

THE INSTITUTE

CONSPIRACY & CONFRONTATION SHEETS

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THE INSTITUTE CONSPIRACY SHEET

The Institute for Theological Research and Innovation is one of the most well-funded advisory boards across the surface of the Territories, dictating which faiths are legitimate and which are not. Their public-facing work involves extensive surveying and cataloging of emergent deities and their followers, as well as consulting with various organizations on integrating new gods into different industry sectors. Privately, they have quite a number of classified projects in development, almost all of them with military applications.

Quote: *"Our mission is to document emergent divinities at every level, maintaining an extensive database of the safest and most reliable approaches to modern worship across the Territories. Careful categorization of lawful deities is a key element in the preservation of our region's history and culture. This also allows us to make pivotal investments in breakthrough worship technologies in service of public health security."*

Quote: *"We remain committed to the highest standards in the fields of emergent divinities and custom worship protocols. By collaborating with academia, industry, and government partners, we formulate and execute research and development projects to expand the frontiers of applied divinity, often beyond immediate government requirements."*

Why the Institute wants to exploit the work of the Custodians: The Institute is heavily funded by military interests. While it is also engaged in some non-military research projects, it faces mounting pressure to produce viable weapons in the form of new saints, targeted miracles, and other methods. It is particularly interested in studying subjects who are in a transitional state in their personal faith, and thus more vulnerable to effects of experimental divinities—such as the Custodians themselves.

THE CONSPIRACY

1 END OF SESSION SCENE

*This layer is unlocked after the Custodians discover the **FIRST** Conspiracy Clue.* At the end of the session of play in which the first Conspiracy Clue is discovered, narrate a scene showing a uniformed researcher working alone in an office at night. The environment is cold and utilitarian, with dull concrete walls, harsh lighting, and gloomy corridors outside reinforced lab windows. The researcher is transcribing field notes which summarize the recent actions of the Custodians. The scene ends in a close up view of a new document being filled out, with the names of the Custodians listed as "potential investments."

Between sessions, write down what you think the Institute's plans for developing a new weapon are in the lines below.

The first Conspiracy Clue...

...is always an appearance by a researcher from the Institute.

It should be brief—the Custodians are conducting their investigation, and notice someone in the distance with a clipboard and field recorder, taking notes on the scene, and disappearing before they can be approached.

2 HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE

*This layer is unlocked after the Custodians discover **THREE** Conspiracy Clues.*

The following details can now be revealed whenever you wish—and in any order—as a Keeper reaction:

- ☐ **Ninth Day of Foundations (The Day of Stepping Forth), Year 22.** Alfred Farragol, a young entrepreneur from a family bearing a perpetual contract with the Saint Electric for resource expansion, began documenting emergent faiths in the rural Territories, taking a special interest in how a god entered the world or what caused it to be abandoned or forgotten.
- ☐ **Twenty-Second Day of Outpourings (Festers-Day), Year 49.** The Institute faces backlash after formally recognizing The Devourer Below, a parasitic fungal god, in efforts to support an accelerated expansion of the forestry industry.
- ☐ **Nineteenth Day of Tithes (The Day of Unfurling), Year 56.** The first battle saint, *Merciful Dawn I*, is unveiled in a Peninsulan military parade through central Glottage. The Institute is credited in its role for refining the process of "cyclical worship activation" using specialized prayer wheels built into its gears.
- ☐ **Third Day of Fathoms (Day of the Dead Saint), Year 58.** The Institute receives the Blazing Star Peace Award from High Adjudicator Shrike, for their "outstanding contributions to the field of Applied Divinity," and receives an unprecedented lifetime contract with the Legislatures to continue its research and development of new worship technologies for "public health security."

2 HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE (cont'd)

You may now use the following Keeper reaction, in addition to the others:

Show that the Institute has been interfering with the work of the Custodians.

Between sessions, write down the names of one or two Side Characters you'd like to see return during the Confrontation.

Take some time to revise your idea about what the Institute's next big project is—what form the weapon takes and how it might be used. Take into consideration how the above Side Characters might be recruited by the Institute, and the roles they might play.

3 AN ASSIGNMENT BECOMES AN ASSET

This layer is unlocked after the Custodians discover FIVE Conspiracy Clues.

Choose an active Assignment and narrate a scene showing how the Assignment becomes an "asset" of the Institute. Note this in the Agents section and tell the Custodians that the Assignment can no longer be resolved (it also ceases to be "active" for purposes of presenting new Assignments, though it is still a danger in the world).

You may now introduce the special Journey Scene, **Escaped Test Subject**, during an upcoming Journey Phase of your choice.

Between sessions, write down the names of one or two more Side Characters you'd like to see return during the Conspiracy Confrontation.

4 THE CONFRONTATION

This layer is unlocked after the Custodians discover EIGHT Conspiracy Clues.

The following You can now present the Conspiracy Confrontation following the guidelines in the rulebook and your notes from this sheet. At this point, you may cease presenting new Assignments. Once all active Assignments are resolved, you may present the Conspiracy Confrontation: The Institute. After the Conspiracy Confrontation has been resolved, select a new Conspiracy to keep the story going, or end the game by asking each player to narrate a short epilogue for their character.

AGENTS

Sgt. Karl Vandermeer, security operations. Unflinching stare, salt and pepper beard, restless when waiting for new orders. A veteran of the Linger Wars, he is well practiced in obfuscating inconvenient findings through paperwork, as well as concealing the lingering effects of his repeated exposure to feral gods from previous missions. Wants to find a lasting cure for those fragments of divinity which have taken root in him, before his superiors notice.

Quote: *"Sure, those feral gods are a pain in the ass to contain sometimes—but at least they stick to their own haunts. Let me tell you, there's nothing worse than some of those propaganda saints we had dropped on us back in the day. Neighbors turning on each other, turning their homes inside out looking for the hidden enemy. Literally turning their neighbors inside out, in one town. Hell of a thing."*

Ishra Karo, divinity consultant.

Jet black hair, eyes deep and unyielding, intricate tapestry of prayer mark tattoos. They have a complicated history with obscure faiths across the territories, having been raised under a faith that was once outlawed, and being a vocal advocate of reforming standards for granting licensed status to emerging faiths. They have a reputation for frequent disagreements with upper management, but never seem to face disciplinary action—and never leave a case unfinished. Rumored to possess a personal rhetorical god which lets them find sympathetic ears for their views and recruit allies in unlikely places. Such things were outlawed long ago, except for special cases.

Quote: *"People like to ask, 'Where do you draw the line?' when it comes to some of the more fringe faiths. To answer that, we'd have to start with every implicit decision we make each day. We all make sacrifices, or allow them to be made on our behalf. We draw and redraw those lines constantly, like a prayer mark in the sand. Surely you can see that—I can tell that you're far more capable than others give you credit for."*

Prof. Helen Beaufort, senior researcher.

Lab coat over faded flannel, hair in a messy bun, sunglasses and thermos at hand. A recent addition to the Institute, her unorthodox methods of study are tolerated by her peers due to an impressive track record with dangerous or hard-to-locate deities. She claims to be unaffected by divine presences entirely, which allows her to approach them in a manner most would consider reckless. Notorious for pursuing outcomes with "acceptable losses" of local residents or assisting agencies, if it gets her the data she wants.

Quote: *"Sure, you could learn a lot from our database, especially if you had the time to dig through the 'unassigned' files. But there's no replacement for looking a thing in the eye, and seeing what gazes back. If it has eyes, of course. If you really want to understand a god, you need to see how it tries to shape you. I assume you wouldn't be on a research team if you didn't accept that risk yourself."*

Asset from Layer Three & Notes

CONSPIRACY CLUES

- ☐ An intermittent drone—too loud to be insects, too soft to be machinery.

☐ Freight trucks bearing large, odd-shaped cargo concealed by black tarps.

☐ A news report on the radio: "...a spokesperson for the Institute dismissed claims of excess regional sacrifice numbers as grossly exaggerated..."

☐ Red lights at night, blinking in complex sequence as if from a signal tower.

☐ A Side Character blames the activity of stray gods or saints on "that place they do those experiments," but has no further information.

☐ Evidence that someone is living in hiding nearby, and that they are on the run from pursuers.

☐ A page from a field notebook with handwritten documentation of a Clue recently found by the Custodians.

☐ Traces of an unfamiliar prayer mark, repeated in unlikely places.

☐ Rumors of illegal sacrifices being on the rise, using more sophisticated methods.

☐ A military vehicle passing in the distance; there are no known bases nearby.

☐ A radio announcement of a planned military drill in the region, assuring listeners that there is no cause for alarm.

☐ A letter to the Custodians, bearing the letterhead of the Institute: *"Our associates have noted your work in the field with interest. Your current trajectory is inadvisable, however. Should the situation require, we are fully equipped to activate our resources to manage emergent threats. If you find yourself in need of assistance, don't hesitate to ask one of our agents."*
- ☐ A body, carelessly disposed of, bearing signs of attempted hallowing or partial sainthood.

☐ Strangely localized pollution. Pick one: scorch marks, withered plant life, heavy rust, oily sludge, cracked and crumbling earth, unseasonal frost, something else.

☐ Wildlife showing signs of angelic transformation. Pick one: extra limbs from another species, extra eyes in impractical places, a sickly radiant glow, a near-human singing voice, pearlescent shell showing beneath fur, feathers or skin, mild levitation, something else.

☐ Strange plant life thriving where it should not be possible.

☐ A rumor that experimental battle saints are being field-tested in rural territories.

☐ A Side Character from a previous Assignment appears again, bearing unfamiliar prayer marks on their skin—and showing signs they have been hallowed. *How do you know this?*

☐ A roadside checkpoint, guards with unmarked uniforms asking about unusual activity in the area.

☐ Sighting of a roaming immortal saint. Paint the Scene: *What features of the saint make them dangerous? What features make them vulnerable or unable to survive on their own? What features make you pity the person they once were?*

NOTES

THE INSTITUTE

CONFRONTATION SHEET

In an effort to rival the Linger Straits' advanced research facilities of Temetry Isle, the Institute established Substation Eremos in the Caliginous Foothills, a day's drive south of Glottage. Official records list it as a decommissioned military base, but as the Custodians have determined, it has been a site of extensive research and testing of experimental divinities for some time.

The precise location of the facility is obscured by a series of localized mirage miracles and false road signs designed to redirect anyone who ventures too close. The facility itself is protected by perimeter fences and limited security forces, but despite appearances, the day to day operations of the facility are carried out by a skeleton crew. It is rumored that some areas of the substation are patrolled by wandering Saints, or overrun by experiments gone awry.

Direct the following to a Custodian with the most Verses written, or your choice in case of a tie: Something is guiding you towards the location of the facility. What calls to you? What are you afraid you will find there?

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

How can the facility be breached? (Complexity: 4)
Unlock the following question, and gain access to the Locations: Ground Floor, Sub Levels, and Testing Hangar.

How does the Institute plan to implement their Project? (Complexity: 4)
Resolve the Confrontation by sabotaging, reclaiming, or destroying any work of the Institute which has ties to the Custodians.

THE PROJECT

The Institute has developed this new deity or miracle in secret, but the Custodians have gathered enough evidence to know its general form. Note the idea you have developed in the Conspiracy Sheet below, including any particular powers it has that makes it dangerous or challenging to engage with.

MOMENTS

- A sequence of tones and beeps over the intercom; a coded signal.
- Muffled sounds of research in progress (pick one or more: roaring, screaming, gurgling, tearing, shattering, flushing, buzzing, winds, whispering, chanting, rhythmic pounding, scraping metal, crumbling stone, a deafening implosion of silence, something else).
- A thunderous impact of a heavy door slamming shut. Prolonged silence.
- A pair of researchers, observed at a distance, frantically reciting something from a stack of pages as a space nearby shimmers and pulsates in response.
- Overhead lights flicker, then shut off in sequence, plunging the space into darkness.
- Wet tapping and crunching sounds, like eggs being gently cracked and split open.

DANGERS

Agents of the Institute, if they are still in play. At this stage, they are well informed of each Custodian's strengths and vulnerabilities, and will anticipate opportunities to exploit them, recruiting other Institute staff and resources to separate and take them by surprise.

Experimental saints. Miracles awakened in living flesh, unstable manifestation loops localized around a single body. Most are contained by military-grade barriers, but the Institute lacks the resources to continuously monitor every one of their research subjects. Those which have escaped their confines or resisted destruction have been temporarily walked out of certain sections of the facility—roaming a particular floor, nesting in a locked storage room—but their precise whereabouts and true capabilities are unknown.

Class 5 hazardous materials. Volatile materials of divine nature. Cursed objects, remnants of failed rituals, commercial by-products, samples of godflesh, and other undefined fragments of divinity are stored throughout the facility. Documentation regarding their effects is limited, and the nature of such materials is mercurial. Exposure is dangerous, of course—but these materials could also be leveraged to different uses with some skillful planning and luck.

The Asset from Layer Three of the Institute Conspiracy Sheet may be roaming the surrounding wilderness or even patrolling the outer grounds of the facility. Note any features and abilities of this Asset that may pose a threat:

LOCATIONS

The Custodians start with access to the following Locations.

The Slumbering Moors. Fog-shrouded scrubland, winding roads which vanish and reappear on a whim. Abandoned roadside shops, warehouses and industrial wreckage, looming boulders which suggest dreaming faces. Distant flickering lights. Vehicles half-sunken in the mire.

Paint the Scene: *How does the landscape seem to misdirect you from your path?*

Institute: Exterior. Barbed wire perimeter fences with multiple gates and service roads. Angular concrete slabs jut from the hillside, with small mirrored windows and a single domed observatory like the sunken eye of a leviathan.

Paint the Scene: *Despite appearing sophisticated in design, how is the facility starting to show its age?*

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These additional Locations are only unlocked after answering the first Question.

Institute: Ground Floor. Harsh, fluorescent-lit corridors, tasteless patterned carpet and vinyl floors. Dim, cramped offices feature bulky computer monitors, cluttered filing cabinets, shelves packed with old equipment. Spindly plants wither behind stacks of paperwork and reference materials.

Paint the Scene: *What does the workplace culture of the Institute demand of its employees? What artifacts of personal gods have been brought in by employees for protection?*

Institute: Sub Levels. A labyrinth of narrow corridors and stairways. Stacks of crates and shipping containers. Some rooms have padlocked doors, some are missing doors or are covered with plywood. Signs on doors include Auxiliary, Observation, Overflow, Cleansing, Purging, High Impact, Level III Consecration, Rebirth, and others.

Paint the Scene: *Some areas have been marked off as dangerous. How are these problems being handled with half-measures instead of lasting solutions?*

Institute: Testing Hangar. A massive, sealed vault with sound-proof walls, sacrificial cages, operating stations with arrays of blinking buttons and knobs. Less visible are the rapid-response systems on standby, ready to neutralize any uncontrolled experiments (pick one: pre-recorded self-destruction incantations, automated sniper turrets, heat-activated vessel containing a frost miracle, quick-release holy water tank, under-floor incinerators, something else).

Paint the Scene: *Researchers have been testing an experimental project extensively. How can you tell they are close to its final iteration?*

Special Move. The Custodians may access the following move in this Location:

SIDE CHARACTERS

Jared Shrike, warden.

Ducks through doorways. A face fixed in a glowering expression. Carries an excessive array of weaponry at all times, both approved and illicit, mostly concealed. Recruited by the Institute after expulsion from the Greater Glottage Police Force for "overzealous pursuit of renegade faiths." Relishes the rare occasion when a test subject attempts to flee.

Quote: *"They just had to torch one of their precious pets in there. Wasn't saintly enough. You smell pretty saintly to me, though. Like you got some false gods hiding in you. Maybe they need to be torn out."*

Dredge Sommerfield, containment specialist.

Greasy auburn hair, a week of stubble, shadowed eyes. Working double duty while monitoring an unstable test subject which seems to be resisting standard protocols. Furious that superiors have disregarded his previous safety recommendations.

Quote: *"You're not listening—if we purge the subject by the usual means, it's only going to dissipate temporarily. What do you think's gonna happen when we have new saint-particles just dancing through the air ducts? It WANTS to spread!"*

Agnes Caryl, altar technician.

Dull charcoal eyes, expressionless features.

Equipped with heavy boots, hazmat robes, consecration helm with tinted visor, a chastening staff and confession syringes. Veteran of countless sacrificial ceremonies, some of them quite high-profile.

Quote: *"Stop! You've entered the space. You're a part of the ceremony now. Might as well make yourselves useful..."*

When you invoke a divine element within a living sacrifice, roll with Communion. This roll is made at disadvantage unless you include any of the following elements: a *ritual formula or specific prayer mark*, a *relevant invocation*, *Class 5 hazardous materials*, OR if you have marked The Bleeding Revelation.

- On a 10+, the ritual succeeds, transforming the sacrifice into an immortal saint. Describe it.
- On a 7-9, the ritual succeeds, but takes a heavy toll. The Keeper describes something that the saint consumes as it emerges, or other complications that arise from engaging with it.
- On a miss, the ritual is completed, but is not contained to the sacrificial subject—the Keeper describes any destructive miracles that affect the environment and anyone nearby—including unintended sainthood.

HALLOW

SIDE CHARACTERS (cont'd)

Vaughn Harrow, research director.

Light-swallowing arachno-fiber suit and sunglasses. Measured stroll, impeccable speech. Bears a personal deity of obfuscation to protect them from collateral miracle exposure, or to tactfully alter undesired narratives which sometimes emerge in the complex and constantly shifting field of applied experimental divinity. Unflinchingly dedicated to the mission of the Institute, even beyond its current scope. Seeks to shock and awe current leadership with their latest experiment, so that they can pursue more ambitious projects.

Quote: *"I'll tell you why our predecessors failed. They'll say it was a lack of resources, or sabotage by terrorists, or simply lackluster support by a poorly educated public—but sadly, no. It was simply a lack of vision. This country was not founded on politely-worded emails and political compromise, my friends. It was drawn forth in ashen marks, in salt and smoke, in symbols carved into bleeding flesh. We must be bold in our pursuit of transcendence."*

Orion Lux, research assistant.

Handsome but frazzled. Restless gaze, always typing or scribbling some kind of notes. Has a Grindinglord-branded mug stamped with a silver eye—the exclusive logo of the Unceasing Wakeful membership club. Recruited right out of university with a very generous job offer, they now feel trapped and unsure of what to do with the unsettling knowledge of the Institute's work.

Quote: *"Initial results are promising, but we need more data. There's a few directions I think we could go with implementation, but there's just not enough subjects. I thought we were supposed to get interns this season!"*

Samara Quinn, birthing attendant.

Radiant skin, beaming smile, unblinking fervor in her gaze. Wears simple cotton robes, always carries spare cloth and blessed water for things needing to be cleansed. Claims to have attended each divine emergence in the facility, and mourned personally for each subject which was not destined to walk a greater path.

Quote: *"It is a blessing beyond words, to bear witness to such miracles. One day, it will be my turn. I am not afraid—I long to be born anew."*

Violet Oblivion, a void monk.

Member of a fringe sect of anti-deity practitioners known as the Unstruck Sound, they are trained in the disciplines of unwavering, open attention and the cessation of thought and emotion. This makes them highly resistant to the effects of volatile new deities, and less likely to be affected by typical emotional biases of other researchers.

Quote: *"We are calm. We are contained. Tranquility expands from the center. No outside influence can sway us from our purpose."*

Test Subject 1178, an emerging saint.

Luminous. Buoyant. Vibrating. Shimmering opalescent particles glisten in the air around them, crystalizing on every surface. The features still visible are disintegrating in something like torment, or rapture. Their extremities are difficult to perceive; a blur of glowing afterimages which gives the appearance of endless hands gesturing gracefully like gentle wings.

Quote: *" — — — " (incomprehensible, multilayered harmonic frequencies)*

Test Subject 1343, a conduit.

Hanging in a pressure-relieving cocoon of synthetic fibers, trailing telemetry wires, IV tubing and strands of prayer beads and talismans. Several cameras are trained on them at different angles, an array of microphones angled like an eager congregation. A heap of scattered pages lies beneath their ink-stained fingers.

Quote: *"...there is nothing before. There is no future. Only the ever-witnessing Emergence... cascading reflections of the potential we each carry, waiting to be born. As soon as you glimpse it, it ceases to be. Thus we must create, always in motion... our frail and futile bodies the heralds of the Emergence. It's so... tiring, though. Why won't they let me rest?"*

A Side Character, awaiting processing.

Describe a Side Character encountered in a previous Assignment, which the Institute has captured.

Paint the Scene: Why do you believe the institute has targeted them specifically?

Quote: *"I'm not supposed to be here. You have the wrong person! I swear, I don't know anything special about gods."*

CLUES

- ☐ A rare sighting of a helicopter circling overhead, releasing some kind of mist trail.
- ☐ A map of the Institute grounds containing escape routes; large blank sections are simply marked "Turquoise Level Clearance and Above."
- ☐ Patterns of foliage and stonework seem to repeat themselves in kaleidoscopic fashion.
- ☐ A crumpled, incomplete research form. Sections include: Test Subject, Worship Induction Methods, Manifestations, Risk Analysis, Further Applications.
- ☐ A recently barricaded location—barbed wire, caution tape, motion sensor lights installed.
- ☐ Abandoned repairs or renovations, left in a state of disarray.
- ☐ A scrap of dried human skin, monstrosly altered and cast aside.

CLUES (cont'd)

- ☐ Graves sealed with concrete.
- ☐ Caution signs in an unusual place, warning of "Unverified God Manifestation," "Danger: Active Miracle in Progress" or "Warning: Saint Imminent."
- ☐ Blueprints in a sealed envelope (pick one: a complex ritual, advanced protective gear, an experimental weapon, a containment vessel, something else).
- ☐ A false barrier (pick one: floor, ceiling, window, wall) which gives way to an adjacent room full of (pick one: sand, water, foam, flash powder, incense, consecrated soil).
- ☐ Classified records (pick one: disastrous prior contracts, unfiled reports of missing test subjects, denied requests for increased funding, revised security protocols, something else).
- ☐ Narcotics kit labeled "IN CASE OF SAINTHOOD" (pick one: a case of pre-filled syringes, a vial of pills, a tranquilizer gun and darts).
- ☐ An incomplete prayer-mark tattoo; the sigil can be easily completed by drawing over the skin.
- ☐ A dog-eared safety instruction handbook containing handwritten amendments.
- ☐ A one-way mirror in an unusual location.
- ☐ Set of tactical gear, any combination of: fireproof robes, silk-woven mask, composite armor, dreamsmoke censer, holy water vials, prayer-etched blades, spark gauntlets, noise-canceling headphones, ultraviolet goggles, flash powder, hallowed manacles.
- ☐ A small room with no floor but an open shaft, at least dozens of meters deep.
- ☐ A locked room or sealed vessel contains an inexplicably-preserved body.
- ☐ Concealed, handwritten notes for a personal theory, including an untested prayer mark.

REWARDS

- ☐ A fragment of a saint or angel (pick one: vial of ash, bone splinter, sealed jar of viscous amber liquid, a lump of glittering crystal infused matter). Add it to your Altar.
- ☐ A typed invocation of a dangerous experimental god (pick one: hunger, panic, paranoia, rage, despair, rapture). Add it to your Altar.
- ☐ A prayer scroll in a sealed tube, which invokes a small miracle (pick one: snow, moonlight, silence, plant growth, euphoria). Add it to your Altar.
- ☐ A piece of tactical gear or experimental technology from the facility. Describe it, then add it to your Altar.
- ☐ A reclaimed artifact of a forgotten god. Describe it, then add it to your Altar.
- ☐ Orion Lux becomes a recurring Side Character and will aid you in your investigations as a research consultant. You get 1 extra Clue when consulting them about matters related to data or research.

NOTES
