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– Nelson Algren, *The Man With The Golden Arm*

CHICAGO WORKINGS

An adventure for the World of Darkness
using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by: Will Hindmarch Additional Writing: Ken Hite, Bill Bridges Layout: matt milberger Art: sam araya World of Darkness created by Mark Rein • Hagen

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM			
SCENES	MENTAL	●○○○○	XP LEVEL
8	PHYSICAL	●●○○○	0-34
	SOCIAL	●●○○○	



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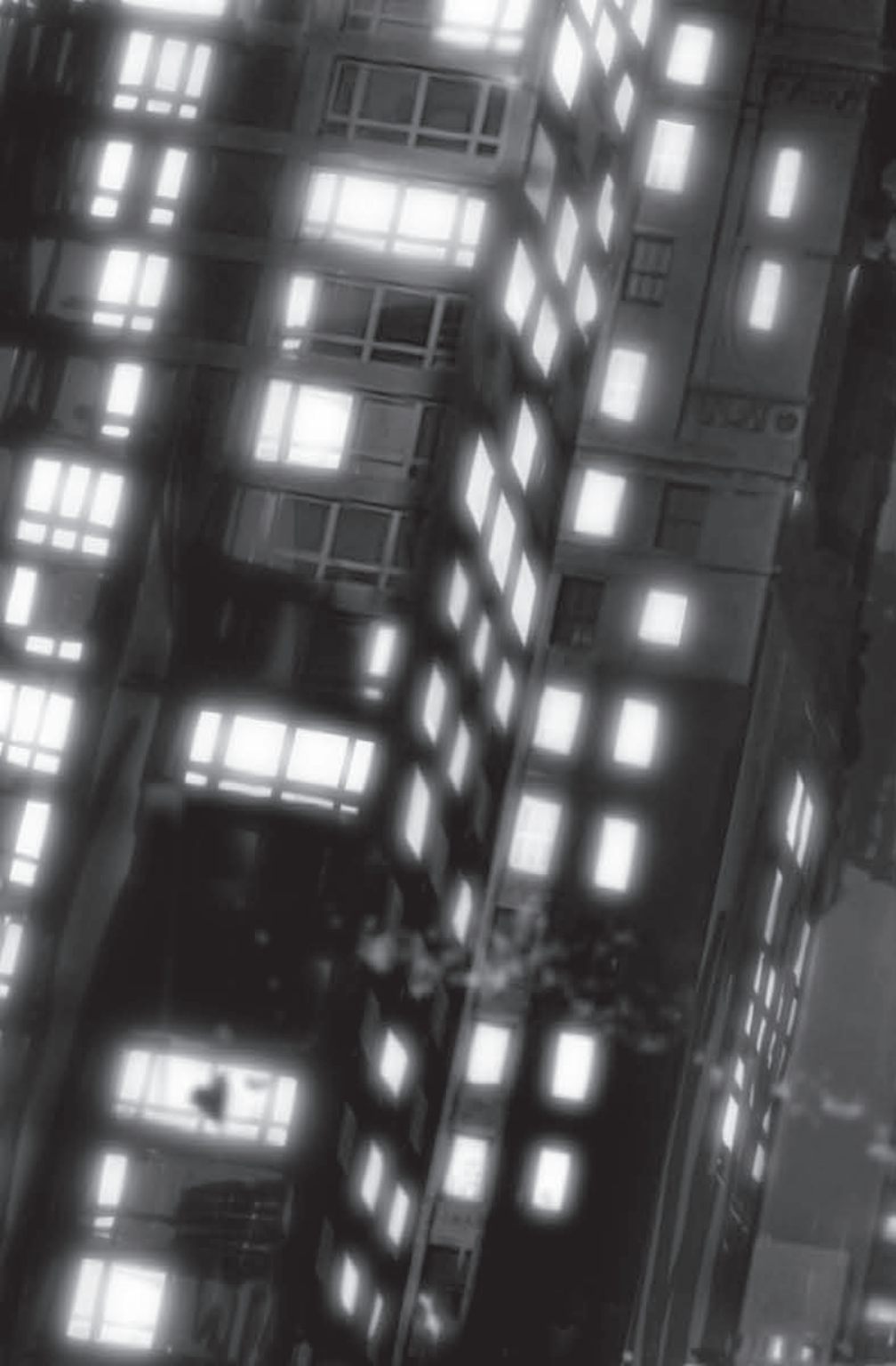
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The Chicago Working

by Kenneth Hite

The rails do move. They rattle and spark at night, when they think no one is watching; perhaps they echo the long-gone “Black Line” train, delivering corpses to funeral homes after midnight, widdershins around the Loop. They speak, these electrified steel dragon tracks across the throat of the city. What do they say? You have to listen, to hear them in the right frequency.

Some hear other voices in harmony or counterpoint, the angels who designed the city, flowing through the stylus of Daniel Burnham, architect by day and devout angelic contactee by night. Burnham thought them angels at any rate, and certainly voices are heard on high in Chicago, howling down out of the sky on the wind, over the lightning and under the rain. Burnham heard voices, and he drew up the 1909 Plan of Chicago, its Classical grid shimmering over the prairie and the swamp, straight lines vanishing into the distance, straight lines that for some reason impressed a visiting Rudyard Kipling “with a great horror.”

The angled streets Burnham was stuck with, the old trails of the Potawatomi and Wyandot and Miami Indians who for some reason never stayed here long. He couldn’t move or divert the angled roads — the 148 specters of the Fort Dearborn Massacre, marched down to the lakeshore dunes and killed by those same Indians in 1812, wouldn’t let him. Where the bodies fell, 18th and Prairie, the houses of rich men eventually sprouted, nestled in Burnham’s grid.

Burnham straightened the angles the best he could, tying them to cemeteries or “forest preserves” or canals. The canals were best. Controlled water is hardly water at all, and Chicago’s iron bridges lock it down further. Those bridges know the real reason that Chicago ran its River backward in 1900, at the turn of the century. (The River turns green every St. Patrick’s Day, a gift from Dionysus on John Wayne Gacy’s birthday.) Only seldom does the tamed water, the Gray Lady, claim her own. La Llorona still snatches children down by the Cal-Sag Canal. And on July 24, 1915, she pulled the steamer Eastland under the Chicago River. Between two of Burnham’s best cold iron seals, the Clark and LaSalle Street bridges, the River reached up and drowned 835 people, bodies in sodden stacks for blocks along West Washington Street. Moans still echo among the poles and piers on green River’s edge at night.



the chicago working

So Burnham's grid doesn't quite hold. Some of the ghosts will still walk up Stony Island or down Ogden, and Resurrection Mary herself rides the oldest road of all, Archer Avenue, on foggy nights. By the end Burnham had to be buried on an island, surrounded by controlled water, pinned in his grid in Graceland Cemetery. He's not the worst off. Railroad magnate George Pullman lies nearby, American pharaoh entombed in a Pullman sleeper car, criss-crossed with steel rails and encased in a block of concrete. Perhaps he feared the ghosts of the 13 men gunned down in the Pullman Strike of 1894 more than he feared the voices in his own rails.

But in Chicago everything intersects, on the El, on the ground, or somewhere underneath. They say if you stand at State and Madison long enough, you'll see everyone you know in this world or the next. And if you stand at the right places in Chicago, you'll see the same shades come back. The Pullman Strikers, hearing voices of their own, seeing their death coming down the broad streets of the South Side, burned down the White City, the perfect City of Beauty that Daniel Burnham built for the 1893 World's Fair. Burnham laced it with tame canals dug through Hyde Park, the buildings faultless models of Roman rationality. Burnham's partner John Wellborn Root had a different vision. Root heard untold harmonies of his own; he wanted to build the White City on "authentic Egyptian designs" but he died suddenly, in 1891. Burnham's voices were louder.

The Fair brought a million tourists to the city, strangers on the trains eager to see the future walking down Burnham's boulevards, to catch its reflection in Burnham's canals. And some of the strangers vanished. The dashing "inventor" H.H. Holmes murdered 40 — or was it 60? — of them, all young women. He boiled them in acid or eviscerated them in Iron Maidens or choked them in gas chambers beneath his "Murder Castle" just a streetcar ride away from the Fair, down the rails on 63rd Street in bucolic Englewood. Today the site of Holmes' Murder Castle is a slouching post office, and Englewood is a blasted heath, and only dogs hear the voice of what still lurks there. He had a devil in him, Holmes said at his trial. He was hung high from a special gallows, and they buried him in a block of concrete just like they would George Pullman, and the Murder Castle burst into spontaneous flames in August of 1894, a month after the White City burned down.

Fire and murder are no strangers in Chicago. They ramble around town like old friends. They drop by Richard Speck's hunting ground on East 100th, remember the "fireproof" LaSalle Hotel and the childish screams from Our Lady of Angels in 1958. They drink to Mrs. O'Leary's barn and to Dillinger's alley behind the Biograph, and to Leopold and Loeb's razed Hyde Park mansions, and to the perfect blend of fire and murder

at Haymarket Square. And they drink to absent friends: Hymie Weiss, bleeding like the bullet holes in the cornerstone of Holy Name Cathedral where he died. Dion O'Banion, shot in the gut, smelling the flowers that would bloom at his funeral. The blood-spattered dog howling over five bodies on Valentine's Day in a garage on Clark Street. In these last toasts it seems like murder has the best of it, but fire is there.

The fire this time was poured over ice, and buried under water. It was that same firewater that the fur-trapper John Kinzie sold to the Indians just before Fort Dearborn; Dionysus reborn in the frenzies of the Colosimo Mob and the Moran Gang and the Capone Outfit and all the rest. (Like Capone, Kinzie knew how to handle competition — one hot June night Kinzie buried an axe a foot deep in his fur-trapping rival Jean LaLime, and he got his son elected the first Mayor and Kinzie Street named after him. That's the Chicago way.) Over 1,100 gangland killings in Chicago since 1919, and only 14 convictions. A thousand dead bodies dropped in the River for the Gray Lady or buried in cornfields feeding Ceres, goddess of grain. Some wore concrete into the Underworld, like Holmes and Pullman. Some still walk down Wabash under the El, screaming or whining like a blood-covered dog.

Chicago's spirit howls: chants of Dionysus and sobs of Ceres and the Gray Lady, the voices of Burnham's angels and Root's Egyptian harmonies, the muttering of the steel rails above the streets and in the buildings' skins. And always the roar of fire. The Iroquois Theater Fire of 1906 broke out during a performance of "Mr. Bluebeard" — a lighthearted romp about a murderer with a castle full of dead women. The blaze chorused on Randolph Street, in the shadow of John Wellborn Root's last building, the Masonic Temple, the tallest building in America. Root's "Egyptian designs" lurked within its steel frame, glowing as the flames consumed 600 people half a block away.

Since 1906, the buildings have only grown taller — the Board of Trade Building on LaSalle Street, designed by Root's son in 1930 and topped with a statue of hungry Ceres. (Like Chicago, Ceres watches her daughter descend into Hell and does nothing.) The Hancock Building, crossed steel like Pullman's sarcophagus laddering up 100 stories to the very wingtips of the Watchers in the Skies, standing tall on steel piers driven down through Kinzie's swamps to bedrock, a shining trapezohedron bridging Heaven and Hell. And at the very center point of Burnham's "noble Plan" the Sears Tower scrapes the sky, carrying the words of the El tracks and the hum of the grid up its steel skeleton to the tip of its radio mast and thence to distant stars. Egyptians and Mayans, Assyrians and Tibetans, dream beneath its shadow, and in the eldritch purple glow of a Chicago night, the towers speak to Burnham's angels, and move a bit with terrible intent.

Chicago Workings

"Chicago Workings" is a complete supernatural thriller story for your World of Darkness chronicle. Only you, as the Storyteller, should read this product initially. What follows is a frank how-to guide to playing out this story with your troupe, using the game rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Think of this product as a story kit, as if you'd bought a piece of modern furniture and brought it home in a big flat box. Inside, you'll find all the parts you need to build this story at home, through play. The tools you need to put this story together are in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. When you get your troupe together, you'll use all these parts to build something together. It might not look quite the picture on the box, but that's fine. Your troupe doesn't get together to look at a story, it gets together to build them.

So this is a nuts-and-bolts thing. The parts in this kit are designed to make the actual job of being a Storyteller easier, to make the craft of Storytelling fast and fun for you. The heavy artful majesty you've read about — the transcendent game experiences that shock and satisfy as well as any novel — those come simply from doing a great job. Everything in here is intended to take up the slack so you can focus on doing that great job.

The basic parts that make up this story are simple: Storyteller characters and scenes. Each of them can be used in different ways to keep the story building towards its climactic end.

RELATED TITLES

Though you don't need additional books, this story was built using:



**World of
Darkness:
Chicago**

**World of
Darkness:
Antagonists**



Overview

When a new neighbor moves into the characters' neighborhood, they become the final hinge in a fifty-year-old secret struggle between the ghosts of two Chicago geomancers. The fate of their occult conflict is in the characters' hands.

Simon Ellsworth and John Burgess used to be friends. They met as apprentices in the halls of a prestigious architectural firm in Chicago and got to know each other while commiserating over grunt work. They were seated next to each other, hunched over drafting tables in a wide office planted with rows of apprentices, each hoping to be hand-picked by a higher-up in a fine black suit. All the apprentices sat facing a row of wide windows, looking out on the top floors of Chicago skyscrapers against the bold blue band of the lake. With that skyline to inspire them, the apprentices hand-copied the designs of their bosses during the week, and pitched their own designs on Fridays. Ellsworth and Burgess were passed over every time.

Ellsworth wanted to follow in the footsteps of the old guard of the Chicago School, Burgess wanted to be on the cutting edge of modern design. They never agreed on anything work-related, but they felt like a good pairing, each strong where the other was weak. Together they believed they could create a revolutionary new design and pull themselves out of the apprentice farm. They spent weekends plumbing through trade magazines and history books at the palatial Chicago Public Library on Washington Street and stayed late in the firm's archives, looking for a hypothetical project to design and pitch.

One night, in the dark stacks of the firm's private archives, they stumbled on a collection of handwritten papers tied shut in a flaking leather folio and tucked behind accordion folders of old apprentices' sketches. A paper label glued to the front read, "Chicago Workings." The papers were studies of Chicago architecture and, seemingly, notes taken during some kind of meeting or lecture. They contained diagrams of townhouses and skyscrapers built before 1900, overlaid with geometric schematics; maps of the city studded with little sun- and moon-shapes, connected in a complex grid of dotted lines; lists of addresses and quasi-mathematical formulae that took into account variables like " x = purchased under a new moon" and " n = inhabited by a man with n children." They were mystified... and captivated.

Each of them snuck a half of the folio out of the firm and studied it in depth for months. Though it contained only fragmentary notes

and observations, they both managed to understand the general ideas of the papers: The city could be more than simply inhabited, it could be tapped into. A citizen resides within a city, but a builder develops a relationship with it. A city resonates with the power and the pathos that is put into it, and that resonance can be received by those with a grip on it. The buildings are transceivers for the wisdom of the city and those who made it what it is. That wisdom is embodied in angels in the architecture, the mystic workings of Chicago, the charge that makes its geomantic machinery run.

The great architects at the turn of the century had rattled Chicago's steel frame with the hammers of their genius. Ellsworth and Burgess planned to grab onto that thrumming frame and take in that genius.

But they couldn't agree on how to do it. They couldn't agree who should maintain control of what portions of the Chicago Working Folio or just what benefits they would attempt to derive from their study of sacred geometry and the city's mystical grid. Each withheld information, a few pages of the Folio, from the other. Their friendship fell apart, and with it their trust.

Each went his own way with a portion of the Folio and tried to make his own impact on the city. At first, they weren't working against each other, but that didn't last. As each bought up and renovated properties throughout the city according to the principles he'd learned of sacred geometry, each created his own mystical matrix that acted on, and reacted to, the resonance of the city. Those matrices interfered with each other, causing spiritual static and diminishing the power of both their works.

For decades they competed with each other, buying up and altering properties throughout Chicago for the purposes of improving their own personal attunement to the city. It was a complex game of capturing and controlling territory in the city, with dozens of small victories and small reversals over the years, which eventually took their toll.

Their ignorant misuse of half-understood mysticism altered their fortunes and their bodies. Ellsworth got sick with cancer, Burgess died from pneumonia. Ellsworth, thinking his molestation of Burgess's mystic grid had killed him, left Chicago ashamed.

But Burgess wasn't truly dead. He had his body planted like a seed in the ground beneath one of his properties. Installed into his own grid. He was speaking through the thrum of the city now, resonating in his own mystic frames. Through his buildings he maintained his will and continued to expand his influence on the Chicago workings.

Enter the players' characters.

Ellsworth moves back to Chicago, hoping to make a positive contribution to the neighborhoods that were a part of his old mystic grid before he dies. He wants his legacy to be positive resonance, a sense of pride in the places he renovated. Upon his return, he and his live-in nurse, Richard, moves in near one of the players' characters. Maybe he becomes their new landlord or next-door neighbor.

In his nineties now, Ellsworth is something of a talker. He relates a bit of his belief and what he knows about the city's history to the characters. These are quiet but somewhat spooky encounters in which he tells the characters tales bordering on ghost stories — the sort of stuff you read about in the prologue to this story. He confides in them, desperate for someone who will listen the story of a lonely old man. He whets their appetites.

But tragedy strikes! The characters are witness to a fire that sweeps Ellsworth's apartment while his nurse, Richard, is out. They catch sight of figures moving around in the apartment but these figures never emerge. If the characters go to investigate (or to rescue Ellsworth!) they find no one in the apartment except for Ellsworth, already dead. The place is thick with smoke and piles of plaster and splintered wood scattered in the room all around him — though the ceiling hasn't yet started to come down and there doesn't seem to be enough damage to the walls to account for all that plaster and wood. The characters may be able to salvage some of Ellsworth's historic materials, but there's no hope for the old man.

What's happened is this: Burgess, acting through his mystically enslaved Agents, has paid Richard, the nurse, to leave Ellsworth's security system off and his doors unlocked. Richard presumed someone was going to rob the old man, but he wasn't expecting a murder. Burgess sent a handful of lifeless creatures, born through a mystic rite, to start the fire in Ellsworth's building and make sure the old man didn't escape. Their work completed, the creatures disintegrated into the plaster, nails and wood they were made from.

Richard is the weak link in the crime. He's not sure he can be a party to murder. If the characters don't find him, he finds them and confesses what he knows — including Ellsworth's final wish: to have his ashes buried in a special stone box in the ground on one of his properties in Chicago. Richard's afraid of the old man's "paranormal talk," though, and doesn't think he can go to the police with what he knows. Not only is Richard an accomplice in a murder, but he's getting more scared every night by the person who asked him to help.

When Richard left, he took the key to Ellsworth's safe-deposit box, containing his will and other precious papers. Richard turns that over to the characters to ease his conscience. Then he tries to skip town.

But first, Richard can also show them what it's like inside an apartment building owned by John Burgess. The characters find that everyone in the building is virtually identical, like Stepford Tenants. If they probe further, they even find Burgess's zombie-like minions being born in the building's basement. It should be clear to them now: They've become involved in something more grotesque than simple murder and arson.

Ellsworth's documents explain his desire to be buried at one of his Chicago properties. They also lead the characters to the hiding place of Ellsworth's half of the Chicago Working Folio — the notes Ellsworth used to teach himself about sacred geometry and the mystic grid. With this information, the characters understand the basics of Burgess's war with Ellsworth: each was striving to control the spiritual resonance of his part of the city, and each was getting in the other one's way.

The papers show the characters how to bury Ellsworth such that his spirit will be infused in the sacred architecture of the mystic grid created by the properties he owns. To do this, they'll have to convince residents in one of Ellsworth's old buildings willing to let someone be buried on the lot. This unusual Social challenge is a chance for macabre humor or suspense, depending on how honest the characters are when they ask permission. This assumes the characters choose to give Ellsworth the power they're likely to take from Burgess. That choice is ultimately up to them: will they help the ghost of Ellsworth influence the spiritual resonance of his properties or will they choose to prevent his hauntings, beneficial or not.

The papers also reveal how to hear the voices of Chicago's angels, how to tune temporarily into the workings of Chicago, and thereby communicate with Ellsworth again and find out what can be done about Burgess. If they're willing, Ellsworth tells them how to find Burgess and break his mystic control over his territory. To do it, they must destroy Burgess's mystic connection to his properties. Locate the keystone property in Burgess's mystic grid and separate Burgess's corpse from it.

There's symmetry here. Ellsworth and Burgess are the two circles, and the characters are the vesica piscis, caught in the middle. Ellsworth and Burgess are different, but the same. Congruent. Burgess enslaves his agents with mystic rites, Ellsworth persuades the characters to help

him through human interaction. But ultimately Burgess and Ellsworth want the same things: to maintain his own geomantic grid in the city and to be free of the other.

The characters must choose: They can take justice into their own hands and risk their lives to stop the ghost of John Michael Burgess, or they can refuse to tamper with mystic powers they don't understand and let a greedy ghost get away with the murder of their friend.

Backstory

Chicago has long been a city of famous architecture and historically significant architects. Burgess and Ellsworth each had different visions for the city, based on different philosophies of life and art. A basic understanding of their field can give you a valuable handle on these characters and an ability to invent dialogue for them that sounds more informed about architecture than the average person probably is.

John Michael Burgess was an inconsistent modernist. Every few months he became distracted by some new approach or style, often depending on the attention it was getting in the trade publications. Burgess loved architecture for the attention it drew from ordinary people — and for the good fortune it could draw to an architect. He admired the work and philosophies of Philip Johnson, an American architect and fascist. Johnson attempted to found an American fascist party in the 1930s, attended a Hitler rally in Nuremberg in 1938 and visited Poland just after the invasion. Back in America, the pressure of the US involvement in WWII (and an FBI investigation) prompted Johnson to renounce fascism in 1940, the same year the Burgess met Ellsworth while apprenticing at Holabird & Root.

That same year, Burgess lost interest in Johnson's work (as a result of Johnson's surrender to social pressure) and became enamored with the Beverly Hills-style modernism (and money) of Paul László, who *Time* magazine would call "the Millionaire's Architect" in 1952. Burgess was attracted to László's fame and celebrity client list as much as his designs. When Burgess eventually, inevitably lost interest in László, he took to developing a personal style based on Frank Lloyd Wright's increasingly stark modernism and the most severely industrial elements of art deco. When he opened his private design firm in 1953, Burgess had a reputation among Chicago architects for cold, dead designs and no reputation among non-architects at all.

That reputation persisted until the 1970s, when Burgess's affordability trumped all other concerns for many clients. Throughout the

city's urban renewal phase of the era, Burgess snatched up sub-contracts for work on municipally funded housing projects and bloodless commercial properties. Through these contacts he eventually entered the real-estate market on his own and took up a new full-time job: renovation. From the mid-1970s until his death in 1996, Burgess made his fortune buying derelict properties and renovating them in shiny, bland modern styles.

Each renovation was a small point in a complex mystical matrix across the city. Each property was another dot to connect on his mystic geometric graph, another etch in the stone of the city, another piece on the game board against Ellsworth. When he died, he had resonant properties all over the city.

Simon Ellsworth, by comparison, was hung up on the architects of Chicago's past, from John Wellborn Root and Daniel Burnham to Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. Ellsworth's style, from his first days at Holabird & Root to his last days as a working designer in Chicago, was eclecticism. He wanted to revive the ornate art nouveau styles of Sullivan and return to the soaring verticality of the first turn-of-the-century skyscrapers. Unfortunately, Ellsworth became a professional architect in the 1950s, when glass and steel were in vogue in Chicago, and his work was never singled out by the powers that were at the city's great firms. His career at Holabird & Root wasn't going anywhere.

Ellsworth left Holabird & Root the same year as Burgess and opened his own design firm on the South Side. For many years, Ellsworth handled low-budget, low-profile projects almost exclusively. He used to joke that he'd built additions and designed parking lots for every grade school on the South Side. He gave every project its own ornamental details, from Oriental arches and art nouveau fixtures to Gothic windows and decorative gargoyles. Just as his flourishes were beginning to get special attention in the local scene, Ellsworth was struck by a drunk driver — just outside a property that happened to have been renovated by Burgess. Ellsworth's legs were shattered and he spent a year learning to walk again.

Unwilling to accept the "accident" as anything other than a mystic attack by Burgess, Ellsworth set out to create his own mystical matrix of properties to counteract Burgess's. Now there were two sets of pieces in play on the arcane grid of the city. As they renovated and razed buildings throughout the city, bought and sold properties from the North Side to the South, they were altering the spiritual resonance of the neighborhoods they inhabited and changing each other's fortunes.

In 1995, two days after a West Side school he'd designed burned in the night, Ellsworth was diagnosed with leukemia. The next week he bought a historic mixed-use building in Lincoln Park — which had been Burgess's territory for years — and returned to his oncologist. The prognosis was good: Ellsworth's cancer was asymptomatic and not currently life-threatening. But Ellsworth knew Burgess had dealt him a blow he could never truly recover from, even if Ellsworth wasn't sure how he'd done it.

In the winter of 1996, Ellsworth got his revenge, but it was more than he'd planned for. Ellsworth quietly arranged for the heat to go out in several of Burgess's North Side townhouses and apartment buildings. Radiant water-heaters rattled and went cold, pilot lights were packed shut with spackle or cement. Snow fell. Ellsworth had intended a night-long nuisance, a frigid warning, but four snowy days later, Burgess died of complications from pneumonia (just as John Wellborn Root had died in 1891).

Ellsworth never forgave himself. He stopped renovating properties to maintain his matrix. The points on his geometric grid fell into disrepair. His mystic influence faded. He spent long nights sitting on fire escapes and stoops listening to the city's angels, but he no longer rattled the rails. When his cancer tried to kill him in 1999, he didn't consider that it might have been Burgess spurring it on. He had been at Burgess's funeral, after all, seen him buried like a man, not a foundation stone. He mistook the sound of Burgess in the rails for guilty echoes.

Ellsworth moved to Rochester, Minnesota, to work on charity projects through Holabird & Root's regional office and to undergo treatment for his leukemia. He tried to forget about Chicago's angels. Tried to get over his guilt.

But he never stopped watching. What he saw in the papers was developer after developer gentrifying block after block of historic buildings, not out of local pride or a love for the neighborhood character, but out of greed. Neighborhoods that should have been renewed and revitalized were instead undergoing a complete change of blood, forcing out long-time residents in favor of newer, wealthier ones. It broke his heart.

Then it revealed itself to him. Burgess was not dead. He had planned well beyond Ellsworth's expectations and had his corpse laid into the city — somewhere — as the Chicago Workings Folio described. Burgess's greed was spreading through the city like asbestos on the wind.

In 2006, Ellsworth returned to do what he could: die in Chicago and hope to shape the city from within the remains of his old mystic grid.

TIMELINE

1940: Burgess and Ellsworth meet as apprentice draftsmen at Holabird & Root. Burgess imitates the styles of Philip Johnson and Paul László. Ellsworth hopes to resurrect the Chicago School style.

1949: Burgess and Ellsworth discover the so-called Chicago Workings Folio, a notebook containing hand-written notes about mystic architecture and sacred geometry in Chicago.

1951: A dispute over ownership of the Chicago Workings Folio puts an end to the friendship between Burgess and Ellsworth. Each hides his parts of the Folio from the other.

1953: Burgess and Ellsworth go to work for different architectural firms in the city. Their old dispute develops into an intense personal and professional rivalry.

1953: Burgess and Ellsworth wage a secret, occult war against each other, both attempting to influence the growth and development of the city to suit their own tastes. For 46 years both designers attempt to alter the architectural resonance of the city through small, calculated constructions, renovations, expansions and tear-downs throughout the city.

1995: Ellsworth is diagnosed with leukemia.

1996: Burgess dies of complications from pneumonia. Ellsworth knows this won't put an end to their conflict. The designs Burgess has put into motion continue to subtly stymie and oppose Ellsworth's success.

1999: Ellsworth's leukemia becomes life threatening. He moves temporarily to Rochester to undergo treatment.

2006: Ellsworth moves back to Chicago, hoping to make a few more small contributions to the city's architecture and people before he succumbs to his cancer, but Burgess turns out to be much more powerful after all these years than Ellsworth anticipated.

Sacred Geometry and the Mystic Matrix

You don't need to know exactly how the mystical power struggle of Ellsworth and Burgess worked. They didn't. All you need to know is enough for the players to understand the goal of the story — and to provide the sense of a complex mystical scheme in the background. To that end, here's a little bit of information about sacred geometry and the Chicago Working Folio, so you can feel ready to run this story.

Sacred geometry is a belief system (actually any of a variety of belief systems) that regards mathematics, especially geometry, as the true workings of the cosmos on a spiritual or religious level. It is, in a way, a geometric counterpart to numerology. Pythagoras, probably the most famous name in sacred geometry, is one of the earliest solidifiers of the belief. He and his followers were philosopher mathematicians who believed that a spiritual appreciation for mathematical understanding offered insight into the architecture of the cosmos. For the Pythagoreans, geometry was the study not only of terrestrial architecture but the architecture of the universe.

Pythagorean philosophy finds symbolism in geometric truths. The unfolding revelations of geometric forms can be seen to represent an unfolding understanding of the universe. Likewise, as geometry reveals patterns and occult relationships in mathematics, so can it inspire the recognition of patterns and hidden relationships in the physical (and, perhaps, spiritual) world. In this story, Ellsworth and Burgess draw from two common models of sacred geometry: **the vesica piscis** and **the golden ratio**.

The Vesica Piscis

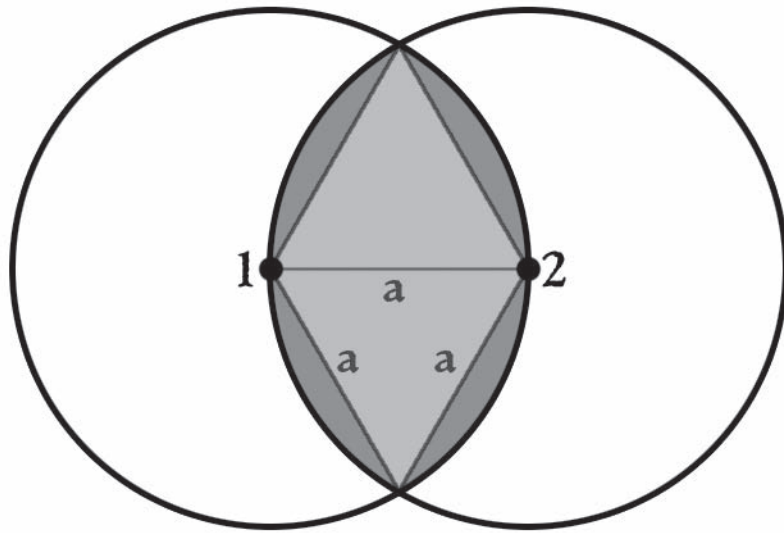
This information can be shared with the player of any character with at least one dot in the Occult Skill, as described in the scenes "Tales of Angels" and "Inside A Burgess Property."

The *vesica piscis* ("bladder of the fish") is a geometric curiosity regarded by Pythagoreans and others as geometrically sacred. It represents the formation of the universe and the development of life. Some claim that its symbolism links early Christians to ancient Pythagoreans as well.

First, begin with a point (1), the smallest and simplest concept in geometry. Then step outward to a second point (2), the smallest conceptual leap from a single point, and reveal the truth of the second dimension. If there are two points, there must be space between them, and that space is expressed as a span (*a*). That span, however, could stretch out from either point in any direction — it's a radius. A radius reveals a circle. Two points reveals two circles. The center of each circle, our two points, is also a point on the other circle. This union creates an almond-shaped space — a new appreciable space — that exists within both circles.

That new space is the vesica piscis. Its shape defines two new points, the pointed "tips" where its parent circles intersect. Drawing lines from those points to the original center-points of the circles reveals

the vesica piscis



two equilateral triangles whose sides equal a . The points have begat circles which have begat the vesica piscis which has begat triangles. From those two points a world is being created. By adding other points equidistant from points 1 and 2, more and more fertile areas can be created. This repetition can be completed into infinity.

The vesica piscis represents creation and fertility. It's an image of cellular replication. In some traditions, it and its component circles symbolize female genitalia or ovum. Displayed horizontally the almond shape may symbolize a fish (the fanning curves of the circles bending away from one tip are sometimes depicted as a tail). To the Pythagoreans the ratio of the vesica pisci's height to width (265:153) is a holy value. In the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ was reported to have created 153 fishes (the miracle may have had a different meaning for Pythagoreans of the time).

The Golden Ratio

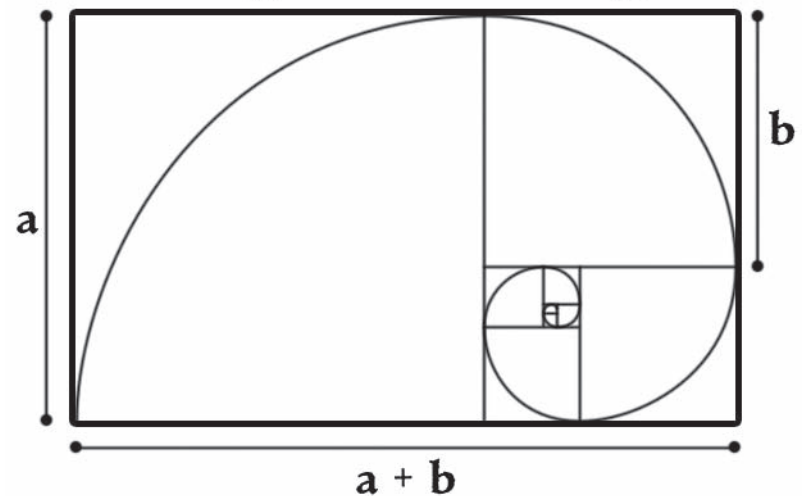
This information can be shared with the player of any character with at least one dot in the Occult Skill, as described in the scenes "Tales of Angels" and "Inside A Burgess Property."

The golden ratio (or golden section, or a hundred other "golden" names) is another geometric discovery attributed to the Pythagoreans. It exemplifies the beautiful patterning inherent in geometry (and by

extension, the universe) — and how that patterning is irrational and beautiful. The golden ratio defines a logarithmic spiral that personifies the universe.

To understand the golden ratio, take a rectangle with a short side (a) and a long side ($a + b$). Draw a line through the rectangle such that a square with sides equal to a is created. This leaves a rectangle remaining, with sides equal to a and b . This new rectangle can be divided just as you divided the first one, leaving another rectangle, which can also be divided, and so on, *ad infinitum*. The recurring process creates the beautiful, endlessly unspooling golden spiral.

the golden rectangle



The golden ratio reveals itself to be an irrational number when figured algebraically. In short, if the lowest possible expression of the golden ratio is a/b , then the golden spiral demonstrates that a/b equals b divided by $a - b$. But if a/b is the lowest value of the ratio than $b/(a - b)$ is lower than the lowest. How can its smallest form reveal a smaller version of its form? It contradicts itself into infinity. (To see the spiral expand outward, do a web search for "Fibonacci numbers.")

The Chicago Working Folio

Only the original (unknown) creator of the Chicago Working Folio, Ellsworth and Burgess have heard of this work. Characters can learn this information only when revealed during relevant scenes.

Look back at the triangles in the vesica pisci. Before those lines were drawn, those triangles did not necessarily exist. They are whole new things within the circles, sharing points with the circles but not actually parts of the circles at all. New, artificial spaces have been created within the natural spaces, using the grace of the radius that existed in a new way. This is the symbolic root of the mystic concepts sketched out, but never completed, in the Chicago Working Folio.

By identifying and linking points in the natural spiritual landscape — on the invisible but tangible expanding circles of the cosmos — an architect can capture the sacred space between those points in spans of spiritual power. Those triangles can be extrapolated out into infinity as well, as new points are discovered are linked into the web of triangles to create new triangles.

In the first few pages of the Folio, this idea is used to describe how a person impresses spans onto a personal space through repetition. That is, repeated spiritual input and emotional resonance can define an area. A space that is subject to repetitive emotional resonance (the three sides of the triangle) will create an area (the area of the triangle) defined by that same emotional resonance. (This emotional imprinting on an area is the same kind of spiritual resonance explained in *Werewolf and Mage*.) The revolutionary ideas of the Chicago Working theorems lay in the way it redefines scale of resonance and the ways that resonance can be manipulated and redistributed.

What if each point on the expanding web of triangles was a building? Then the areas of spiritual resonance being defined could cover whole blocks of a city.

What if the lines radiating from each point to create the areas of influence could be spiritually linked to transmit at a shared spiritual frequency? Then whoever did the transmitting could define the type of spiritual resonance in each area.

So What's It Mean?

Simply put, each property prepared according to the principles of the Folio becomes another point in the architect's mystic network. The spokes between points carry spiritual resonance throughout the network. The more points the architect has giving off the same resonance, the stronger the signal and the greater the control he has over that resonance.

Resonance — the frequency at which the buildings hum and the rails rattle — can impact a variety of spiritual and arcane qualities within any area of the network. Emotions sway, luck changes, spirits are attracted

and physical changes can be wrought. In the areas defined by Burgess's network, people become greedy and Spartan. In the areas defined by Ellsworth's network, people become proud of their neighborhoods and protective of their people.

But Ellsworth and Burgess were each working from portions of unfinished notes they didn't fully grasp. They were building their networks in the dark, adding buildings and resonance with little awareness of the spiritual consequences. Their matrices overlapped and interfered with each other. Their competing resonances created accidental disharmonies and spiritual static. Their feud transformed each other's bodies with illness.

As the architects of their networks, each had a certain sympathetic connection to their creations. Each was affected by his matrix of properties no matter where he went.

But Burgess was the first to attempt the greatest feat of the philosophy. He encased himself in stone and entombed himself in one of his properties, thereby installing himself within the spiritual matrix he created. He unlocked a new level of control over his network, and an ability to transform the state of the points that defined it. Unfortunately, Burgess had long ago forgotten that those points in his network were *real* houses inhabited by *real* people with lives of their own.

What Burgess and Ellsworth Know

Burgess and Ellsworth each ended up with different halves of the Chicago Working Folio. It was divided between the two of them, and the place where their knowledge overlapped — the creation of mystic grids — became their battleground.

Ellsworth had the fundamental notes, including the secret techniques of tuning into the voices of the city's angels. He understands how to create and maintain a geomantic grid and how to plug himself into it by burying his body in stone, in a part of the grid. But Ellsworth doesn't know how to impose his will on others through geomantic resonance and doesn't know how to create Burgess's zombie-like Minions.

Ellsworth's share of the Chicago Working notes are hidden in the Chicago Cultural Center on Washington Street. (See the scene "The Folio.")

Burgess, meanwhile, had the later notes from the Folio, including the theoretical techniques of merging one's spirit with space through sacred geometry and the rite through which the vesica piscis can be used to fashion life-like creatures. Many of these notes were incomplete in Burgess's half of the Folio, and it's likely that his usurpation of his Agents' bodies has more to do with the resonance of his phenomenal greed than any particular geomantic rite.

Burgess's half of the Chicago Working Folio is presumed destroyed (to keep anyone else from learning its secrets), though that's ultimately up to you. In this story it's just a background detail explaining his power. You may decide that Burgess's half is still hidden in the city somewhere, waiting to be discovered.

Theme

Others reap what you sow. The things you do live on after you're gone. The places where we live also live in us.

On some level this story is about the ways people affect those around them, the way that people in close proximity are constantly acting on one another. How a neighbor changes the way you see the world. How a stranger changes the way you treat your employer. How the person who built your house changes the way you live.

The spaces we inhabit seem so separate, but they are also interconnected. In the city, we live in apartments and houses built decades earlier by people we've never met and, usually, have never heard of. We live *inside* their work, in places others have held dear before us and others will cherish after we're gone. We live inside the houses of others without knowing why they were built as they were.

Ellsworth and Burgess spent their lives acting against each other in ways they barely understood. They were groping in the dark, pulling on strings in a desperate struggle to get through to the other one. To change the way the other thought and lived. And their struggle begets struggle.

Each of them has projected a portion of his self onto his part of the city. Ellsworth wanted to feel good about his work and he wanted others to feel good about the places in which they lived. Burgess wanted to feel about his work, too, and he thought that with enough money and enough property he could prove its value to himself.

Mood

Huge mystic mechanisms turning in the background. Being in the midst of something vast and complex, struggling ahead on the little glimpses you can see of the larger whole. The sense of unknowable things working in the background must be palpable.

Everywhere, from the first scene until the characters step into Burgess's house, there must be background action going on. Cars grind through snow outside, past people waiting for the bus, who are being watched by the lady in her kitchen upstairs, who has the news on in

the background, which shows the traffic backing up on the Dan Ryan, where that car that drove by is headed. Snippets of sound come from all over, out of windows open a crack, through car doors, from inside the apartment upstairs, from inside the restaurant you walk past and from the wind as it gets scraped off the sky by Ceres atop the Board of Trade building.

Finding the truth of Ellsworth's death in this story should be like finding one cable in the workings of a giant engine and following it, hand over hand, to the outlet in the wall.

USING CHICAGO WORKING WITH VAMPIRE, WEREWOLF, MAGE OR PROMETHEAN

This story is written for mortal characters, but it could, with some adjustments by a Storyteller, be run for supernatural characters. It presents little challenge for such characters, however; it might work best as a short introduction to a greater mystery, such as the identity of the original author of the Chicago Working Folio. Below are some suggestions for how to make this story important for supernatural characters.



Vampires: Perhaps a character's new haven is in one of Burgess's buildings, and he's beginning to suspect first hand the strangeness of such places. Maybe one of his ghouls or trusted Retainers is co-opted by Burgess as an Agent, prompting the vampire to investigate what rival of his is stealing his pawns. It's also possible that Ellsworth has sparked some remembrance in the vampire of what it meant to be human. Revenging Ellsworth helps the character cling to that feeling.



Werewolves: Ellsworth's and Burgess's mystic grids almost surely intersect a locus or two here and there. Spirits who wish to reside in these places might ask the characters to clear them out first, to make their resonance more palatable to natural spirits.



Mages: Was the author of the Folio a mage? Did he leave other arcane works in the city, waiting to be discovered? Was one of the characters his apprentice, or was he a criminal condemned by the Consilium and now the characters are tasked with collecting all evidence of his work? The characters might well be interested in taking control of the mystic grids, once they've dealt with their previous owners.

Promethean: Perhaps Ellsworth's grid suffers a



Promethean's Wasteland effect at a slower rate than elsewhere, tempting a nomad or throng of them to stay in the city for a while. The kindness Ellsworth bestows on them (he seems unaffected by their Disquiet, protected as he is by his grid) is invaluable, and well worth rewarding by helping the old man even after his death. Indeed, burying Ellsworth and uninstalling Burgess might serve as a milestone for one or more of the characters.

Storyteller Characters and Antagonists

The conflict between the players' characters, on behalf of Simon Ellsworth, and the designs of the dead architect, John Michael Burgess, is the source of all the action in this story. The best thing you, as the Storyteller, can do to prepare is to understand Ellsworth and Burgess. Understanding Ellsworth enables you to make his importance felt throughout the whole story, even after his death, and use that importance to motivate the players' characters. Understanding Burgess, especially his goals and his methods, gives you the freedom to react to the characters, to mold and expand the story around them, wherever the players' decisions take them. With a good grip on these characters, and the supporting cast, you'll find it much easier to adapt the scenes in each act to whatever unique story unfolds at the game table.

These characters are yours to control; use them however you can to guide, direct or lure the players' characters toward the next scenes. Sometimes you can tip off the players, hinting through dialogue or narration that it's time for them to wrap up one scene and move the story to a new location. You describe the cab driver "leaning out the driver-side window, holding his hat on his head in the wind. 'I'm not sticking around here, man! But you'll never get another cab down here. You coming or not?' he shouts over the rain." That sends a signal to the players that it's time to move on. "The light in the woods is weakening, turning from an afternoon's orange glow toward dusk's dead gray. Not much time left to get out of here before dark," you say, for the same effect.

The same technique can be used to lure characters into another specific scene. An Ally might get up off the couch at the club where they've been negotiating with the characters, stretch her arms and say, "All right, it's late. I got too much to do tomorrow. Give me a ride back

uptown?" On that ride through town, the characters see the pulsing lights of squad cars and stumble on the story's next crime scene.

The players may see right through your subtlety when the Ally asks for a ride, but that's fine. You don't want to be so subtle that no one catches on. Remember, you *want* to communicate ideas to the players. You want to be understood. It's not enough to hope they'll ask the right questions or stumble onto the next scene. A Storytelling game should never devolve into the frustrating boredom of a pixel hunt in a video game, because the supreme hint guide is right there with them. It's you. Getting stuck is no fun, and fun is what everybody showed up for. A great story that grinds that to a halt isn't so great. It's certainly not better than a great story with a few hiccups and bumps along the way. So, when you have to, sacrifice subtlety to get the players playing again. Sometimes it's all right to say, point blank, "The convenience store clerk doesn't know anything else."

And, of course, some of these antagonists can challenge the characters directly. In this way, each character is another potential scene you can create to enrich or excite the story. Simply putting the characters alone in a splintering tenement with some of Burgess's zombie-like Minions creates a scene of suspense or action, for example, while putting the characters into Ellsworth's study with him one more time before his death could create a quiet, charmingly comic scene to throw his death into stark relief.

Simon Ellsworth's Plan

The public library of a great metropolis is appropriately the palace of the people. It is the one building which by its very nature is best fitted to exercise a strong refining and elevating influence on the masses.

— *Inland Architect Supplement*, vol. 30, no. 6, January 1898

Ellsworth doesn't have the domineering aims that Burgess does. Still, he has a desire to influence the course of his city's history by becoming a part of it. For him, however, that simply means leaving a mystic legacy behind for others to build on. Ellsworth hid his portion of the Chicago Working Folio in the old Chicago Public Library building at 78 Washington Street (now the Chicago Cultural Center) for just that purpose — so that some other young researcher working in those sacred halls might stumble on it one night. Ellsworth wants to leave great things behind for those who come next.

Ellsworth's plan to become a part of his mystic grid is simple: have his ashes buried on a property in his mystic grid, in the sacred cask he created to transmit his essence. To do that, he needs reliable executors

for his will. That's where things get tricky for Ellsworth. He can't create a legal will and testament listing the properties where his ashes can be buried, because Burgess could use such a list to break Ellsworth's grid. He'd hoped that Richard would bury him, but can't trust him not to just dump his ashes and piss away the inheritance.

So Ellsworth sets out trying to build bridges with people as soon as he arrives in the city. He can pay someone to accept his ashes on their property, but he doesn't want his installation to be about money. So Ellsworth doesn't have a foolproof plan yet, and Burgess's attack against him in the scene, "The Fire," comes before Ellsworth can commit to choosing his executors. Everything that happens after his death is just the movement of people's lives on the ripples of his half-finished plan. Whether or not Ellsworth gets what he wants is up to the characters.

Ellsworth's Properties

Strictly speaking, Ellsworth's mystically prepared properties can be anywhere you like. The scene "Burying Ellsworth" offers a few archetypal locations. In general, though, most of Ellsworth's geomantic grid runs from Englewood, on the South Side, up through Wicker Park and the Ukrainian Village on the West Side, where Burgess's and Ellsworth's networks collide.

Remember, it's not enough for Ellsworth to own or reside in a property. (In fact, he no longer owns most of the properties on his mystic grid, since he felt part of the artistic purpose of architecture was to pass it on to others.) Only those properties Ellsworth was able to mystically prepare according to the principles of sacred geometry are actual points in his mystic grid.

Simon Ellsworth. Architect

Quote: *The places where we live also live in us.*

Background: Simon was born in Rock Island, Illinois, but raised in Chicago from age 8. His family lived in Ukrainian Village and in Logan Square on the city's Near West Side until 1939 when Simon's parents died of influenza. He moved into a tiny apartment in a renovated Victorian house in the Washington Park neighborhood, between Englewood and Hyde Park. That house is now an empty lot, brimming with broken glass and spiked with used needles. He used to sit in the park and read articles by its planner, Frederick Law Olmstead, and dream of being an architect. He won his apprenticeship at Holabird & Root with his sketches alone — he'd had no formal education to rely on.

Ellsworth never started a family of his own. He always says he was

"busy with work," then winks and says, "but when I'm finished I'll settle down."

Description: He listens to you with one knotted finger in the air, at the ready. When you finish, he points it at you as if to say, "Exactly."

Today Simon Ellsworth is a withered man in a bow tie. He's all but bald and dotted with liver spots from his fingers to his face. His hands shake. He turns his whole body instead of his head. Most often he wears argyle V-neck sweaters or smoky cardigans and shiny loafers. His wardrobe and his vocabulary make him seem as though he never escaped the gravity of the 1950s. Yet he's no stranger to cell phones or computers — he uses email and the internet to keep up with real-estate and development news.

Storytelling Hints: It's vital that the players and their characters like Ellsworth. To make that happen, play to your audience. Ellsworth can be an earthy veteran with a surprising awareness of popular culture and a talent for cutting through bullshit, or he can be a talkative old coot with stories to tell from fifty years of Chicago history, or he can be the kindly but helpless relic just waiting out his years. Whatever his demeanor, he is certainly a generous person with an apartment full of junk to pass on to interested neighbors.

Ellsworth: "Oh, now that was a lovely one. I remember the day they tore it down, after it had burned. We drank a lot of whiskey that night."

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Geometry, Mathematics) 3, Computer (CAD) 2, Crafts (Architecture, Pottery) 4, Investigation (Research) 3, Medicine (Cancer) 1, Occult 2 (Sacred Geometry), Politics (Zoning Boards) 3, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Tennis) 1, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Drawing) 4, Persuasion (Seminar) 4, Socialize (Fund-Raising) 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Lie) 1

Merits: Contacts (Chicago City Hall, contractors, architecture, charities), Architectural Attunement: Chicago (see "Aftermath"), Resources 3, Retainer: Nurse (Richard) 2

Willpower: 7

Morality: 6

Virtue: Charity. Ellsworth has long had a reputation as a generous, charitable humanitarian. On the rare occasions now when he's out

and seeing people, he picks up the check, he loans out nice pens and says "keep it," he walks panhandlers into burger joints and buys them food. He was a frequent and popular speaker at charity dinners. He donates roughly the same worth as his monthly expenses.

Vice: Pride. Ellsworth was brought up to believe that a job he couldn't be proud of just wasn't finished yet. His pride drove him to deliver remarkable work for unremarkable projects. It also drove him to downplay and hide his illness until too late.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Size: 5

Health: 6

Richard. Ellsworth's Nurse

Quote: Yep. But you don't need that today, I'll get it tomorrow.

Background: Richard floated through high school, having decided early on that teachers were just penniless losers going through the motions like he was. A few years of shit jobs and crap money went by before he got kicked out of his parents house. He spent a year in a basement apartment in Pilsen, biding his time until he figured his parents felt guilty enough to loan him money. They paid for nursing school in Rochester, MN, and Richard's been stealing from the refrigerators of bed-ridden grandmothers ever since.

He was linked with Ellsworth by MediCourt, his medical temp agency, a year before Ellsworth arrived in Chicago. Richard was approached by one of Burgess's Agents as soon as Ellsworth's name starting appearing on condo offers in the city. Richard agreed to sell Ellsworth out for a great lease and some money before he even knew what it would cost Ellsworth. To his credit, he feels sort of bad about it now.

Description: His head and his eyes are never facing the same way. He faces down but looks up past his brow at you.

Richard keeps himself looking respectable for the sake of the nursing agency that gets him his clients, but he's toeing a line. He sometimes goes a week without shaving and seldom wears his uniform according to official standards. More often than not he just throws a dirty scrub top over a Metallica tee and substitutes dirty blue jeans for scrub pants. He wears the white jacket that the agency gave him when there's weather.

His hair is buzzed short all over, rounded to the shape of his scalp.

Some days his beard is just as long. He has the blocky build of a guy who used to be in shape but has been softening for a year or so. His skin is a vaguely drunk-looking red and his eyes are dark spots in shadowy circles. He's always bored.

Storytelling Hints: Richard is a listless punk who can barely muster enough interest in the world to hate a movie. Until his big scene he shouldn't seem like more than a bland twenty-something slacker meant to show just how polite and understanding Ellsworth is. Until his big scene, that's his real purpose: to help the players like Ellsworth. Everyone should be able to agree that Richard's a schmuck and Ellsworth is being too generous with him.

Richard fails a contested Social action: "Whatever, dude," he says, as if he was blowing you off. But there he goes, just like you asked.

Richard succeeds at a contested Social action: "Yeah, I'll get on that," he says. But he just sits there, picking his teeth.

Abilities:

Chores (dice pool 4) — *You can hear Richard clattering around in the kitchen, filling the dishwasher like a pouting child.* Richard spends most of his day doing regular chores for Ellsworth, from laundry and cooking to mail runs and grocery shopping. All these domestic activities are second nature to him, now. He doesn't think much about his chores (he thinks more about what to do with his salary), but neither to they take much thought. Use this dice pool to cover ordinary day-to-day activities governed by Skills like Crafts, Computer and Driving.

Medicine (dice pool 4) — *He looses an exact count of pills with a single practiced shake, thumbs the bottle shut in one hand and carries them pinned under two fingers while palming a glass of water.* When Ellsworth's taken them, Richard tosses the bottles back into the cabinet like shoes into a gym locker. Richard is a registered nurse, but not a great one. He gets by in positions like this one because he's good at reliably doing repetitive work, so doling out the same meds and running the same tests all day is doable for him. Medical procedures that he doesn't do on a regular basis are quickly forgotten.

Subterfuge (dice pool 6) — *"I was at the Thirsty Whale, the night it closed down, when this drunk dude was harassing all these chicks. And I was like, 'Shut it, dude. My dad's a judge and I'll give him your name off your ID at the bar and he'll have you getting pulled over every night for a year.' And we was all, like, silent and shit. That shut him up."* Though chores take up most of his day, Richard lies all day long. He makes up stories about his past, claims to be doing errands when he's in fact going to the movies and insists that he doesn't know "where that money on the hutch went, Mr. Ell." When it comes to feigning ignorance and pretending to be sorry, Richard's a natural.

John Michael Burgess's Design

As far as Burgess is concerned, he's already won. Ellsworth's mystic grid has gone unattended for years and Ellsworth seems to have given up the game. Burgess has installed himself into his mystic grid, thereby gaining a degree of immortality, and yet is still able to expand and improve his grid. All Burgess needs to do now is continue the gradual expansion of his power, mystically incorporating properties into his network and bringing in lucrative, respectable residents whose lifestyles contribute to the harmonious thrum of his grid.

To Burgess's mind, that means stability. And to Burgess's mind, "stability" means "wealth." He wants tenants whose wherewithal doesn't waver. Who can get sick, miss work, and still make rent.

Burgess's superstitious means of injecting some stability, some good fortune, into his network is to evoke the Roman goddess of luck, Fortuna, in his designs. Specifically he incorporates her Fortuna Redux aspect into his properties — Fortuna Redux's purview is the safe return of a person to his home. (Burgess's wooden coffin in Graceland Cemetery contains a statuette of Fortuna Redux instead of his corpse.) Burgess's take on Fortuna Redux is an image of a woman in neoclassical robes lifting a blindfold off of one eye and standing on a spoked wheel. This is meant to represent Fortuna cheating blind luck, choosing fortunes instead of trusting to the chance of the wheel.

Ellsworth's return to Chicago has the potential to upset Burgess's plans, though. Burgess thinks he is so close to feeling complete that he can't bear another setback. He kills Ellsworth to protect his investments.

Burgess's Properties

As with Ellsworth's, Burgess's mystic properties can be anywhere you like. Only one of his mystic properties is absolutely essential to the story, and even that one's interior is more important than its location. See "Burgess's House" and the scene "Uninstalling Burgess" for details on that property.

In general, Burgess's mystic properties are scattered from the Near South Side north to Lincoln Park and Lakeview, with an arm of properties extending west through Bucktown to Wicker Park, where Burgess's and Ellsworth's mystic networks interfere with each other the most.

Remember, it's not enough for Burgess to own or reside in a property for it to be a part of his network. Only those properties he was able to mystically prepare according to the principles of sacred geometry are actual points in his mystic grid. Unlike Ellsworth, however, Burgess

maintained ownership over most of his mystic properties (and many others) while he was alive, because he was unwilling to part with them — and the rent checks they provided him.

Burgess's House

Quote: *In the momentary light of the swinging bulb you see that the shadows cast off the ridges of swollen paint on the wall form the words, "Get Out." When the bulb swings back a second later, the shadows are gone.*

Background: Burgess built his house in Old Town in 1959, knowing full well what role it would play after his death. He tore down a historic townhouse, erected on the spot in 1881, and used materials salvaged from it and other demolished houses from throughout the city to build his new home. These salvaged materials gave Burgess's home an arcane connection to sites throughout the city — and saved him money. Burgess lived in the house from 1959 to 1964, but didn't sell it when he moved out. Rather, Burgess kept the house in his estate until his death in 1996, when it was sold to the unknowing developer who became the first of Burgess's Agents. Through him, Burgess gradually destroyed most city records of the building dating from before 1990, in an attempt to hide the house's importance from Ellsworth. On paper, it would appear like just another point on Burgess's grid.

When Burgess died, he was secretly buried beneath the house in an ornate triangular prism made of stone and carved with art deco designs depicting Ceres, Vulcan and a stylized skyline view of Chicago across each face. This concrete coffin is laid on its side in the house's cellar behind a stone slab depicting the Fortuna Redux aspect of the Roman goddess of luck.

Burgess's spirit resides in the house now. He's not exactly a ghost and not exactly a spirit, in the sense that mages or werewolves would understand them. He has no ephemeral body and no presence in Twilight. He is little more than a willful resonance echoing throughout his mystic geometric matrix from the spiritual transmitter that is this house.

Description: *If it were shorter, it'd be a German bunker. If it were taller, it'd be a smokestack with windows.*

The house was a cutting-edge design in 1959, a strict stone riff on glass-focused designs of the day. Four stories, from cellar to master suite, it looks more like a modest Deco office with its glass bricks and steel bars. Over the years its interior has been cosmetically redesigned. Today it has a bland, eggshell-white interior with shiny black countertops and matte black fixtures. Most of its ground-floor portals are barred with black iron rods. Its narrow yards are concrete slabs stained with

water rings from metal flowerpots. A metal door with prison cell-style windows leads into the house at the front and back. No doors access the cellar from outside.

Inside the house has a severe 1980s design style, almost like a black-and-white version of Miami Vice. What furniture there is looks square-ish and uncomfortable. Art consists mostly of serrated abstract metal ornaments and decorative glass shapes hanging from the walls. Carpets, blankets, pillows, shelves, tiles and doors are white. Upholstery is black. Nothing is wood-colored.

Storytelling Hints: The inside of Burgess's house is cold and bizarre, like a sterile futuristic environment. The Agents who live in the house do nothing but eat simple meals and sleep here, so the house has no books, television or other human details. The severe art on the walls is intended to intimidate visitors and gash intruders through Burgess's telekinesis. To convey the eeriness inside, remind the characters how cold it is, because the heat's off. It's uncomfortably silent, at every hour of the day. The sound of the refrigerator making ice seems as loud as dropped pool balls in here. The sound of feet on the tile is like a museum. The air stings with the alcoholic bite of heavy-duty cleaner.

Destroying the House: As described in the primer to Act Three, Burgess's ghost can't be permanently damaged through simple physical harm to the house. As long as Burgess's concrete casket is in the cellar, he can continue to exert his will on his anchor property. To do away with Burgess for good, the mystic symbols on the faces of his casket must be defaced (Durability 2, Size 6, Structure 8; Structure must be reduced to at least 2 to fully deface it), breaking its spell. This removes Burgess's ghost from the grid and, thereby, his control over his Agents and his Minions. (See "Aftermath" for the consequences of his removal.)

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 1, Resistance 5

Willpower: 10

Essence: maximum 10 (Burgess collects Essence from the resonance of the properties on his mystic grid, so long as their present conditions remain within the parameters he planned for in their architecture. He regains 1 spent point of Essence per day. Significantly altering his properties might slow this rate.)

Morality: 2

Virtue: Prudence. (See Burgess's Agents)

Vice: Pride. (See Burgess's Agents)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 0

Speed: 0

Size: Three floors, plus basement.

Corpus: N/A. The house has all the durability and solidity of its excellent construction. Damaging its plaster and breaking its windows isn't enough to affect its wellbeing. Burgess's spirit can only be overcome by neutralizing Burgess's casket and destroying the house, as described above and in Act Three.

Numina: Animal Control (6 dice), Clairvoyance (6 dice), Compulsion (6 dice), Ghost Sign (6 dice), Magnetic Disruption, Telekinesis (6 dice). These Numina can only affect subjects in contact with the house, whether it's a crow on the gargoyles or an intruder in the basement.

Burgess's Minions

Quote: *In the hush you can hear it sucking for air like a child in a plastic bag.*

Background: Burgess's corpse was planted in the ground like a seed. His will grew up through his house like a tree. These are fruit it bears.

The Minions are utterly lifeless supernatural creatures grown in the walls of Burgess's properties through a mystic rite contained in his pages of the Chicago Working Folio. They derive their power from the fertility of the vesica piscis.

Description: *If it has a face, it's underneath the paint and the plaster, behind the long crack that would be between its eyes, but all that's there is stretch of gauze studded with steel nails.*

Burgess's Minions are faceless, man-shaped creatures with primer-white skin the texture of wet plaster. They smell like sawdust and the electric stink of a power drill. They're lean like marathon runners. Their bodies and heads have hints of features, as if a real person was trapped inside them, but they are nothing but wood fibers and plaster dust. This one has a screaming mouth sealed shut with a curve of dry plaster, that one blows little puffs of asbestos out of its nostrils.

Storytelling Hints: Though they are, functionally, zombies, avoid the temptation to have the Minions groan or lurch like animated corpses. These are creatures the characters will (presumably) never see again, so make them distinctive. When they move they run both hands flat along walls and floors. They tip their rough heads up as if they were smelling the air. They tap their four fingers on the walls as

if feeling for studs. They stop in place —for a moment — then resume their hunt.

The primary purpose of these creatures is to frighten the characters. Their secondary purpose is to threaten them. The Minions aren't comically idiotic, merely unimaginative. What they lack in creativity they make up for in thoroughness, scouring any area for signs of prey before giving up. In a chase, they sprint without fear. Burgess doesn't hesitate to command them to destroy themselves if his Minions could be followed or otherwise convincingly revealed.

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 3, Resilience 4

Health: 5

Initiative: 3

Physical Integrity: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 0

Attack	Damage	Dice Pool
Brawl	2B	5
Crushing Grip	4B	7

Aspects:

Crumble — When destroyed, when in danger of being revealed or when ordered to do so by Burgess, these creatures crumble apart into ruined plaster, splinters, particle board fibers and nails. Their corpses leave no evidence of their supernatural origins and no shapes, features or remains to suggest they were once mobile, malevolent beings.

Indestructible — Burgess's minions are inhumanly resilient. Though they have no natural healing, they do not suffer wound penalties. Once a minion's Health is depleted, subsequent damage is lost from Physical Integrity. The only way to destroy these creatures is to reduce their Physical Integrity to 0. A minion's dice pool for any action cannot exceed its current Physical Integrity.

Limited Intelligence — Minions are capable of extremely basic problem solving on their own. They may turn doorknobs, navigate fire escapes and use basic tools. If tools and other improvised weapons capable of dealing better than Damage 2(B) are within reach, they use them.

Power Climb (dice pool 6) — Through a combination of mystic synergy and brute Strength, Burgess's creations can climb man-made structures with frightening ease. They gain a +3 bonus on all attempts to scale scaffolds, walls, fences and other structures.

Preservation 3 — These eerie creatures do not suffer damage over time. They do not rot or decay, they do not bleed or starve.

Quick Movement — Despite their weak minds and imperfect bodies, these creatures are capable of steady movement. Their Speed is equal to 5 + Power + Finesse.

Regeneration — By returning to Burgess's building and resuming their places in the basement, these creatures regain one point of Health per hour. Only Health, not Physical Integrity, is healed in this way.

Sensitivity (dice pool 6+) — The creatures of Burgess's house can sense living creatures through the studs, floorboards and bricks of the house, through the asphalt and concrete of the city, no matter how well they hide. Only objects not built by humans — like grass, water, soil and trees — do not conduct the voices of the angels in the architecture and guide these creatures in their search of prey. To sense the telemetry of a living being through the fibers of architecture, the creature rolls Finesse +3 in a contested action against the subject of its search, who rolls Dexterity + Stealth (but see below for rules about using the Stealth Skill). If the creature and its subject are in the same building, it gains an additional +1 to its roll; if both are on the same floor of the same building, it gains a +2 to its roll. The range of their mystic sensitivity stretches out 24 yards, unimpeded by walls or other man-made barriers.

The Stealth Skill is useless when hiding from these creatures as long as the character is in contact with an architectural medium. Before Stealth dots can be of any use in the character's contested dice pool, a character must first run to, climb to or otherwise reach a place where cement and steel won't relay his pounding pulse back to Burgess's creatures. For example, once a fleeing character has managed to reach a tree and climb it, she can use the Stealth Skill to hide from Burgess's Minions. Until she reaches the tree, however, her every step along the sidewalk or street sends a tremor back to the creatures, reducing her dice pool to her Dexterity dots alone.

Solid Materials — These creatures are made from a mystical assemblage of plaster, drywall, nails, cement and fragments of sheet rock. Their arms, legs and heads are like clubs, dealing Damage 2(B) on all unarmed attacks.

Special Attack: Crushing Grip (dice pool 7) — Burgess's creatures have hands like vices, capable of crushing bone and splintering wood. When able to get a grip on an enemy or an object, these creatures gain a +2 bonus to Power-based attacks.

DIY

Burgess's House was created using the rules for ghosts in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (though, strictly speaking, no ghost resides there). You can easily swap out the House's Numina, or add new ones, to tailor its abilities to your player's characters' abilities. Books like **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, **Predators** and **Mage: The Awakening** contain other Numina suitable for the House, too.

Burgess's Minions were created using the zombie-building rules from **World of Darkness: Antagonists** and a few new Aspects created especially for this story. If you'd like to modify these monsters, it's easy to do using that book. These creatures were made with 27 creation points; add or subtract more dots and Aspects until you get the monsters you want.

Burgess's Agents

Quote: *This flat has all the amenities you'd expect, and the region is rapidly coming into its own. You're just steps from Whole Foods and Starbucks. It's a very emotional property, sure to be snatched up soon.*

Background: Burgess's handful of Agents are his greatest work: people so utterly transformed by their environment that the people they used to be no longer exist. They have moved into Burgess's spaces and Burgess has moved into them.

Their bodies are facades. Inside, each is inhabited by an echo of Burgess. This driving force is not exactly Burgess's ghost, and his means of controlling them isn't exactly possession. Though each is like a facsimile of Burgess, none contain his true spirit. Killing one of Burgess's Agents does not physical or mystical harm to Burgess — he simply loses a piece of valuable property.

Each Agent began as an ordinary young man in residence in one of Burgess's townhouses. For months, sometimes years, Burgess whispered to them, almost imperceptibly, through the mystic architecture of his buildings — arcane transceivers designed and built just for this purpose. Over time, each potential Agent's individual personality was muted to the point that he became one of Burgess's hypnotized Tenants. Finally, each Agent was completely stripped of his own identity and remade, inside, in Burgess's image. For most Agents, this process took mere months of living and sleeping inside Burgess's work. For those with

great Willpower, the process took a year or more, afforded to Burgess with long-term, iron-clad leases.

All of Burgess's Agents are also real-estate agents. Each took the test with Burgess's knowledge and passed on the first try. None were real-estate agents before their transformation (though some were "flippers," buying houses and selling them for a quick profit). The Agents work to get desirable owners and renters into Burgess's properties, and to keep undesirables away.

Description: *His smile comes on and off with the flip of a switch. He's just waiting for you to stop talking.*

Though each Agent began as an individual, every one has since undergone a complete makeover. Each is a clean-cut young Caucasian man between the ages of 28 and 35. Each has the same haircut, an old-fashioned, close-cropped, slicked-up do. Each dresses in modest, earthy clothes with the same label (Whitworth). Each has the same ten ties in his closet, the same three pairs of shoes. Each carries a zipper-shut leather folder with a notepad and a pen. Each has the same make and model of camera-phone. Each has the same shiny metal laptop. They are exaggerated metrosexuals, amplified from simply stereotypical into something bordering on parody by Burgess's fascination with the modern and desperation to be cutting edge.

They all talk alike. Despite the fact that every one Burgess's Agents is American, each uses a handful of British vocabulary words, like flat and lift and maisonette (a duplex). When an Agent is stymied or harmed, he says "bloody hell." None of the Agents attempts an accent. (Burgess adopted these words to make himself look, or maybe feel, like a sophisticate.) These words are a touchstone for you to use. Establish that Burgess's Agents use these words, then you can use them later to tip off the players that the person they're hearing is one of Burgess's Agents, too.

Storytelling Hints: Most of the time, Burgess's Agents are listless, silent organisms that cannot be fairly described as people. They sit in their condos and wait for Burgess to steer them out into the world, to take meetings and show properties and haggle over the cost of investment properties.

When under his specific command, an Agent seems genuine enough, though stilted and awkward. Burgess was never very comfortable dealing with customers outside of a business situation, and speaking through his Agents isn't much easier for him. He relies on their young, well-groomed faces and trained real-estate spiel to make a good impression. (The Agents are, in a way, living tools, granting a +2 bonus to Burgess's Persuasion dice pools; this is already factored into the stats below.)

Burgess's Agents should make the characters feel uncomfortable, but not outright scared. Not at first. When an Agent isn't participating

in a conversation, he seems blank, spaced out. Their practiced smiles drop too quickly. Their eyes are somehow blank, even when the rest of their face is animated.

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Geometry) 3, Crafts (Architecture, Carpentry, Masonry) 4, Investigation (City Records) 2, Occult (Mystic Architecture) 2, Science (Chemistry) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 1, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny (Breaking and Entering) 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Clubs) 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression (Drawing) 2, Intimidation (Civil Threats) 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: City Status: Real Estate Agent 1, Iron Stamina 3, Resources 4

Willpower: 8

Morality: 2

Virtue: Prudence. Burgess was patient to a fault. When coworkers and would-be friends tried to politely imply that he was no longer welcome somewhere, he'd stick around past the point of rudeness. He was prudish with money and praise, because risks could cost him precious money or status. Burgess would sit on a property for years and wait for it to slowly ripen rather than risk investing too much money into it.

Vice: Greed. Burgess was an arrogant, self-centered son of a bitch waiting to be applauded by betters he wished would consider him a peer. But it wasn't strictly pride — it was greed. No amount of ink in architectural journals, contracts or signed checks was enough for him. No one house was enough to stand for what he thought of himself, so he collected them. No money was enough to compensate him for his genius, so he skimmed and scammed more of it where he could. He was greedy in the hope that it would lead to pride.

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

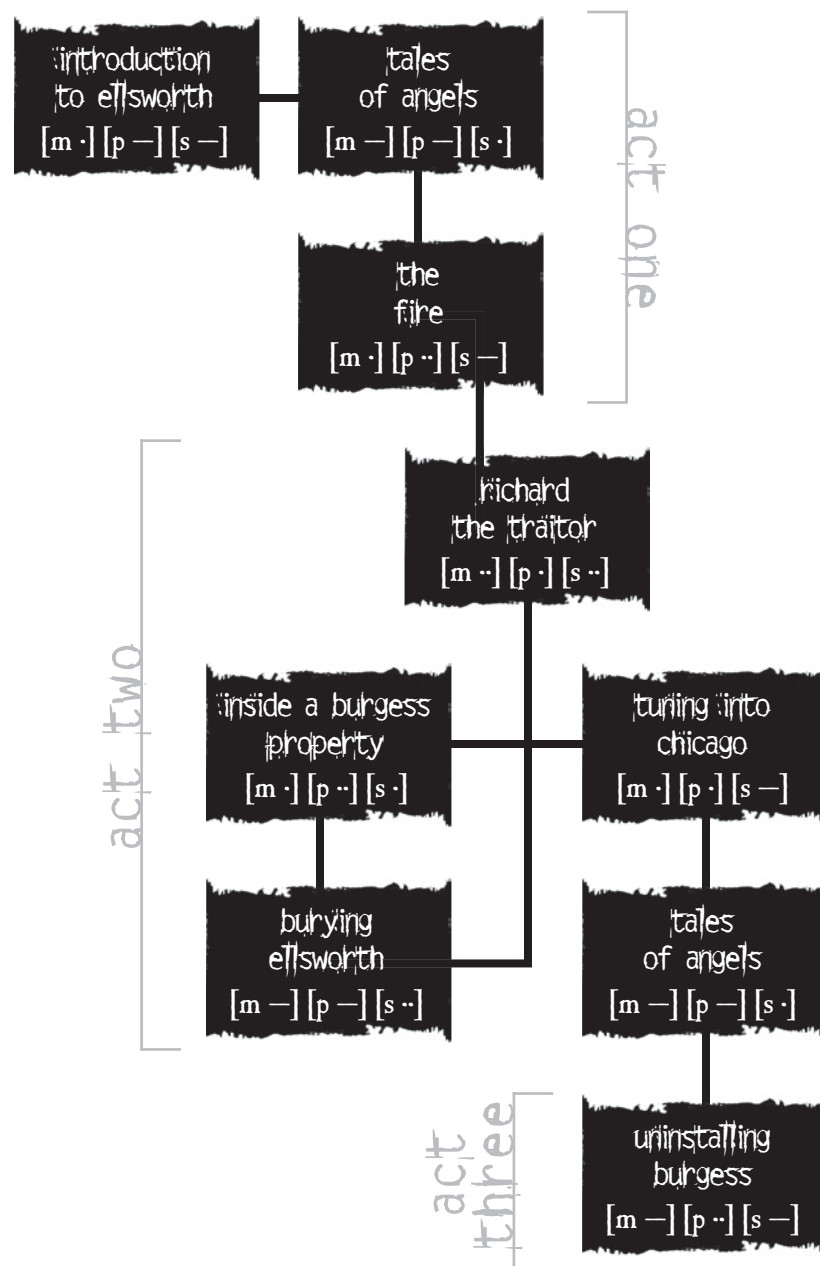
Speed: 9

Health: 7

Aspects:

Iron Stamina 3: The Agents have a functional resistance to the effects of pain. Their bodies are just appliances for their personality. They feel pain, but are not affected by it.

“chicago workings” basic plot



ACT ONE

FOUNDATION

The first act of the story is for setting up the characters and ideas you'll need the players to understand and be familiar with later on. In this case, setting up the story takes however long your players need to sympathize with Simon Ellsworth and get the basic gist of his back-story. This goal is harder to attain with some troupes than with others. Your players may never really come to like Ellsworth, so don't force it. What's more vital is that they understand that he believed in the supernatural and in sacred geometry.

Pacing

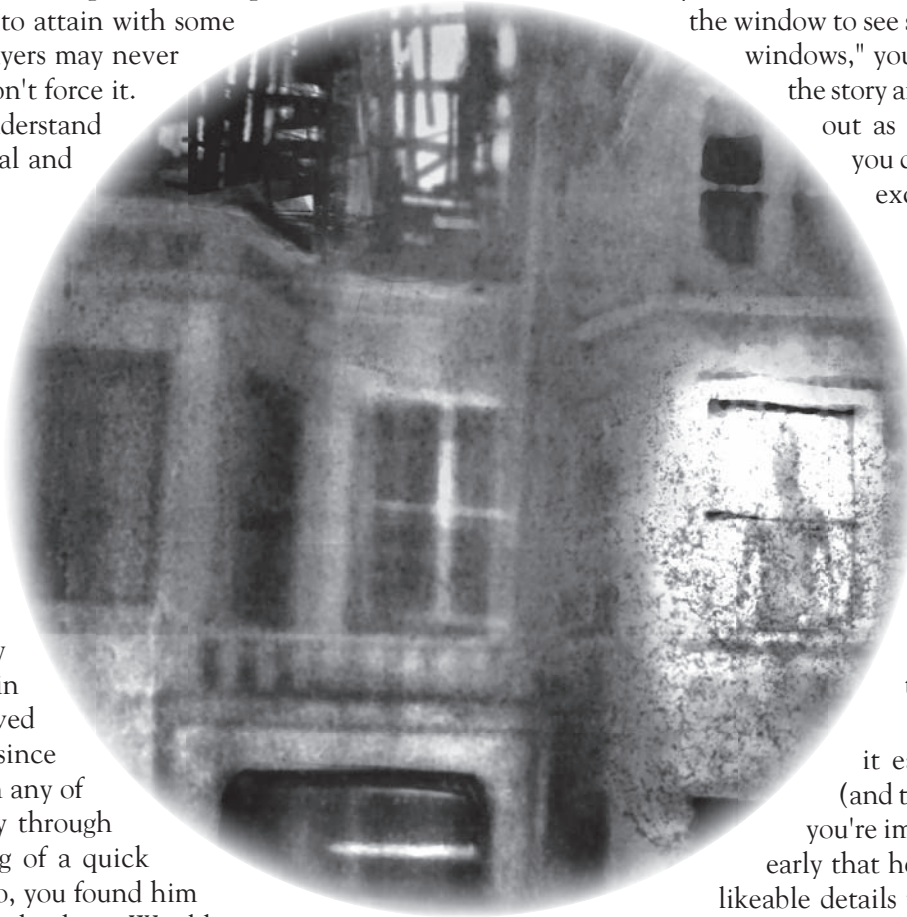
Don't dawdle in this act. Keep things moving, even when you're playing scenes about helping an old man with his groceries. Handle a series of encounters with Ellsworth as a single scene, dilating time to play through a month's worth of Sunday-afternoon visits with grandpa in a short stretch, if you can.

Maybe the tightest way to play through this first act is to start it off in the past tense ("Mr. Ellsworth moved in almost three months ago, and since then you've seen more of him than any of your other neighbors...") and play through a few encounters with the feeling of a quick recap. "One day, a month or so ago, you found him outside his building struggling with his keys. Would you have helped him?" you ask. Whatever the answer (maybe Ellsworth outright asks if the player says no), you play the short scene in the present tense and then "step back" to the past tense, reminding the players that you're manipulating time in this sequence.

Do that another two times ("He showed up on your doorstep once, asking for help hanging a painting...") and then cut straight to the night of "The Fire." "All those moments flashed through your head when you heard the screech of a smoke-detector and ran to the window to see smoke pouring out of Mr. Ellsworth's windows," you say. Now you're in the real time of the story and all those set-up scenes have played out as an interactive prologue. "What do you do?" you ask, and the story's off on an exciting start.

This technique, when it works, is great for keeping players on topic. Some players want to run off on their own side missions right from the start, but if it feels like you're just covering some quick background material for *really* get started you can keep them from wandering away from the story until your fiery opening. Create momentum right from the start and they have to hang on to your words just to keep from falling off the ride.

This also has the benefit of making it easier for you to get the characters (and the players) to like Ellsworth, because you're implying that they already do. Set it up early that he's likeable and they'll fill in a lot of likeable details from their own imaginations. Some players will also get instantly suspicious of a new, likeable Storyteller character, assuming that he'll peel off his face or drink their blood the moment they let their guard down. With this pacing trick, they'll hardly have a chance to be suspicious before Ellsworth gets killed and the story is unfolding in their hands.



chicago workings

act one foundation

SCENE

Introducing Ellsworth

Mental • Physical — Social —

The characters meet their new neighbor, an eccentric but generous old architect.

Overview: An old man moves in near the characters and gets to know them. They also meet his nurse, Richard. In this scene, you're just laying the groundwork, establishing how the characters know Ellsworth and Richard. Remember, no matter how suspicious the *players* may get, you don't want to give their *characters* reason to be. At the end of this scene, you want the characters to be telling Ellsworth a little bit about themselves — this gets the players engaged in the scene and helps to establish Ellsworth as somebody they can talk to.

If you can, play this scene as part of another story, a chapter or two before you plan on beginning this story in full. That way Ellsworth feels a little more established in the chronicle before he comes to the foreground. This scene can then serve valuable double duty as a mundane counterpoint to something bizarre happening in another story — a valuable reminder that while the characters are investigating magic artifacts the rest of the city is going about its daily business.

Description: *From the furniture coming off the truck, it looks like your new neighbor has just moved in from another era. His wood-armed couch looks like an antique, but not next to the globe they're unloading now, which looks even older. The owner, a shrunken little man in tiny spectacles and a bow tie, watches the movers go by from a beat-up wooden bench of his sitting near the curb. From the bare wood on its sides it looks like it came out of an old building somewhere.*

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Get the players to like Ellsworth. Use Richard for contrast, showing how kindly and forgiving Ellsworth is when Richard is being a lay-about.

You need to decide before you run this scene what Ellsworth's connection to the characters is going to be. Is he simply a neighbor? (With his charitable nature, but his great real estate connections, it's not unrealistic that he could end up in a nice or lousy apartment suitable for a few dots above or below his actual Resources rating.) Is he someone's new landlord? Is he moving in near a character's office? Ellsworth could very well be moving into a loft space in a neighborhood otherwise filled with offices for rent, provided the building offers him some historical or architectural interest.

You also need to establish a few particulars about Ellsworth's apartment (or condo, or townhouse or whatever is appropriate for your chronicle): It has windows visible from the character(s) residence or office, it is on the second floor (or higher), it has hardwood floors and the front door is the only way into the apartment.

If the characters don't introduce themselves, Ellsworth has Richard walk him over to the characters and introduces himself.

Character Goals: The characters have no obvious goals at this point, except maybe to get a read on their new neighbor. This is risky for you. End this scene before they get bored.

Actions

Avoid using dice pools to resolve the action in this scene, if only to dodge the potential time sink of a million perception tests. Some players find it easiest to engage a scene through the dice at first, though, so you can use one of these actions to deliver for them.

Mental Action: Appraise the Damage

Dice Pool: Wits or Intelligence + Crafts or Academics + equipment
Action: Instant

While carrying a bulbous, green glassy lamp from the truck into the apartment, Richard slips and drops it, cracking its hood. Richard slumps and sighs, but it's closer to a pout than anything else. "Don't worry about it, Richard," says Ellsworth. "You didn't cut yourself did you?" (Richard's fine.) With a quick glance at the lamp a character can attempt to gauge its worth.

Failure: *It looks like an antique, like it came off a wall somewhere. No telling how much it's worth, but the old man's clearly being nice. He's sorry to see it damaged.*

Success: *It's an antique brass wall fixture, like from one of the old buildings downtown. You can't just buy those, it must be a keepsake from somewhere. You can't replace something like that, and the old man knows it. He's being nice, but he's upset to see it damaged.*

Exceptional Success: *It's the kind of ornate brass wall fixtures they took out of the Chicago Public Library during the renovation in 1991. Those were hand-made in the 1890s for the library, so its not like they can be replaced. The old man's being a gentleman: that lamp's probably worth five figures.*

Outcome: At the end of this scene, the characters should know who Ellsworth is and have an invitation to visit his house for scotch or coffee sometime.

SCENE

Tales of Angels

Mental — Physical — Social •

A weird but brilliant old man tells the characters stories about Chicago's weird past — and his own.

Overview: This scene is actually several scenes, which you'll use more than once during this story. This is another scene light on action — refer to the "Pacing" section in the act one overview for guidelines on making this scene exciting.

Use this scene to hint at the occult war between Burgess and Ellsworth and their past as friends. Run this scene in Ellsworth's apartment, or on the stoop in the neighborhood or anywhere else that Ellsworth and the characters might talk. If the characters visit Ellsworth more than once, run two or three variations on this scene.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Your goal is to inform the players in these scenes. In Act One, you want them to know just enough about sacred geometry that they think Ellsworth's death in "The Fire" is suspicious (or at least noteworthy) and that the terrible things that happen during "Tuning Into Chicago" aren't coincidences. Give the notes on the vesica piscis and the golden ratio at the beginning of this story to characters with one or more dots in the Occult Skill, either to represent what Ellsworth tells them about sacred geometry or to illustrate to the players what it is their character can talk to Ellsworth about for two hours.

Character Goals: In Act One you run the risk of the characters having no goals, unless their interest is piqued by Ellsworth's talk of sacred geometry, in which case their goal may be to learn more about Ellsworth's secrets. He has plenty of back-story to share without spoiling the end of the story.

Details:

- *Ellsworth's apartment is like the office of a college professor with tenure. He's been here only a few weeks, but the apartment feels like its been accumulating books and photographs for years. While Richard is clattering around in the kitchen making coffee and Ellsworth is walking you through pictures on the walls, a framed photograph catches your eye of a young Ellsworth and round, mustached man in a room full of drafting tables, lit with*

sunlight reflecting off the Chicago skyline behind them. Ellsworth is tall and dark-haired in this picture, a different person except for his squinty smile.

"That's me and John Michael Burgess," he says. "In our first years as apprentice draftsmen."

- **ELLSWORTH:** *"You see this one? That's what the Chicago Public Library looked like back when it was new. Not so different. She's a beauty. A building like that does good for the whole city. It's like magic, the way a glass dome can lift the spirit. The way arches can lend solidarity to a city's identity. The places we live in also live in us. Buildings, I think, remodel us as much as we remodel them."*

"Think about the way a building controls the space around it. The way it defines that space. Imagine if we could learn to really use the power to change our lives, our minds, that comes with controlling the spaces we inhabit. Buildings give off what's put into them."

Outcome: This scene sets up "The Fire." Once the players have some sympathy for Ellsworth, move on to that scene.



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tales of angels

SCENE

The Fire

Mental • Physical • Social —

The characters witness a fire inside their neighbors' apartment.

Overview: In the night, while the characters are together at the home or office next to Ellsworth's, they hear the sirens of a fire truck pull up outside their building. From the window they can see thick black smoke and snapping orange flames coming out of the windows of Ellsworth's apartment. It's already too late to save Ellsworth.

Paramedics and neighbors are gathering in the street outside the burning building, and the rumors come fast through the crowd. "Mr. Ellsworth was in there," they say. "His nurse had gone out for the night." But near as anyone can tell, Richard doesn't come back.

What happened is this: Richard was approached by one of Burgess's Agents weeks ago. The Agent said Richard would get a good lease on a condo in Bucktown and an easy job doing handy-work around the building if he would leave the employ of Mr. Ellsworth on that particular night — and leave the door unlocked and the security system off behind him. Richard accepted the offer.

Four of Burgess's Minions, dressed in rags, walked into Ellsworth's apartment and started a fire in the kitchen. Ellsworth, knowing that he couldn't fight or escape the creatures at his age, sat down in his chair and slowly died while the Minions watched. When the firefighters arrived, the Minions that were inside had already disintegrated themselves, their remains mingling with the damage in the apartment.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Raise questions. Raise the adrenaline. Set up the mysterious circumstances of the fire so that these questions motivate them in "Richard the Traitor."

This scene is also your earliest chance to deliver a Physical challenge to the players whose characters are built for them. In this case, such characters have a chance to save lives and discover an unsettling clue, all with Skills like Athletics.

Character Goals: The obvious goal — "save Ellsworth" — cannot be accomplished. The actions of the characters may also be able to earn them a valuable hint of Burgess's power, however.

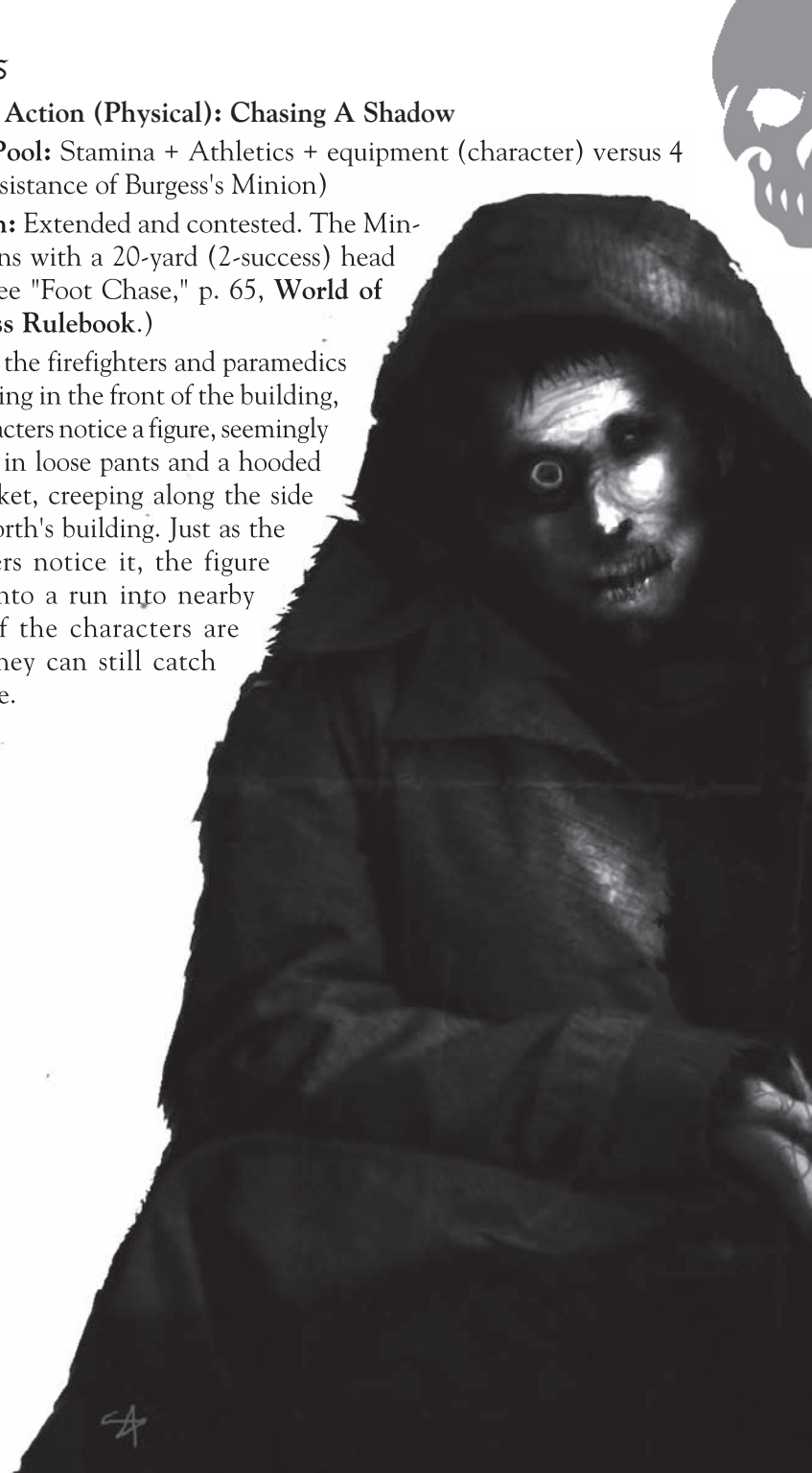
Actions

Key Action (Physical): Chasing A Shadow

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics + equipment (character) versus 4 dice (Resistance of Burgess's Minion)

Action: Extended and contested. The Minion begins with a 20-yard (2-success) head start. (See "Foot Chase," p. 65, *World of Darkness Rulebook*.)

While the firefighters and paramedics are working in the front of the building, the characters notice a figure, seemingly barefoot in loose pants and a hooded sweatjacket, creeping along the side of Ellsworth's building. Just as the characters notice it, the figure breaks into a run into nearby alleys. If the characters are quick, they can still catch the figure.



chicago workings

The Minion has little hope of escaping outright. Rather, it attempts to get far enough from the scene of the fire to minimize witnesses if it is caught and forced to disintegrate in front of human eyes. It sprints over the broken asphalt of driveways and back alleys without hesitation or fear, unimpeded by darkness, sensing its way by the resonance of the city alone.

Dramatic Failure: *Your foot catches under a loose chunk of asphalt, yanking your feet out from under you and dropping you chin-first on the pavement. (The character suffers one point of bashing damage.)*

Failure: *His bare feet slapping on the pavement, the figure surges ahead of you and dashes around a garage. For a second, in the sickly yellow glow of a streetlight, you could make out a bald white head with seemingly no ears. As you turn the corner after him, stumbling into plastic garbage cans along the way, you find yourself in a little chain-link pen — a dead end. There's the pants and the sweat jacket you saw on the runner, in a pile of plaster chunks and wooden splinters, but there's no sign of the man himself.*

Success or Exceptional Success: *Just as your strides bring you up behind the runner he seems to stumble in the dark, falling to his knees and then his face on the pavement. Your momentum carries you past him, but you can make some of it out. When his body hits the ground, it's like a sack of sand fallen off a truck: chunks of plaster scatter out from an empty sweat jacket. There's a sound like a fistful of nails bouncing along the ground. Where, one second ago, there was a person, there's now just plaster dust and gauze.*

Obstacles/Penalties:

- The alleys are one layer of broken asphalt over another. Trying to keep your feet on level ground is like trying to run across a creek on a trail of stones. (difficult terrain, -2)

- In the dark of the alleys, with the shadows of telephone poles and garages slicing into the orange glow of the streetlights, you can see the runner only here and there, as he slips across another amber patch of light. (bad lighting, -4)

- The half-hearted rain makes your teeth cold as you run. Every spot of light is surrounded by a shiny corona, so seemingly solid you almost expect to shatter one as you run by. (bad weather, -1)

Aides/Bonuses:

- The chasing character(s) can attempt a reflexive Wits + Composure roll to get their bearings in the dark and gain a +2 bonus for the familiar terrain near their home or office.

- If the chasing character is known to the neighbors in the chase area, he can make a Presence + Persuasion roll with a -2 penalty (hol-

tering in the dark is not the most persuasive) as an instant action. If successful, neighbors turn on the lights on their porches and garages, reducing the darkness penalty during the chase to -2.

- Equipment bonuses: athletic shoes (+1), flashlight (reduces darkness penalty to -2)

Outcome: The characters can be quite sure that something supernatural has happened, but they have little evidence of just what that might be. The news they hear from neighbors and the newspapers is mundane: Ellsworth died of smoke inhalation when a leak from his gas range caught fire while he was sleeping. The house was locked up at the time. Richard had gone to the movies. Ellsworth apparently left everything he had to the Chicago Historical Society.



ACT TWO

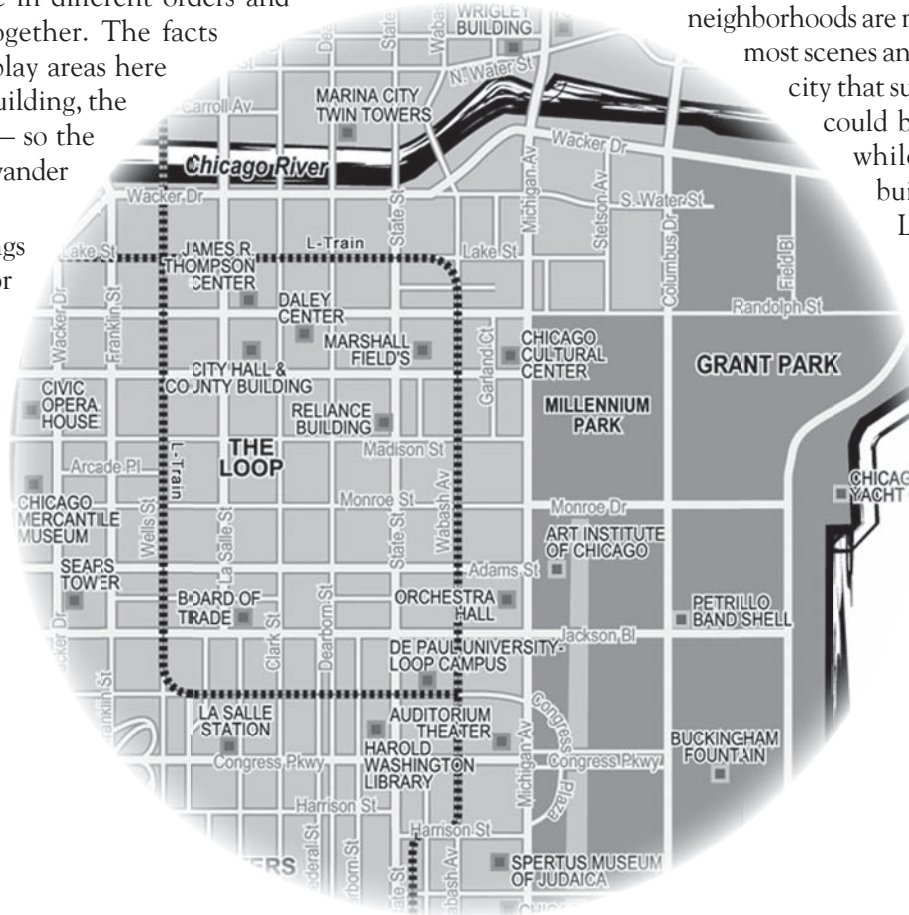
Getting Chicago Working

The second act is, naturally, the middle of the story. Here is where the players have the most freedom to act. Depending on the choices they make, scenes may take place in different orders and some scenes may be skipped altogether. The facts of the story define a few distinct play areas here — the Burgess-owned apartment building, the Chicago Cultural Center, the El — so the players shouldn't have occasion to wander too far from the central story here.

The pacing here is flexible. Things happen at the pace that's right for your group, with Richard providing motivation if need be. Avoid letting the story drag in the second act, however. If the players get stuck, they need more information. Richard can give it to them or Ellsworth's ghost can make a desperate plea as a disembodied voice while one character is on the El, if need be.

Where In The City

Every location in this act is an archetype. Though specific neighborhoods are mentioned, you should be able to move most scenes and actions herein to another part of the city that suits you. The Chicago Cultural Center could become Union Station, for example, while Richard's apartment in Burgess's building could move from Bucktown to Lakeview, or anywhere else.



SCENE

Richard the Traitor

Mental .. Physical · Social ..

The characters come face to face with the man who may have sold out their friend and learn valuable information about what really happened that night.

Overview: The characters can come to this scene in search of Richard, or he can come to them. Richard is currently living in the basement apartment of a Bucktown church that's been converted to modern condominiums. A for-sale sign on the lawn for one of the condos features the gleaming white smile of one of Burgess's Agents.

Richard had a key to a safe-deposit box of Ellsworth's, which Richard was hoping would have something valuable in it. Instead it had a letter in Ellsworth's hand explaining his desire to be cremated and buried in a special, stone urn he hid in the walls of the former Chicago Public Library when Holabird & Root updated the site in 1991. Richard thought this sounded like more of Ellsworth's "holy geometric bullshit" and was just going to skip the details, but he saw something in his condo that has him freaked out and now he's interested in cooperating with the only other people who listened to Ellsworth's weird talk — the characters.

Whether the characters come to Richard or he comes to them, he still needs some cajoling before he becomes completely cooperative. He has nowhere else to go, though, so sooner or later he tells the characters what he knows. Exactly how the scene plays out is up to them. Richard may end up admitting what he knows in a wet-eyed whisper or he might cough it out through bloody-nosed sobs, depending on the characters' methods.

However it turns out, Richard begs the characters to see to it that Ellsworth gets buried like he wanted, "cause you seem to understand that stuff." Richard has already received Ellsworth's ashes from the funeral home. He has them in the simple brown jar the crematorium supplied. He'll take the characters to the spot at the Cultural Center where he's sure the urn must be.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Your goal with this scene is to give the players new leads and reward them (after the automatic tragedy of "The Fire") with the chance to choose Richard's comeuppance.

Character Goals: Get the truth out of Richard. Find Ellsworth's urn and his share of the Chicago Working Folio.

Actions

Social Action: Getting the Truth Out of Richard

Dice Pool: Wits, Presence or Manipulation + Intimidation or Persuasion + equipment versus 4 dice (representing Richard's desire to help but propensity to lie)

Action: Contested. Can be retried.

Ultimately, the characters will be successful. Dish out the following information as necessary to maintain the mood the players are showing you they want. The question is whether they do anything to Richard along the way that could get them charged with assault if they want to turn him into the police.

Success: *"I didn't know what was going to happen. Okay? I swear I didn't. I thought maybe they were gonna lift some of his antiques, steal a deed or something. I didn't think anyone was going to fucking kill the old guy! All I had to do was walk away and my days of sponging old men were over."*

"The guy who made me the deal was some real-estate agent, I think. I don't know anymore. He told me to call a number and tell them I wanted the caretaker job at the condo building on Walcott, and I did, and I got the job. But, man, listen: I don't know what is going on there, with those guys. I don't want to go back there, man. There are sounds in the storage area."

"The old man's note said he wanted his ashes to go into an urn he hid in the, ah, the library. When they made it the Cultural Center. I had to walk the old man down there a couple times. He had this spot he liked in the room with the big dome. Gotta be in there. They've got big-ass vents in there with fancy grills, and he used to always touch this one. Like for luck or something."

Action: Finding the Folio

Dice Pools: Intelligence + Crafts + equipment (remove vent cover), Wits + Dexterity (feel inside the wall for the urn), Strength + Dexterity (pull the urn out)

Action: Each is an instant action that takes two minutes and can be retried.

The vent in the Cultural Center where the urn is hidden is located in a large reception room at the top of a grand marble lobby off of Washington Street, near Millennium Park. It is a public area, but with no exhibits or events that day it is not a high-traffic area. Visitors come



through to see the famed Tiffany-glass dome and the exceptional oriental-style tile work on the walls. The room is two stories high, decorated with sage passages in a half-dozen languages, from Latin to Arabic to Hebrew. It's a grand, echoing room with nowhere to hide.

The urn is behind an ornately decorative heating vent, up in the wall on a shelf of stone. A Size 5 person can lean into the vent but cannot fit in the space in the wall. Searchers must grope around with an arm until they find the urn, then pull it down one-handed. It's a stone triangular prism about twice the size of a football, decorated with images of Ceres, Vulcan and the Chicago skyline in a flowing, Art Nouveau style. Rolled up inside it is Ellsworth's half of the Chicago Working Folio (see "Tuning Into Chicago") and a list of three suitable properties where his ashes can be buried (see "Burying Ellsworth").

Obstacles/Penalties:

- A visitor to the center wanders by the characters while they're retrieving the urn. A contested fast-talk action (p. 83, **World of Darkness Rulebook**) versus 4 dice eases her suspicion. With a failure, she mentions what she's seen to one of the docents. The docent arrives two minutes later.
- A docent in a blue jacket, with a walkie-talkie in hand, approaches the room where the characters are working. Fast-talking her requires a roll versus 5 dice. If the characters fail, she goes to get a guard. The guard arrives two minutes later.
- A civilian security guard arrives to investigate the characters' actions. Fast-talking her requires a roll versus 6 dice. If the characters fail, she radios for more security and the police. Building security arrives in two minutes, the police in six. If the characters flee, the security guard only pursues them to the doors.

Aides/Bonuses: Toolkit (+3, remove vent cover; +1, fast-talk), ID Badge (+2 fast-talk)

Outcome: It's essential that the characters retrieve the urn and the Chicago Working Folio. The penalty for being caught "stealing" the urn must not be immediate; instead of being arrested or having the urn confiscated, identified characters are blacklisted from the likes of the Art Institute, the Field Museum and the Chicago Public Library. Certainly they should never be able to return to the Cultural Center if they're caught.

Once the characters part ways with Richard, he disappears. He may leave town to avoid the characters, the police, Burgess or all three. He may be caught by Burgess's Agents and buried in a hole somewhere.



SCENE

Inside A Burgess Property

Mental · Physical · Social ·

The characters explore the strangeness going on inside a tenement renovated by the mad spirit of a geomantic architect.

Overview: The characters arrive at this scene if they choose to investigate Richard's condo. If they agree to do so, he gives them his keys. He's unwilling to return there himself.

The building was a church until it burned in 2003. Now it's home to five of Burgess's Agents in five different condos. A sixth condo is currently for sale. Richard's apartment in the basement is the only non-condo unit in the building. The two-story stained-glass window in the front of the building is now a set of four bay windows looking into very public, very Spartan modern living rooms.

While there, the characters might encounter any or all of the Agents who live in the building. If the characters watch the place before entering, they can get a glimpse of how the Agents live. They sit, quietly and motionlessly, in their carpeted living rooms, doing nothing. Between 11:30 pm and 12 am, each stands up, turns out the lights, and goes to bed. The next morning they get up in the same order they went to sleep, get ready for work, and leave the condos, one after the other, about fifteen minutes apart. They always leave one Agent behind.

An investigation of the publicly accessible areas of the building reveals nothing remarkable. If the characters go knocking on doors, they experience eerily similar conversations with the Agent in each condo. If an Agent is attacked it does the best it can to dial 911 or hit the panic button on its security system. Failing that, it becomes completely catatonic, jettisons Burgess's personality and goes limp.

Remember that each Agent was a unique person before Burgess got a hold on them. They're not all identical, just strangely similar. Their condos still contain remnants of their old lives, such as pictures, CDs, books; these items just go unused. Still, you must make it clear that the Agents are living people, not like Minions.

If the characters resort to breaking and entering, alarms go off in short

order. There isn't a great deal to discover in the building aside from the nature of the Agents and the discovery in the storage room.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Your primary goal here is to creep out the players. Second to that, you want them to take Burgess seriously as an antagonist by showing what his Minions and his Agents are like.

Character Goals: Find out what's going on at the building where Richard was living.

Actions

Action: In the Storage Room

The storage room is located in the basement of the condo, next to Richard's apartment. The other half of the basement is the boiler room (Richard's key doesn't open that door). The storage room is a long, low room (about 10 yards) that smells like wet concrete and drywall. A few squat square pillars rise through the naked rafter of a drop ceiling to the cement above. There is no power to this room.

Near the back of the room, in both corners, the walls are deformed, as though the foundation were falling behind the drywall. Brown water stains makes odd shapes in the bowing plaster. Drawing closer, it's clear that the walls are being pushed out in the shapes of adult humans curled in the fetal position, as though the walls were pregnant with grown men. Here there's a handprint pushing out for freedom. There the wall is dried around the bulb of a head. This is one area where Burgess births his Minions.

If the characters take action against the Minions in the walls, the Minions split cracks in the drywall and fight back, hands groping out from the walls for flesh. (Each Minion must spend just a single action to free itself from the wall. If it forgoes this action it can attack only targets close enough to reach from its nest in the wall.) The walls contain enough Minions to overwhelm the characters (make that clear to them), so that flight becomes their best option. If the characters stay and fight (and live), any Agents upstairs call the police. The Minions collapse into drywall and dust if they are in danger of being seen by anyone but the characters or Burgess's Agents.

The Minions let characters flee the building if they can escape the storage room.

If the characters do not act out against the Minions in the walls, they can quietly leave the room without trouble (unless you think your troupe needs an action scene here).



Obstacles/Penalties: Gloomy (-2 to all visual perception rolls)

Aides/Bonuses: Flashlight (eliminates penalties for the gloom)

Outcome: The characters should come away from the property convinced that something really weird is going on. If they encountered the Minions in the basement, they'll know that the problem is definitely supernatural. If such things as the Minions can exist, then maybe Ellsworth's own ramblings about the city's architecture and its meanings are also true. This thought should spur them into honoring Ellsworth's burial wishes.

If, after this, they don't honor Ellsworth's burial request (see "Burying Ellsworth"), then you can repeat this scene at another building owned by Burgess, one that the characters (or a single character) do not expect to be associated with all this weirdness they've stumbled onto. Once they encounter creepy new Agents (or even Minions), in a completely different building, they might be inclined to revisit the whole Ellsworth business. A good location is Watertower Place, on the north end of downtown, near Michigan Avenue. There are enough restaurants and stores in the area to provide an easy excuse for the characters to be there.



SCENE

Burying Ellsworth

Mental — Physical — Social ..

The characters must convince an ordinary home-owner to let them bury an occult artifact on his property.

Overview: This scene occurs any time after the characters retrieve Ellsworth's urn from the Chicago Cultural Center and before the end of Act Two. Strictly speaking, this scene could even be played for denouement at the end of Act Three, but you'd need to keep a tight hand on the rudder to avoid dragging the story out after the climax just for a curious Social challenge.

In this scene, the characters must choose a final resting place for Ellsworth's ashes — and potentially a house for him to inhabit. Only three properties (on a list folded inside Ellsworth's urn) are suitable for Ellsworth's mystic needs. The characters therefore have three tries to execute Ellsworth's last will.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Your goal is to make the decision whether or not to participate in this scene as dramatic as possible. The characters are essentially giving Ellsworth a semblance of what Burgess has (though they may not fully appreciate that yet). Use this scene to demonstrate the difference between Ellsworth's and Burgess's properties, too.

Character Goals: Convince a homeowner to accept the burial of a bizarre urn on their property (or do it in secret) without resorting to bribery.

Actions

Key Action (Social): Negotiating For A Grave

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus the Composure + Empathy or Subterfuge dice pools for the four potential properties, below

Action: Contested (for fast-talking)

Obstacles/Penalties:

• **Englewood Property:** *On the outside, this pointy Victorian house leans like a witch's hat, but through the curtains you can see handsome framed pictures and a glowing plasma-screen television.* Edward (Composure +

Subterfuge, 7 dice), the owner here, is a mechanic; he answers the door in a shirt with his name on it. He has plenty of yard to spare for an old man's last request, but what's in it for Edward? (Any bribe or gift is something for nothing to Edward, good for a +2 bonus for the characters.)

• **Wicker Park Property:** *It's a renewed brick townhouse with window-boxes and little winged gargoyles. Tricycles and skateboards clog the front walk, spilling over into the disheveled rock garden between the iron fence and the arched basement windows.* Maria (Composure + Empathy, 6 dice) is a stay-at-home mother who does telemarketing work from her kitchen. She loves her little townhouse and doesn't want strangers digging it up, but she likes historical knick-knacks and might fall for a story about the renovator who loved this house, too (+3 bonus).

• **Ukrainian Village Property:** *This little bungalow looks just the same as the others on the block, until you get near the front door and see that, inside, it's full of restored details like leaded-glass doors on built-in bookshelves — and decorative flourishes that recall the golden spiral.* Pieter (Composure + Empathy, 6 dice) is a factory manager who inherited this house from his father. He's wary of strangers poking around his family's property and doesn't like to be blustered. He's a sucker for a sob story, though (+2 dice).

Outcome: If the characters succeed in finding a resting place for Ellsworth, they each regain one Willpower point and Ellsworth's spirit slowly dissipates into his mystic grid over the course of several days. (Eventually he is nothing more than a resonant sense of charity and pride.) If the characters resort to bribery, secrecy or deception to bury Ellsworth they regain no Willpower, but Ellsworth is successfully put to rest.



chicago workings

burying ellsworth

Tuning Into Chicago

Mental • Physical • Social —

The characters gain insights into the mystical nature of the city while traveling to sites on Ellsworth's mystic grid.

Overview: It is assumed that the characters have played out the “Burying Ellsworth” scene and succeeded. The characters’ involvement in the decades-long battle of the geomancers did not end with Ellsworth’s burial. It’s only just begun.

Over the coming hours and days (pace this however you like), the characters begin to suffer what they probably at first will assume to be hallucinations: Faint voices are heard speaking to them, seemingly coming from the walls or pavement. Ghostly figures are briefly glimpsed, appearing to be construction workers from the turn of the last century, still hard at work making the city. Buildings seem to glow from within their very bricks, glass and steel, their colors imparting emotions resonant with those buildings: peacefulness at a church, excitability at a playground, and sorrow at a graveyard. The wind rushing through the streets seems to turn the characters’ heads, in time to catch the motion of light across prominent buildings, seeming to form glyphs and sigils from the Chicago Working Folio.

Characters who paid attention to Ellsworth’s talk about the city and its architecture might remember his talk of “angels” and “their voices.” This sure seems a lot like what’s happening now. The city itself — or its angels — seems to be speaking to them, not via air pushed through human lungs, but in light, wind and the vibrations within wood, stone and steel structures.

The characters are experiencing an effect similar to that afforded by the Architectural Attunement Merit (see “Aftermath”), allowing them to perceive the city’s secret resonance, as ordered and controlled by human architecture. This effect is most prominent in areas near Ellsworth’s mystic grid (see “Ellsworth’s Properties,” p. XX), but can be felt in any area of the city.

It is Ellsworth himself who is reaching out to the characters, trying to recruit them again to finish the battle that he now realizes has not ended with his and Burgess’s deaths. While he is content to withdraw

and watch over only those places on his grid, Burgess is still expanding his grid, and co-opting the lives of those who reside in his properties. For the characters to truly understand what’s been going on — the war of the geomancers and their still-potent grids — they need to see and hear it for themselves. Ellsworth reaches out to them through the resonance he now has with them by way of their burying his ashes, and opens their eyes and ears to the secret hum all around them.

Once he’s sure he has their attention, he makes his message even more clear: He wants them to take the “L” train as it travels between certain key locales on his grid. Once they have encountered — that is, passed through via the L — the resonance of at least three of these areas, they’ll become attuned enough to the grid’s frequency that Ellsworth can appear to them and speak his final words.

Ellsworth delivers his message about the L through a number of different means, each of which can be experienced by different characters:

- A newspaper page blows past a character and suddenly veers, flying straight into his face. As he peels it away, he notices a map of the L, produced as part of a story on local points of interest for tourists. What seems strikingly obvious is how, seen over the folds of the crinkled map, some of the stations seem to form a sigil of sorts, if an imaginary line were to be drawn between them. If the paper were flattened out, the effect disappears, but when it is folded just the right way, the sigil is clear.

- A taxi driver delivers a character not to his requested destination, but to one of the L stations. “Here ya are, mac — the L.” When the character complains, the driver seems shaken, as if he’s just woken from sleep. He is apologetic and offers to drive the character to his proper destination, but admits he’s woozy and not sure he should be driving. (The guy lives in a property that is a major point in Ellsworth’s grid. He’s not an Agent, like those Burgess controls, but only a temporary vessel for Ellsworth’s message.)

- A television or radio broadcast is interrupted by a news report of an old man seen throwing himself on the tracks of the L. A witness’s description of the victim describes Ellsworth, down to the clothes he was wearing the night he died. Strangely, police have yet to find the body. The strange thing is that witnesses at another station claimed to have seen the same man leap onto the tracks at about the same time. (These two stations form points on the sigil seen in the crinkled newspaper.)

Once the characters are on the L, the journey through mystic Chicago begins. Many of the stations on the Blue Line pass through Ellsworth's territory. You can choose three stations along the route (a map can be found here: <http://www.transitchicago.com/maps/maps/2006N.html>) to provide the main points of this journey. The Western, Logan Square and Belmont stations are ideal. The California station, even though it is between Western and Logan Square, is not part of the grid, and so can provide a mundane contrast to the strange visions afforded to the characters on their trip.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Reveal the true war going on in Chicago: the mystical geography fought over by Ellsworth and Burgess.

Character Goals: Realize that something truly supernatural is going on, and find out who killed Ellsworth and why.

Actions

Visioning the Grid

As the train travels down the line, the characters see more than just the usual sights — their temporarily altered vision awards them a special view of the geography. The perspectives of buildings and streets seem to warp and realign themselves according to mysterious new law of physics — actually, very old laws. Some lines glow like neon as they traverse the cityscape: These are ley lines, ancient currents of power, channeling resonance in its many flavors across the land. Ellsworth's grid has taken advantage of these lines, and rearranged them in places to make their flow more efficient or to bring subtle energy to certain regions.

At each stop along the line, the effect is even more powerful, as if by the grid's taking the L's own straight lines into its pattern, the overall effect has increased tenfold. The monumental scale of the project is finally laid bare, and is dizzying in its hubris.

At times, figures seem to move along the lines or to revolve around points on the grid like cars stuck in a British roundabout. It is impossible to make out their features, although some of them occasionally catch the eyes of the characters and seem, for a brief, shining moment, to be filled with light — then, just as briefly, consumed by shadows. Are these Ellsworth's angels? Or mere ghosts caught in the machineries of his vast project?

The purpose of this journey and these visions is to give the characters a sensory experience of the mystic grid, to show them that it's not just an *idea* but a *reality* — even if it seems unreal and hallucinatory.

They don't have to solve any puzzles here or fight any foes; they merely need to become convinced that the spoils of the mystic war between Ellsworth and Burgess are real.

You can describe the grid anyway you like. One way to approach it is to illustrate the meaning and significance that the grid lends existence architecture, street signs and even graffiti. Signs that before seemed random and haphazardly placed now, when taken in sequence, seem to spell out some greater message: "Coke adds life" + "Gray's Anatomy, Sunday Night on CBS" + "Affordable Health Care from Doctors Who Care" = this area has healing properties.

Key Action: Ellsworth's Final Tale

Once the third point on Ellsworth's mystic grid has been traversed, Ellsworth appears:

A century's worth of Chicago architecture slides by in the dark outside the train window. Gargoyles and stone arches pass close enough that you could grab them through the emergency window, punctuated by twinkling downtown lights. The train jostles back and forth on the rails, lulling you almost to sleep. Your eyelids sag down, then snap open, and there's Ellsworth in the fluorescent reflection in the windows, as if he were sitting on the train with you.

But he's not. He's only out there in the reflection, mingled with the view. When he talks, it sounds like he's speaking from the other side of the window. You can hardly hear him over the rattling of the train.

The players have only as much ability to interact with Ellsworth's ghost as you think the scene can muster without losing its surreal edge. He can share as much information from his back-story as you're comfortable with improvising dialogue about. When you're ready for him to explain the end of it all: "We were friends, John and I. But, he... Burgess confused who he was with what he owned. He's so far gone now. I can hear him in the rails, through the rafters. I can hear him all over. He killed me. He killed me. He was afraid I was going to find him and ruin all his hard work. It won't be me, but he's right: someone has to.

"He's become a part of his house, where he was buried. He's stealing the people who live in those buildings of his. He's taking their lives. It's not enough that he take people's homes now and get rich off those. Now he's taking their lives... their bodies. He can't tell the difference between people and things anymore.

"Dig him out of his grave in his cellar. He's underneath that ugly stone townhouse across from the Fichtner's in Gold Coast [or wherever you choose to put it]. Down in the cellar. Break his casket and break his spell."



Thugs on a Train

If the players prefer action to words, all this traveling might get boring for them. Before Ellsworth appears, spice the journey up with some of Chicago's night denizens: thugs who board the train and begin giving passengers a hard time. If the characters attempt to intervene, the thugs target them for intimidation and, if the characters don't back down, a possible beating.

Use the traits for the "Gangbanger" on p. 205 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, except that these guys don't have guns.

If the characters do poorly against the thugs, and the train has passed the third station, have the thugs flee when Ellsworth appears. They'll leave the characters' train car for the next over, and exit at the next stop, already shaking off their fear with false bravado.

The thugs aren't part of the mystic action going on, but they do represent an unfortunate fact about the L and the dangers of taking it at night. Through the eyes of the characters' temporary Architectural Attunement to the city, though, these thugs seem to take on a mythic role: that of the Guardians of the Threshold, challenging all who would seek the city's deeper mysteries.

Outcome: The characters now know who killed Ellsworth. They only have to decide if they're going to do the bidding of a ghost or not.



tuning into chicago

ACT THREE

Demolishing

This is where it ends. The characters have a chance to stop Burgess, if they're willing to accept the risk.

Though this act is only one scene long, this scene could become develop into a complex and lengthy affair if the characters become trapped or captured. Avoid rushing this scene.



SCENE

Uninstalling Burgess

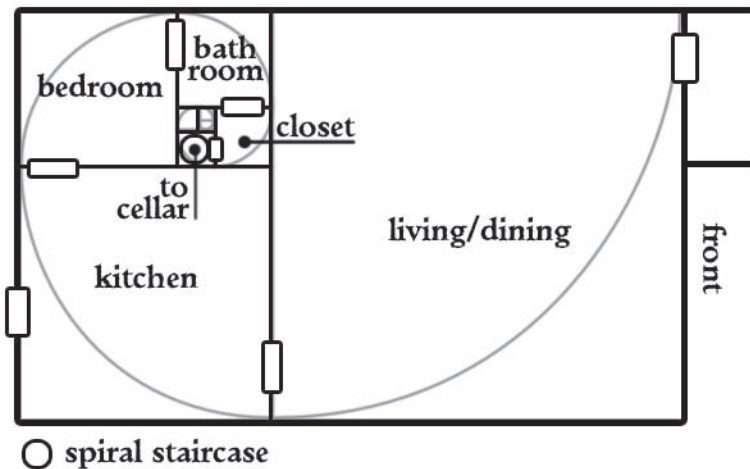
Mental — Physical .. Social —

The characters venture into a house possessed by an insane architect to kill him again.

Overview: This scene may involve a great deal of preparation on the part of the players. They might choose to prepare an elaborate plan to accomplish their mission, and that's fine as long as it's entertaining for everyone. Ultimately, the task is simple, even if difficult. In this final scene, the characters face off against Burgess's house, two of his Agents and two more Minions than there are characters.

Burgess's house is specifically designed to make it difficult to reach the cellar and his casket. A shaft running down the interior of the house is only reachable from the top floor. A spiral staircase winds down this shaft to the cellar. The floorplan of the cellar is the same as that of the upper floors, except every doorway is empty, there are no windows and everything is made of concrete. The course of a golden spiral is marked in faded white paint on the floor of the cellar, symbolically funneling power from Burgess's casket to the spiral stair and, thereby, the house.

burgess's house golden spiral



Burgess's Agents are free to roam the house. His Minions lurk in the cellar, near his casket. In an emergency, the Minions climb the cellar stair to support Burgess or his Agents.

Storyteller Goals and Tips: Scare and thrill the players.

Character Goals: Find Burgess's casket and destroy it.

Actions

Mental Actions

The characters may attempt to outsmart Burgess to get the odds in their favor, by luring Agents out of the house or arranging for some kind of distraction. These are viable approaches, but they do not solve the ultimate problem of getting physically into the cellar and breaking Burgess's spell.

Elaborate plans to tunnel into the cellar are probably more trouble than they're worth, as once they reach the cellar the characters still have to deal with Burgess's Minions. Still, a brilliant plan deserves its chance to shine.

Burgess responds to mind games and Mental-based attacks as he would to a Physical attack: with whatever cold violence is necessary to protect what he has.

Physical Actions

Most likely, whatever the characters' plan is, they'll have to get physically inside Burgess's house at some point to get at his casket. They may attempt to finesse their way inside through stealth or they may stage a home invasion. The consequences of a Physical approach are clear: Burgess fights back.

Burgess reacts to a Physical intrusion proportionally if he can. If calling police (only the two Agents can do that) has a reasonable chance of stopping the characters, he orders it. If it seems they're able to do disastrous damage before police would arrive, he tries to kill the characters and avoids involving a police investigation if at all possible.

Social Actions

Is it possible to negotiate with Burgess somehow? Yes. Burgess is naturally suspicious of any proposed deals that come from the characters (especially if they've confronted Agents or Minions at Richard's building), but he'll entertain arrangements that solve his problems and also make him money. If the characters can come up with some juicy arrangement, Burgess can be convinced to negotiate with them in his house (through one of his Agents). The characters may have

managed to get inside, but Burgess controls the house, so he feels plenty confident himself.

Burgess is not above lying outright to get the characters in a vulnerable position. If he believes their intentions are to hurt him, he betrays them. This could well lead to a situation in which the characters are invited into Burgess's house for a meeting in which both parties are planning to betray and destroy the other.

Obstacles/Penalties:

- Guard dogs (p. 203, **World of Darkness Rulebook**)
- Outer doors: Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 8, Damage 3
- Outer locks: 8 total successes necessary to pick (p. 74, **World of Darkness Rulebook**)
- Inner doors: Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 6, Damage 2
- Security system: 12 total successes necessary to bypass (p. 74, **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

Aids/Bonuses:

- An exceptional success on a Persuasion action at the record office can win the characters a floorplan of the house (+1 to +3 bonus on Stealth actions and tests to avoid surprise).

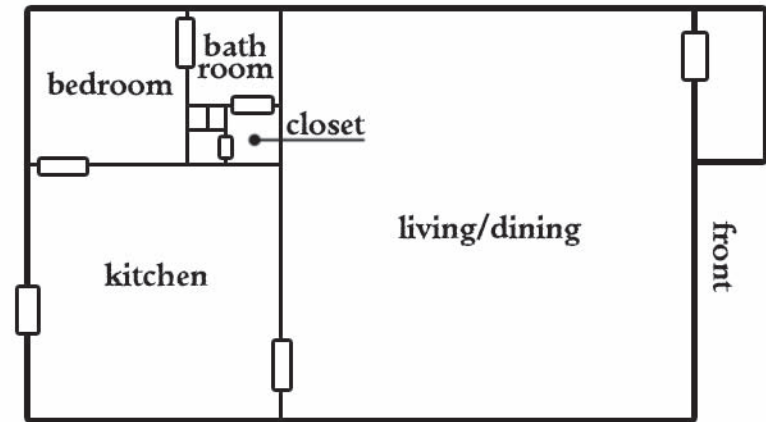
Defacing the Casket

As stated earlier, the characters must deface the symbols on Burgess' casket to end his influence over the house, his Minions and his Agents. The casket's traits are: Durability 2, Size 6, Structure 8. Its Structure must be reduced to at least 2 to fully deface it, which breaks the spell.

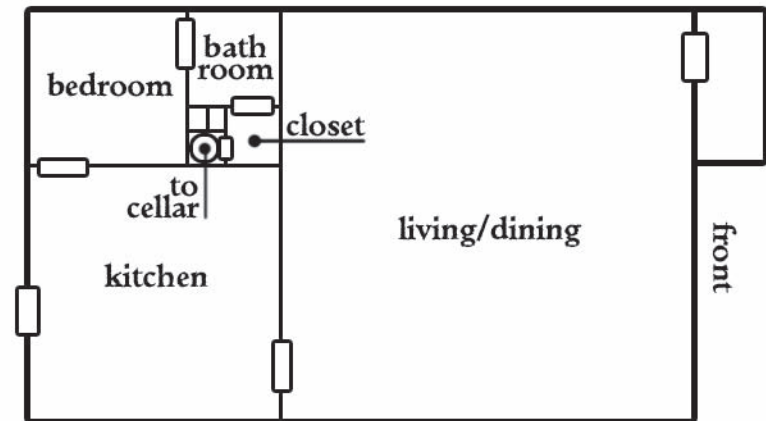
The casket, however, is behind a stone slab depicting Fortuna Redux. It has Durability 3, Size 6, Structure 9. It can be lifted aside, but it weighs 500 lbs. (no roll is necessary for Strength 5 and above).

Outcome: Defacing the casket causes what remains of Burgess to dissipate. His Minions disintegrate and the Agents go catatonic. After a while, the Agent's own original personalities slowly awaken; they will get up and wander away, confused and tormented by the unexplained missing chunks of their lives (they have no memory of their time under Burgess's control).

burgess's house (floors 1 & 2)



burgess's house (floor 3)



○ spiral staircase

Aftermath

Once Burgess ceases to exist, the supernatural element of this story is over. Or is it? The characters can certainly try to explore the mysteries of the Chicago Working Folio, although they've only got Ellsworth's portion of it (unless you want to reveal clues on how they can find Burgess' half). Besides the supernatural, though, there are a number of more worldly concerns to consider:

Police Pursuit

If a home invasion was called in at Burgess's house, the police give chase to the characters. If they arrive after the characters have gone, they might follow the evidence back to them. Their willingness to investigate this far depends on just what the characters did. Property damage is a minor concern to the police, one they won't invest a lot of resources toward investigating. Murder, however, is another story. If the body (or bodies) of an Agent is left on the scene (or even the signs of a possible murder, such as blood stains), they'll investigate with full force. How close they get to the characters depends largely on how well they cover their tracks and if they have previous criminal records (if they're already in the system, they're easier to track through forensic traces). Getting a murder charge to stick might be tricky; a good lawyer can probably get the characters off, but only after lots of time and expense.

The Attention of Angels

The psychogeography of Chicago, no longer under Burgess' and Ellsworth control (Ellsworth watches over only his own small grid), returns to a natural state. That is, it tends to only get powerful around regions of intense emotional activity (murder, rape, joy), and works more subtly in other places. Its reasons become obscure to the characters, even those who have purchased the Architectural Attunement Merit (see the sidebar below), as it is now largely influenced by happenstance and the behavior of spirits, which are beyond the awareness of the characters.

Alternatively, the grids maintain their power but go wild, captured by the unconscious whims of humans within their vicinities. Without someone to tame them, these places become chaotic, magnifying the good and bad traits of their residents.

Ellsworth might help the characters to inherit the grids, but he is reluctant to do so. As time passes, his personality increasingly fades, becoming a mere force of charity rather than a recognizable being. What remains of him is filled with regret for his misuse of the mysteries of the Folio, and he doesn't want to see others make his mistakes, or — God forbid — unleash another

Burgess on the city. Whether or not he helps the characters, hinders them, or ignores them depends largely on how responsive they were to his needs throughout the story. For instance, if they waited to honor his burial wishes until after they could no longer deny they were important, he isn't fully convinced that they're the type of people worthy of inheriting his work.

NEW MERIT: ARCHITECTURAL ATTUNEMENT (****)

Prerequisites: Wits **, Academics **, Occult *, Occult Specialty: Sacred Geometry or Mystic Architecture

Each time this Merit is bought, it applies to a specific city. The character can easily perceive any intentionally constructed mystic grid within the city, such as those created by Ellsworth and Burgess in Chicago. Further, he can perceive the resonance of the city as it pertains to human-built structures (make an extended-action roll using Wits + Occult, taking 10 minutes per roll), and given enough time (an extended scrutiny action, rolling once per day of active meditation while traversing the zone in question) read its deeper fluctuations and influences. In addition, if the character were to erect his own mystic grid (using the Chicago Working Folio and years of planning), he would gain a +1 perception bonus and the Danger Sense Merit while within his grid.

More details on Resonance can be found in **Werewolf** and **Mage**.

Experience

Each Act awards 1 point of experience to each character who experienced it in whole or part, so a character who experienced the entire story gets 3 experience points. Certain actions in different scenes award more points:

- Characters who intently listen to Ellsworth's tales of old Chicago, and ask him questions that show they're clearly paying attention and are interested, gain 1 bonus experience point. Those who merely humor him as he tells his tales gain no bonus.
- Characters who engage in combat with Agents, Minions or even thugs on the L train, gain 1 experience point for the *first* such physical encounter, *if* they escape it largely unharmed or were victorious. Any successive physical encounters, even if it's against a new type of foe, do not award further bonus points.
- If the characters complete the final scene without causing the police to respond or leaving behind evidence that causes them to investigate further (such as dead bodies and blood stains), each character gains a bonus experience point.

chicago workings

aftermath

SCENE: Introducing Ellsworth

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

HELP

STs

Get the players to like Ellsworth

PCs

None yet.

SCENE: Tales of Angels

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

HELP

STs

Introduce sacred geometry; set stage of suspicions in later scenes.

PCs

Learn Ellsworth's secrets.

SCENE: The Fire

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

The chase:

difficult terrain -2

bad lighting -4

bad weather -1

HELP

The chase:

Reflexive Wits + Composure to get bearings (awards +2 for familiar terrain)

Alert neighbors (Presence + Persuasion -2); success turns on lights (reduce bad lighting to -2)

Flashlight (reduces bad lighting to -2)

STs

Raise questions and adrenaline.

PCs

Gain a hint about the supernatural.

SCENE: Richard the Traitor

MENTAL ●●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Getting truth: Wits, Presence or Manipulation + Intimidation or Persuasion + equipment versus Richard's 4 dice.

Finding Folio: Intelligence + Crafts + equipment (remove vent cover), Wits + Dexterity (feel inside the wall for the urn), Strength + Dexterity (pull the urn out)

Visitors walk by: 4 dice to resist fast-talk

Docent arrives: 5 dice to resist fast-talk

Security guard: 6 dice to resist fast-talk

HELP

Finding Folio:

Toolkit: +3, remove vent cover; +1, fast-talk
ID Badge: +2 fast-talk

STs

Give players new leads.

PCs

Get the truth out of Richard. Find Ellsworth's urn and his share of the Chicago Working Folio.

SCENE: Inside a Burgess Property

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL ●

HINDRANCES

Storage room:

Gloomy (-2 visual perception rolls)

HELP

Storage room:

Flashlight (eliminates the gloom)

STs

Creep out players; get players to take Burgess seriously.

PCs

Find out what's going on at the building where Richard was living.

SCENE: Burying Ellsworth

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL —
SOCIAL ●●

HINDRANCES

Englewood: Edward has 7 dice to resist subterfuge

Wicker Park: Maria has 6 dice to appraise characters' motives

Ukrainian Village: Pieter has 6 dice to appraise characters' motives

HELP

Englewood: Bribing Edward gives +2 bonus

Wicker Park: Telling house history to Maria gives +3 bonus

Ukrainian Village: Pieter is a sucker for sob stories: +2 dice

STs

Demonstrate differences between Ellsworth's and Burgess's properties.

PCs

Convince a homeowner to accept the burial of urn on property without resorting to bribery.

SCENE: Tuning Into Chicago

MENTAL ●
PHYSICAL ●
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

HELP

STs

Reveal the true war going on in Chicago.

PCs

Realize that something truly supernatural is going on; find out who killed Ellsworth and why.

SCENE: Uninstalling Burgess

MENTAL —
PHYSICAL ●●
SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

- Guard dogs (p.203, World of Darkness Rulebook)
- Outer Doors: Durability 3, Size 5, Structure 8, Damage 3
- Outer locks: 8 total successes necessary to pick (p.74 World of Darkness Rulebook)
 - Inner doors: Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 6, Damage 2
- Security system: 12 total successes necessary to bypass (p.74 World of Darkness Rulebook)

Stone slab atop casket: Durability 3, Size 6, Structure 9; move with Strength 5
Casket: Durability 2, Size 6, Structure 8

HELP

(must be reduced to 2)
Exceptional success with Persuasion at record office wins floorplan of house (+1 to +3 Stealth and surprise).

STs

Scare and thrill the players.

PCs

Find Burgess's casket and destroy it.