an empty form to a fleshed-out, well-developed denizen of the celestial plane . . .

What Are All These Numbers?

As far as the rules of the game are concerned, characters can be described by several *characteristics* – such as

Strength, Will and Perception – each with a numerical value. These numbers show a character’s standing in relation to other characters in the game.

Conflict is the primary motivator in any story – conflict between people, ideologies or even within oneself. It’s the give-and-take between opposing forces that make an action-adventure story exciting. The numbers on the character sheet serve as a framework, allowing the players and the GM to quickly and easily determine the results of a conflict, either by comparing two numbers (such as two characters’ relative Strengths) or by rolling dice to simulate the randomness of a real conflict.



But more important than the numbers themselves are what they imply, and these implications truly form the character. For example, a Strength of 10, which is an impressive amount, doesn’t just mean an angel can pick up far more weight than most people . . . it will also be reflected in his personality. He may carry his huge frame with pride or he may be shy about his stature – words which tell more about him than any single number.

It is important not to let rules ruin the fun of the game. Numbers should take a back seat to imagination. For examples and advice on when to use dice and when to wing it, see *Game Mechanics*, which starts on p. 38.

In Nomine isn’t about math – it’s about entertainment. If your group feels that a rule or a number doesn’t work, you should change it. Rule interpretations should generally be left to the GM, but if all the players want a change, the GM should follow through. Take a hint from the demons – sometimes it’s more important to have fun than to follow the rules.



IN NOMINE

Name: _____ Choir: _____

Archangel: _____ Word: _____

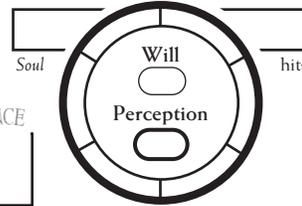
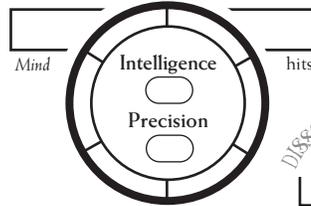
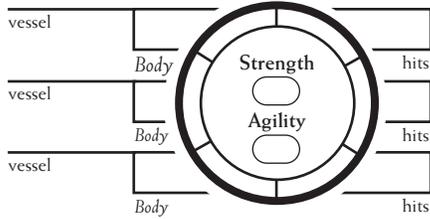


CORPOREAL

ETHEREAL

CELESTIAL

Attunements & Distinctions

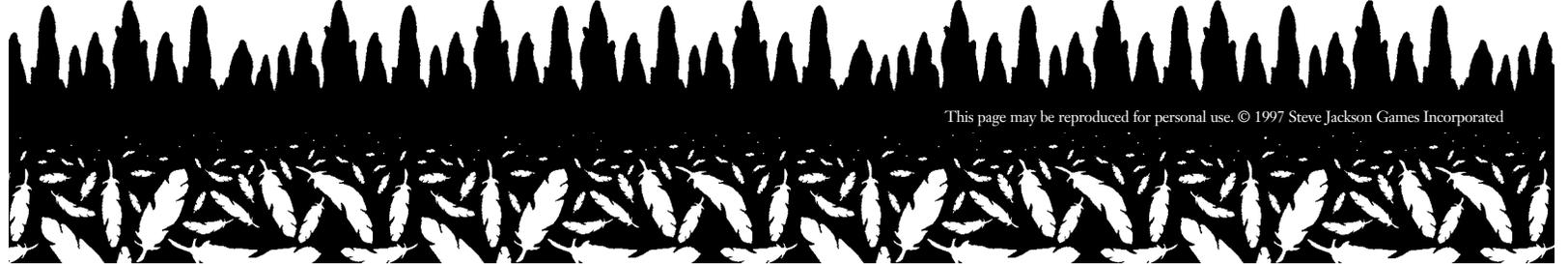


DISSONANCE

Discord



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Name: _____ Band: _____

Prince: _____ Word: _____

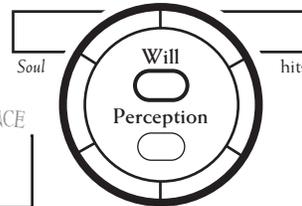
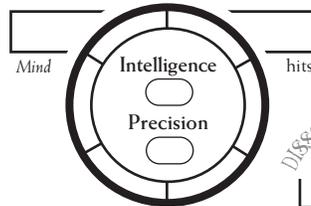
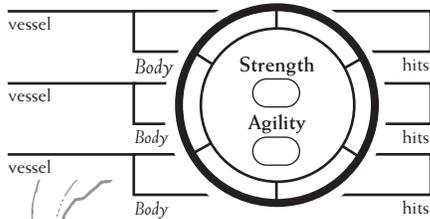
IN NOMINE

CORPOREAL

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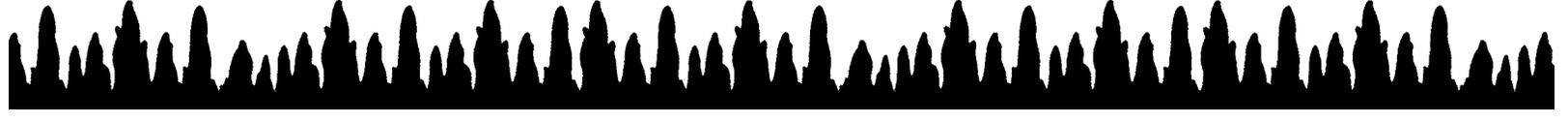
CELESTIAL

Attunements & Distinctions



DISSONANCE

Discord



What Does All This Mean? or, God's in the Details

Okay, so that's why the numbers are there. But if they can be ignored, why bother to include them at all?

A player and a GM can easily get bogged down in arguments over a storyline that might work against that person's character, and numbers serve as neutral arbiters. The difference between free-form, no-rules group storytelling (a roleplaying game with no real numbers) and a structured roleplaying game is like the difference between playing cops and robbers using fingers as guns, and playing cops and robbers with paint pistols. Someone may yell, "No, you didn't hit me!" – but when he's dripping with paint (or staring at an unlucky die roll), there's less room for argument.

A good GM can find the subtle balance between numbers and imagination. A good player knows when the balance is working and when to object.

THE GAME MASTER

The GM must create the structure of the story (that is, write the plot, or adapt an existing adventure to his players' characters), assume the roles of the NPCs, and describe the ongoing events as engagingly as possible so the players stay interested.

Running a good roleplaying game is a social skill, and every GM runs his game differently. We're not about to dictate how someone should or shouldn't run a game. This book is background for the Game Master – guidelines and a little advice. The game is what he puts into it.

CHARACTER CREATION

There are a few simple steps to creating an *In Nomine* character. We'll walk through them over the next few pages, but here's the rough outline.

Character Concept

- Discuss a character concept with the GM (below).
- If the character is a celestial, choose his Choir or Band (pp. 32-33).
- Select his Superior, either an Archangel or Demon Prince (pp. 33-34, 107, 155).

Character Development

- Allocate Forces (p. 34).
- Select levels of Characteristics (p. 35).
- Pick Attunements (p. 36).
- Select Resources (p. 36, 70).
- Develop the character's background (p. 36).

That's it. These steps will be explained below as we create a sample character.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

When creating a character, many players may already have a solid idea of "who" they want to play: the brave investigator, the rebel, the lover, the doubter – these stereotypes and many others can make good characters. Think of a character in a book, a movie or your own imagination, and put your own spin on the idea.

Talk to the GM, and make sure your idea meshes with the campaign he plans. No ideas? Ask the GM; he'll know what sort of character would best suit his plot. He may have a good part in mind for an angel, a demon, a Soldier or a mundane human.

Try to keep a clear vision of the character's concept, and make choices that will further amplify and complement that vision.

Angels and Demons

These celestial beings, the heart and soul of the game, are the default *In Nomine* player characters – movers and shakers in the netherworlds and the heavens. There are several types of celestials: the *Word-bound* and *Servitors*, who serve higher powers; and the *Outcasts*, *Renegades* and *Remnants*, who don't. While angels and demons may be the most powerful PCs, they are still only servants to even more powerful beings, the Archangels and Demon Princes.

All true angels serve an Archangel, directly or indirectly. They are the greatest crusaders for all that is good and right in the Symphony. Those who don't serve Archangels are Outcasts, stuck on Earth.

Demons are a mixed lot. Not all demons would seem especially "evil," by human standards . . . while some are monsters, many look like "just people" with their own style and their own agenda. But they all work to further the cause of selfishness in the world. All demons, from their creation, are expected to serve a Demon Prince in some way, if only by virtue of the Principality of Hell they inhabit. Demonic Servitors may switch Superiors, although it is not done often (and suggests a knack for betrayal). Those demons who refuse to serve are Renegades, shunning the company of other Diabolicals and hiding out on Earth, where they inflict their own dark philosophies on humanity.

The relationship between a celestial and his Superior is delicate, at best. Complete devotion can be stifling. Angelic and demonic player characters spend most of their time running errands for mightier beings – errands which can prove fatal. But complete loyalty is rewarded handsomely, and as long as the advantages of service outweigh the disadvantages, celestial society is unlikely to change.

The other major type of celestial is not really celestial at all. These are angels and demons whose Forces have



been struck such a blow that they are stripped of almost everything divine or infernal. They are Remnants – vestiges of angels and demons whose minds strain to encompass the vastness of their former selves.

• Angels and demons start the game with 9 *Forces*, any of which may be Corporeal, Ethereal or Celestial (see *Forces*, p. 34). Angels and demons must have at least one Force of each type. The rules for Remnants are different – see pp. 30, 68.

Servitors

This includes most of the celestial population. Assume that, unless otherwise specified, all celestial characters are Servitors.

An angel owes his loyalty to his Archangel, and must follow both his immediate Superior's and his Archangel's instructions to the letter, even if that means being assigned to work for someone else. An Archangel's favored Servitors (such as the player characters) have a little leeway, but even they can't push things very far. Archangels are notoriously narrow-minded when it comes to disobedience – imposing Discord or stripping away an attunement – but it depends on the Archangel. For example, Archangel Dominic would as soon kill one of his angels as watch one disobey him, but Archangel Eli will actually praise an angel for personal initiative . . . as long as he likes the final result. Angels are not *supposed* to change their allegiance from one Archangel to another, but it sometimes happens.

An angel's devout service is rewarded with new attunements and a more intimate relationship with his master's Word. A typical angelic Servitor may ascend through three ranks, or distinctions – Vassal, Friend and Master – each of which brings increasing levels of power and responsibility. See p. 108.

A demon owes his loyalty to his Demon Prince, who rules the Principality which that demon calls home. Only a handful of demons are allowed Earth-side for corporeal duty. These are generally the Prince's favored servants, the ones he can trust to roam freely without either drawing too much attention or going Renegade.

Loyal demons may also be granted distinctions. These vary with each Demon Prince, but Knight, Captain and Baron are typical. Every rank grants a demon a new attunement to his master's Word, increasing both his power and his responsibilities. But Demon Princes are even crueller tyrants than Archangels. Disobedient demons are stomped quicker than cockroaches.

Word-Bound

Even more important than distinctions, in terms of status, is a Word. When a celestial is given a Word, his whole purpose becomes to protect that Word, to increase

its importance, and to move the reality of that Word toward the service of good or evil, as the case may be.

The holder of a Word gains a new level of *personal* importance in the celestial scheme of things. Celestials with Words have a unique link with the Symphony. In game terms, this grants special attunements to the holder of the Word, abilities which may be passed on to his servants as well. And each Word-bound celestial has unique Rites to let him regain Essence. For instance, the demon of Pipe Bombs gets a point of Essence when he spends half an hour showing a group of kids how to make a pipe bomb.

The Word-bound are both the celestial world's harshest masters and its most powerful slaves, for as a Word loses importance in the Symphony, so does its holder. Angels and demons without Words serve the Word-bound, helping to achieve greater goals, and lesser Words often serve greater ones.

The best examples of Word-bound celestials are the Archangels and Demon Princes. Each is a manifestation of a particular Word of the Symphony. Their Servitors include other angels and demons with related, but lesser, Words. For example, Blandine, the Archangel of Dreams, is served by various angels of Hope, while Beleth, the Princess of Nightmares, commands various demons of Fear. Beneath Belial, Demon Prince of Fire, are thousands of demons of destruction (the demon of Bombs, the subordinate but hard-working demon of Pipe Bombs, the grinning Calabite who is the demon of Unexpectedly Short Fuses, the Balseph demon of Union Carbide, and so on).

Words run the gamut of physical objects and locations, social concepts, cultural phenomena and natural forces. Each Word is unique; there are many angels and demons, but only one angel, or one demon, for each Word. (But often, Heaven and Hell grant the same Word. The relationship between their holders – for instance, the Angel of Cities and the Demon of Cities – is complex, and not always completely hostile. The Word is their battleground, but they mustn't destroy it as they fight over it.)

Characters should not start the game with a Word. Words should be obtained through campaigning and roleplaying, not just by spending points.

The process of obtaining a Word, although arduous, is worthwhile. With greater responsibility comes greater power, as well as greater respect and recognition from others.

Eventually, if a celestial serves his Word well and prospers, he will gather Servitors of his own. Other celestials may seek him out, or be assigned to him, to help him protect the growing importance of his Word. He may, if he chooses, grant them access to his Rites.

Divine Words

An angel who wants to embody a vacant Word must first discuss the matter with his Archangel. If the Archangel agrees that the Word is complementary to his own, then the servant must petition the Seraphim Council (see p. 137) and defend his strength and capacity in a public hearing. Anyone may speak, either for or against the petitioner, to sway the greatest of the Seraphim.

There may be other beings who wanted that Word but hadn't mustered the courage to ask. Those who wish to compete for the Word will be given an appropriate quest to perform. The Council members, who are not stupid, may assign similar quests to the different competitors, or they may allot a single quest which could be completed in several ways. The specific way a contestant succeeds or fails will influence the Council's final decision.

After everyone has finished his quest or been written off, the Council will listen to final petitions from the surviving entrants. As before, comments are accepted from the congregation at large. Each angel is expected to speak eloquently on his qualifications for the job, as well as describe his quest and its resolution.

When the Council decides who will carry that theme of the Symphony, then the pattern of that angel's Forces is bonded to the thought of the Word, and the angel is bound to protect that Word as much as (if not more than) he protects his own existence.

Infernal Words

The process of obtaining a Word is similar for a demon, if a little more stringent – he asks for the “blessing” of his Superior, then quickly gathers political support and rallies his friends to his side. But without the infernal counterpart of a Seraphim Council, the last step is a tricky one.

Regardless of how many other demons back him and how much he grandstands to show how well-suited he is to the Word, the only thing that really matters is the opinion of Lucifer himself. After all is said and done on a political level, and any other contenders for the Word have been disposed of, the applicant for the Word is granted a brief, private audience with the dark lord of dark lords, who alone will judge his merits.

Lucifer has the power to make anyone bearing diabolical Essence an infernal manifestation of any Word in the Symphony. To ensure the validity of his instincts, Hell's master generally requires the hopeful demon to fulfill a quest. In the end, Lucifer may still decline to grant the Word. Occasionally, he may offer a Word which he thinks would be more appropriate. If he's annoyed, Lucifer may inflict a darkly insipid Word – at the Light-bringer's whim, the petitioner could find himself the next demon of Stale Bong Water.

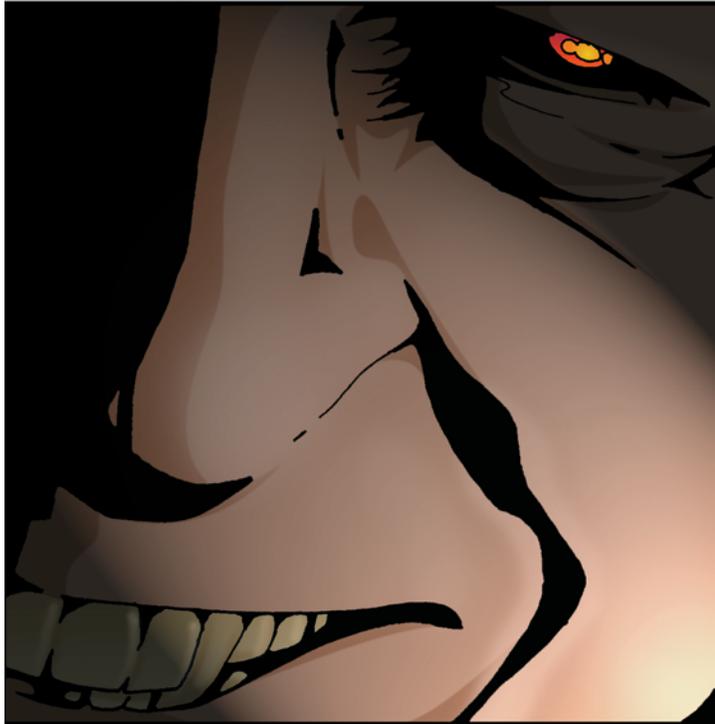


Outcasts

Outcasts are angels who have lost the favor of their Archangel after too many failed missions. They are not truly Fallen; they have not become demons. But their light no longer shines as brightly as once it did.

An angel can become Outcast in play by accumulating too much *dissonance* (p. 56) – or just by offending his Archangel so greatly that he is cast out! A PC may start as an Outcast.

Outcasts begin the game with three levels of one type of Discord, determined randomly or selected with advice from the GM. Outcasts cannot summon their Archangel, ascend to Heaven or use their Superior's Rites. They still get a point of Essence each day at sunrise. On the plus side, they're no one's servants but their own.



Other angels run a risk when associating with an Outcast – their Superiors may disapprove of them for consorting with an angel on the brink of Falling. Dominic's servants may feel torn between helping a troubled friend and turning him in for his failings.

Outcasts may still travel through the Marches (p. 51) and make use of any Songs and attunements they know.

Since it can be difficult for Outcast angels to redeem themselves, many volunteer as Servitors for other, more fortunate angels, hoping that their good deeds will eventually work them back into the celestial ranks. Sometimes they're right – but in general, angels in good standing are encouraged to stay away from Outcasts.

Playing an Outcast

As an Outcast, watch out for demons. Of all the things the Fallen enjoy, terrorizing Outcasts is high on the list. They sarcastically refer to Outcasts as "the Tripped." For an angel who holds any hope of getting back into the Heavens, taking up with demons jeopardizes what divinity he has left.

And what now? Is the angel despondent after being kicked out of the Heavens? Does he have a plan to get back in, or want revenge? Unless he's in the right, that last option may seal his fate and send him spiraling down to the domain of the Diabolicals. Maybe that's what he wants; maybe he just doesn't care.

Once an Outcast rids himself of all dissonance, he regains the ability to ascend to Heaven. He also regains

the ability to summon his Archangel . . . who will more than likely restore his Rites, at least temporarily, and offer a chance at redemption. The angel's first new mission will be to prove himself. If he succeeds, his only reward will be forgiveness. Some Archangels will forgive and forget completely, welcoming the prodigal back into the fold, while others have very long memories.

Renegades

Demons are never Outcasts. Hell's rulers would rather roast their servants on spits than let them roam across the Earth unchecked – and usually that's just what they do. But more frequently than anyone would care to admit, demons rebel against their Superiors and hide out on Earth, doing exactly as they will. Such a demon is a Renegade, and hordes of demons do nothing but run around hunting the rebels' rebels.

Player characters who are Renegades start the game with three levels of one type of Discord, determined randomly or selected with advice from the GM. Renegades cannot summon their Demon Prince. They cannot use the Rites of their Superior, but still regenerate Essence at sunset.

Playing a Renegade

Construct a Renegade character like any other, but consider his background carefully. Many Renegades take Roles (see p. 43) in human society, to blend in better. Decide which Demon Prince he rebelled against and come up with a solid rationalization as to why he did it. What does he feel so strongly about that he put his existence on the line?

As a Renegade, merely surviving is a victory. By helping or serving other demons, you may win tolerance and even some rewards. (But be careful about who you approach, as few demons wish to be associated with Renegades, and many will turn you in to Asmodeus.)

The greatest achievement for a Renegade is to be vindicated in his rebellion, recognized by Lucifer as usefully selfish and truly evil, and granted his own Word.

Remnants

Remnants are what survives of angels and demons whose Celestial Forces are lost in battle. A being who had a physical vessel will manifest on Earth to live out the rest of his mundane life, cut off from the brilliance of Heaven or the comforting darkness of Hell. Most celestials avoid Remnants; they're considered bad luck.

Remnants have lost their divine or infernal natures. Frequently they retain a meager repertoire of Corporeal and Ethereal Songs, or even their Rites and attunements, but they cannot use them in a directed manner. They cannot move to the celestial plane or listen to the Sym-