

Imago (Changeling)

*“When one is in love,
one always begins by deceiving one's self,
and one always ends by deceiving others.
That is what the world calls a romance.”*

– *Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray*

A mysterious species who exist in an otherworldly realm known as the Fog. They can change their appearance through strength of Will. Due to the nature of their being, they do not develop traits naturally. Instead, they acquire them through imitation, voyeurism, or even cannibalism.

As A Species

For those interested in compatibility with BW core book, one may opt to use variations on this prepared backstory: in ages past, the Imago were once fey (Elven stock, BWG). A curse, the punishment of losing an ancient war, stripped them of their pride, individuality, and fertility. Exiled to an unforgiving realm beyond the veil, they dwell in a sunless nightscape of inky fog, dead forests, cold moonlight, damp stone, and crumbling library-citadels of unknown artifice.

Imago cannot breed - instead, they kidnap human infants from the crib. They suckle these children on distillations of wandering wisps. The wisp-vapors invade and push out the child's mortal soul which wanders away on an unfelt wind, while their body becomes a vessel for their newly altered consciousness. As the child grows their features smooth away and their tissues wither. Maturity comes once their bodies have been reduced to nothing but crisp, hard-edged mist: a living silhouette, like frosted glass cut from air.

I Have Grown To Love Secrecy

Imago society is authoritarian, meritocratic, and obscure. The most powerful and eldest of their kind manipulate the young to betray one another in exchange for the privilege of patronship.

Imago society shuns personality and individuality. One must give selflessly of their time to maintain face among their peers, serve dutifully to earn favor from their betters, and coldly suppress their lessers in order to maintain their status. From a young age, the need to conform is ground into the Imago through rote repetition of mantras, tasks of menial labor, and the lies of their caretakers sold as compassion. The breakdown of trust is designed to instill humility and obedience in the young so that they will be ready to serve the senior Imago once they come of age. This suppression of emotion and expression leads to rebellious ambitions and the fetishization of personality. Specifically, a jealousy towards outsider species - their quirks, their passions, their robustness and joi de vivre. These societal mores privately breed the sort of selfish individualism that they publicly shun. To be Imago is to pretend, forever.

Maintaining face as an Imago is important to avoiding suspicion, especially if one nurtures traits in secret. Upon maturity, Imago are expected to have sublimated the self. Traits are forcibly scrubbed out of them if they're caught indulging themselves or, worse, sharing their inner dramas with one another.

Playing With Their Emotions

Despite their cursed fey nature Imago cannot completely subdue the humanity of the shells they're forced to grow within - every Imago is, deep down, human. An *altered* human, uncleanly melded from mortal matter and seeded with alien consciousness. They carry yearnings to be unique, understood, and accepted - particularly those in the Interloper setting who journey beyond the Fog to serve in roles among mortals. In order to gain power and fulfill their duties they must live other lives and take on many faces. These alternate lives and selves stick with them as they slink back and forth between worlds.

Imago who never leave the Fog are less likely to become infected with marks of personality, but strangers and tales from beyond the Fog visit with enough frequency to put all but the most stoic Imago at risk of forming a contraband personality.

Imago publicly scorn, and privately foster, the painful ache to freely express themselves. They both despise and admire all creatures who may openly indulge spontaneous displays of emotion. When Imago break down their facades and open up to each other it can erupt into fiery love and hate.

Imago society is cutthroat and opaque. Most Imago navigate it alone, without friends or

allies they can trust. Many strive to become more than the pawn of a pawn in the grand puppetry of their social structure, known as the Primarchy. Others wander from these structures and seek meaning in their acquired emotions, often losing themselves in the process. Most Imago, being immortal, meander between these extremes until one or the other consumes them. The lowliest burnouts of Imago society very well may have been yesterday's Primarchs.

Imago as NPCs

With their baby-robbing and their constant machinations, Imago are primed for villainy. They run plots and schemes. They pretend to be those whom you trust most. Intrigue with Imago meddling in human politics and power struggles is standard fare.

Imago also may serve campaigns as spies and assassins for hire, as servants to demons and summoner-wizards, as a risky source of information, or even as otherworldly merchants. Their scholars jealously hoard relics and testaments, histories and accounts, even entire ruins and excavations. The most powerful of them work tirelessly to study and manipulate kismet in the hopes of finding a way to regain their lost glory.

Ultimately they desire to become and remain the true hidden architects of All Things. Some seek to control fate itself: to manipulate the Beliefs of other beings.

Imago as Player Characters

Imago have the potential to make for complex and powerful player characters. The Riddleskin rules allow the player to be almost anyone they desire, but require pre-planning and strategy to avoid revealing themselves or getting caught up too deeply in their own web of lies. The ability to pick up traits on the go through imitation is incredibly powerful, although the consequences for doing so irresponsibly are severe. An overconfident changeling can go from being min-maxer's dream to a burnout husk quickly.

Although Imago lifepaths and settings are painted quite sad and bleak, they have a lot of room for emotional investment in adventures. Imago society is a hotbed of intrigue, and every lifepath opens up options to work within or against it. Seeking the family they were once robbed from in hopes of finding acceptance by their former parents is the quintessential Imago tragedy.

Their experience is a surreal one: identity, task, role, and station blur and shift. The lives of Imago routinely turn upside-down as the clever and resourceful are sorted from the unwitting and unlucky.

To play Imago is to experience humanity vicariously. The PC grows and changes in secret and uses their acquired traits like concealed weapons in the pursuit of passion or dominance.

And if the player gets too fed up with it all, they can always go get lost in the Fog...

IMAGO COMMON TRAITS

Spirit Nature **Dt**

This being is magical in nature. Any creature with Second Sight or a wizard using Magesense will be able to determine this with a successful Perception test versus the appropriate obstacle for their ability or spell. They may also be summoned by Humans as a Named spirit when at home in the Fog, and therefore bound by the rules of Human summoning magics and circination (Magic Burner).

Immortal **Dt**

Imago are bound to the Fog. The slow-burning flames of the pyres and bonfires represent the life-force of their species. They will only truly die when all of the Fires In The Fog are extinguished.

Individual Imago may be killed through violence, by becoming unplayable through Degeneracy/Bleakness, or by having their Will *permanently* reduced to zero.

Wisps

When an Imago dies their essence becomes a wisp. No matter where an Imago dies, their wisp eventually finds its way back to the Fog. The unique "silhouette" of a wisp remains recognizable and tragic in this form, just as the face of a corpse is known to the family and friends of the deceased. These wisps flutter through the branches of dead woods and

between the gaps in the stones of crumbling citadels, and are part of the life cycle of Imago - other Imago go hunting for them like fireflies. Caught wisps may be distilled down into vapors. These vapors have many uses among the Imago: they fuel the bonfires which light their strange world and repel the dense lightlessness that surrounds them. They may also be distilled into vapors and consumed to temporarily grant the knowledge and memories (including the skill set) of the wisp's former life. Perhaps most importantly, these vapors are fed to human newborns to transform them into Imago.

The abrasion of bonfire smoke upon the currents of the Fog may, itself, spontaneously give form to newborn wisps, the residual traits of the "mother" wisp divided amongst the newly-formed "children." This is the only means by which Imago are known to multiply without a carrier body, and it occurs beyond the control of the species. This phenomenon suggests that traits are embryonic to the substance of wisps and that the brutal suppression of traits among the Imago may be a form of socially-engineered population control.

Wisps, being the unformed gaseous matter of the Imago species, do not possess awareness according to those who study, hunt, and tend to them. Their movements and wanderings are simply an unconscious expression of loss. They may be lured through means known only to those who have been trained, and only certain Imago know how to appraise their qualities.

Featureless **Dt**

Imago have no physical features. When viewed without their glammers they resemble a silvery humanoid hole, like a living silhouette, in the fabric of the air. Mortals cannot tell one Imago from the other without Second Sight or Magesense, which allows them to mentally retain the unique outline (aura) of each individual. Other Imago automatically distinguish amongst their own with the same ease that humans do with one another.

Formless **Dt**

While Imago can possess nominal physical alacrity, they lack the substance and vigor of other species. Changeling tend to suffer easily from exhaustion when manifest within other worlds and their blows lack heft. Power and Forte are capped at 6 when *outside* of the Fog (regardless of shade).

Their bodies always conform to the physical laws of the realm they invade: they may be cut,

beaten, poisoned, thrown off of objects, set ablaze, drowned, etc. When not assuming a visage their bodies still bleed - a substance like quicksilver which evaporates into a thin mist when any light but moonlight shines upon it. When assuming a visage, they appear to bleed or suffer injury as normal until they drop the visage - their blood reverts with it, which can lead to some very odd crime scenes...

When dwelling within their homeworld of the Fog, no stats are capped. The Power stat is only used for labor such as construction or lifting, for Imago don't exchange physical blows. If a bloody versus test is to be determined by stat, use Will instead. Register wounds on the PTGS as normal when in the Fog, but do not use the Bleeding mechanics. Through a struggle of Will an Imago may metaphysically batter and throttle another Imago down into a fog-wisp: this is considered a heinous and abominable act and will immediately earn the offender the Hunted trait if the blame is placed upon her.

Imago do not use the Fight! mechanics in the Fog. Instead, use the Duel of Wits maneuvers. Body of Argument is Will + Forte. Register "blows" in the debate as you would wounds on the PTGS. If Body of Argument is reduced to zero, treat it as a Mortal Wound. **Only use these rules if it is understood that the Imago are brutalizing one another with the intent to maim or kill.** A normal Duel of Wits in the Fog does *not* cause physical harm unless it escalates to the desire for one Imago to truly rend or destroy the other.

Riddleskin Dt

Imago may change the color and shape of their own bodies at will. They may use this power to physically resemble other humanoids via the Glamours skill.

Riddleskin only works outside of the Fog. Within the Fog one Imago is as distinguishable from another as humans are in our world, at least among their own kind. In that place glamours serve as a visual novelty and as a means of communication, similar to human body language. All successes on Glamours when in the Fog are automatic vs other creatures.

When an Imago takes on the appearance of another, even wholly invented, person this individual appearance is known as a *visage*. They produce visages in the same manner that artists produce sketches and paintings.

A visage should generally conform to the shape and size of an adult Elf when outside of the Fog - Imago are shapeshifters, not shape-changers. The Fog-vapors of which they're made are finite: height, weight, and age may be played with, but the volume of the Imago's body

may not be added to nor taken away significantly. Heavy obstacle penalties may be applied to Imago attempting to resemble a non-human shape (a horse, a treasure chest, a hill giant) at the GM's discretion for their own campaign. Within the Fog, Imago bodies are less limited and may twist and mutate as they fancy. The Fog supplements and supports their existence.

Each visage has a *strength*. This is an abstract way of representing how well the imitation has been crafted. Generally speaking, the strength is equal to the number of successes the changeling character rolls when assuming a visage. It's the obstacle that opponents must test versus.

Becoming Another

Glamours counts as a Magical Skill (6's are rerolled) to construct the appearance of the individual whom they wish to mimic. This process is an artistic one, like sketching or painting from a reference. The clearer the image of the visage is in their mind, the lower the Glamours obstacle. Just like art in the real world, possessing a concrete reference helps even more with their craft.

Acting and Mimicry obstacles use the same rules as Glamours for the purposes of pretending to be specific people. They are *not* considered natural magic by default and are not open-ended. Acting may be linked or FoRKed to Social rolls made while carousing, partying, debating, and the like. Mimicry may be linked/FoRKed for imitating certain voice-related character traits. The added obstacles for imitating traits apply as well: adopting a character trait is +1 Ob while Call-Ons and Die Traits add Ob equal to their cost on burning.

Imitated traits function the same as if the character had bought them at burning. The player can (and should!) earn artha through invoking them. See the Imprinting section below for the consequences of imitating traits.

Riddleskin Obstacles

Using Glamours can be as loosely or tightly defined as the GM desires.

For a simple solution use the Doppelganger trait rules (Monster Burner). This is for when you need to move the game along in a hurry: we assume the Imago has had enough time to observe the subject, but has made one significant mistake in their guise. In spite of the flaw,

we throw the Imago a bone and set the strength of the visage to their Glamours exponent for any attempts to defeat it. This is essentially the player agreeing to a just-barely-failed Glamours roll - minus the skill test. It's the "quick and dirty" way to use visages. It works well if the player wants to throw a disguise together reactively without any pre-planning, or as a compromise in a disagreement between player and GM over any perceived powergaming.

You may desire a more comprehensive system of determining obstacles. After all, much of the fun of being a shape-shifter undercover is the devilish details of holding a disguise together. A middle-ground way to handle Glamours obstacles is to make it part of a linked test. The intent is to create a flawless likeness. The Ob of a visage is called its strength. Visage strength is determined by the number of successes rolled on Glamours. If strength fails to match or exceed the difficulty of assuming a specific visage, flaws appear in the disguise.

Imago must research their subject before they assume a visage. Task for the first part of the linked test is negotiated between player and GM: Drinking (a night out together), Stealthy (window-peeping), Inconspicuous (shadowing or stalking), Seduction (duh), etc. Use your imagination.

As a guide, the obstacle for Glamours may be set by checking the table below and approximating the difficulty based on the amount of time the Imago has spent around the subject, how close the Imago is with the subject, and if the Imago has artistic references to study. Glamours can then be linked to Acting, or other skills, to complete the total effect of pretending to be another human being.

Familiarity Obstacles Table

These scenarios are a loose guide for how to set Ob for Glamours if in doubt.

Ob 1 is intimate familiarity (sexual/familial), months of exposure, and detailed *and* documented physical knowledge. Romantic or specific familial relationships (such as parents and children) count for this.

Ob 2 is friendly familiarity (platonic), weeks of exposure, and detailed physical knowledge. Circles relationships work for this, including enemies (whose face you'd never forget).

Ob 3 is familiar: someone they've met on more than five occasions, and whose body they've

studied clothed (Successful Observation test vs Observation, Perception or Inconspicuous). Circles acquaintances fit this. An Ob 6 Artist's rendition.

Ob 4 for a known (GM has stated their name) member of the community who is not part of Circles, seen on a handful of occasions, who they've studied from a distance. An Ob 5 Artist's rendition.

Ob 5 for a person whom they've briefly met and interacted with, once or twice (GM has described them briefly in occupation or title), and seen from afar on three or so occasions. An Ob 4 Artist's rendition.

Ob 6 for a stranger seen from afar for a few quality minutes or for an Ob 3 Artist's rendition.

Ob 7 for a person observed for a fair minute or an Ob 2 Artist's rendition.

Ob 8 for a moment's glance at someone (Failed Observation/Perception test) or a written/verbally explained description (Ob 3 Composition).

Ob 9 for a written description (Ob 3 Write).

Ob 10 for a rote description or Ob 1 Artist's rendition.

Other factors influence the final obstacle as well:

+1 Ob to recall from memory (bypassing the research phase) a previously rolled visage, even if the roll was a failure. Having any sort of passable reference (Ob 2 Artist Skill) handy reduces this to no penalty.

+1 Ob if there is no reflective surface for the Imago to check their work in while they assume the visage.

+1 Ob for every visually outstanding cosmetic character trait that the Imago is attempting to imitate (Ruddy Complexion, Wrinkly, Hairy).

+2 Ob for really detailed, intricate, or specific physical features (koi tattoos, vitiligo, Drop Dead Gorgeous & Buxom, Extremely Hideous and Ugly).

+3 Ob for each supernatural trait, such as an "aura" trait or stigmata from a high Faith exponent. Note that a successfully imitated aura, such as Aura of Fear, *does* work as per the

trait description and is subsequently available for later attempts to replicate it when Improvising.

The GM may default to averaging these obstacles, rounding up. A Imago who sees the same total stranger regularly from a distance for months would average Ob 1 (months) + Ob 6 (stranger from afar) to make Ob 7 / 2, rounded up to Ob 4. This allows the GM to hand out obstacles on the fly, if necessary, for the sudden need of a visage which was not planned for.

Success & Failure

Glamours successes determine the Ob vs Observation/Perception for anyone to detect flaws in the disguise under scrutiny. Meeting the obstacle means that the Imago looks enough like the victim to pass as them with no issues. Only when there's cause for search or suspicion (for example, if the Imago's presence is known to an NPC) will this Ob need to be challenged. That's to say, a successful Glamours roll fools anyone who isn't out there looking for an imposter.

No successes means a completely unintended look. Failure of intent rides: the original intended visage cannot be re-rolled. This is essentially an accidental improvisation (see below). The GM determines player appearance and the scene begins.

A failed roll by any margin means flaws: note down one flaw for each missed success. Extra finger, discolored skin, wrong haircut, etc. Lop off attempted traits before adding more flaws (the absence of a distinctive visual trait being, itself, a flaw!), starting with the most expensive ones such as aura traits. This is a standardized way to add complications for failure. Successes still equal the strength of the visage: this isn't a "looking like a person" test, it's a "looking like *that* person" test. Oblivious NPCs may not even notice something is wrong!

Failed Glamours ride, of course, and the GM may throw in required tests to conceal these flaws as circumstances evolve. The player must adapt.

Seeing Through The Illusion

It's natural, in the course of subterfuge, to find oneself under scrutiny. Anyone looking out for a disguised individual can challenge the Glamours roll, but only if they declare that they're actively seeking a saboteur and have arguable cause to do so. They may think the

Imago an ordinary spy using a disguise kit, but they will still be looking for anything out of the ordinary.

Individuals with the Observation skill test it versus the Imago's visage strength, or Perception against double obstacle. Imago's successes are automatic: they need not roll. Ties favor the Imago, who always counts as the defender when Glamours is involved.

If the observer wins the test, she notices that something isn't right. For every success over the Imago's roll they will spot one flaw in the disguise starting with the absence of any physical traits. Advantage may be lobbied for degrees of familiarity with the subject of the visage.

Individuals with Second Sight or a currently maintained Magesense spell roll their Perception instead of Observation. What's more, they not only win ties in this Perception vs Will test but also immediately see through the glamour to the Imago's true shapeless form if they win the versus test.

Visages and Let It Ride

Tests versus Glamours ride until the Imago drops that visage. If re-assumed, the new test rides with the new results.

Rules In Action

A standard linked test for imitating someone could be as simple as Inconspicuous => Glamours => Acting to represent stalking a victim, going home to put on their face, and then heading off to pretend to be them at a party. This is a basic template example to handle most uses of Riddleskin. Set Ob for Glamours according to familiarity and the presence of physical traits.

The Imago PC wants to assume the visage of a bishop with important access to religious archives. The player decides to familiarize themselves with the priest by assuming the visage of that bishop's childhood friend (secretly deceased, courtesy of our player). The player sets their intent as studying the bishop's appearance, and the task as arranging meetings over coffee every weekend for a month to discuss scripture. GM and player agree to make the process a linked test, using Doctrine to imitate the deceased friend's opinions and style of conversation. The GM decides the subject matter involved requires an Ob 3

Doctrine test for the player. The player rolls four successes on Doctrine, giving them a bonus die for the Glamours test.

The bishop they want to imitate has the Tonsured and Ruddy Complexion traits. The PC has used a mirror to check his work. That's an Ob 2 test for familiarity, +1 for the Tonsured trait (getting that darn haircut right) and +1 again for Ruddy Complexion. An Ob 4 test. The PC rolls their B4 Glamours (plus one from the successful Doctrine roll earlier) and ends up getting six successes. Killer roll! That's two over the obstacle of four. Anyone trying to scrutinize this visage needs to beat Ob 6.

With this new bishop's face on they head to a library to gain access to a room full of religious scrolls that only the bishop may enter. The guards are actively looking for imposters due to recent issues with theft, so the player will be challenged at the door.

The guard at the door tests her Observation B6 against Ob 6. The guard gets an amazing six successes, but the tie goes in favor of the PC. The guard is left scratching her head. Little does the PC know that the hawk-eyed district Inquisitor, who possesses a Faith-bestowed Second Sight, has been watching from the shadows nearby. She's rolled her B7 Perception (against the same Ob 6 the guard tried against) and gotten eight successes. Our inquisitor sees through the visage and understands that she's caught an otherworldly interloper in the act of deceiving her lady-on-watch.

Had the door guard gotten seven successes she would have noticed something wrong with the Imago's disguise, starting with either his hair or the tint of his cheeks. She would've been free to confront the Imago with suspicion and steer the story in a new direction, although she might not immediately assume the supernatural is at play.

Improvising

An Imago may invent an appearance from their own imagination. In this case the obstacle is based on the level of detail and intricacy desired.

A roll against Ob 1 allows the Imago to assume a generic face. They may spend extra successes over that Ob 1 to add lifelike detail to the improv, increasing the obstacle against any future scrutiny. They may also purchase cosmetic character traits. Only traits which they've successfully imitated previously may be purchased, meaning that the trait must be observed while *being invoked*. Each CT costs a success. A Call-On or Die Trait costs 1 success per point cost in burning. Aura traits may be added if an extra success is spent in addition

to their cost.

By default if a player is creating a persona from scratch the GM may allow them to use their Glamours exponent assuming all successes with no roll (and no benefit of re-rolling 6s). A roll may be preferred depending on the stakes and urgency of the improvisation.

Example: *Hairy (a Character Trait) costs a success. Poker Face (BWG) costs two. Aura of Fear (BWG) costs six.*

Once an Imago successfully makes an improvised visage they may recall it at the visage's original strength with the following modifiers: +2 Ob for a memory recall, +1 Ob for a likeness or detailed illustration (Appropriate artist skill Ob 2), or at no extra obstacle for a replica in stone, wood etc (Sculpting/Carving Ob 3). This is reduced by 1 each time the visage is successfully assumed after the first recall (not the initial improvisation) to a minimum of Ob 1.

Once the obstacle is reduced back to 1, the Imago has successfully burned the image of that improvisation into their mind and need not roll to assume the visage. Tax is rolled at Ob 1. They have just invented a new person! If frequent Acting rolls are made to imitate Character Traits in maintaining this new persona, imprinting may result (see below) and they may begin forming beliefs around this new identity.

Artist skills may be linked to an Improvisation test in advance if the Imago wishes to produce a visage in concrete form first.

Concentration Tax

Maintaining a visage is like tensing a muscle: it wears at the Imago's strength of mind. Test Will against the base Ob of the visage each time a scene ends with that visage still in effect. The effects of the roll carry over into the next scene.

Success means no tax. Success over the obstacle adds 1D advantage to the next tax test. Failure means Will *or* the strength of the visage is reduced by the margin of failure, player's choice. If Will is taxed to zero, the Imago passes out from overexertion. They evaporate and reform in the Fog, or suffer from an appropriately embarrassing complication/setback. Waking up bound by a summoner's circle in the ass-end of wizard town is a great way to piss off your judgemental Primarch patron.

Imprinting Dt

In the course of becoming other people, Imago are imprinted upon: they acquire traits. This is the only way an Imago may acquire character traits, call-ons, or die traits besides lifepath-specific ones.

Every Impulse We Strangle Will Only Poison Us

Whenever an Imago imitates or witnesses an invoked character trait they run a risk of it imprinting upon them. For this to occur they must resolve a belief (and earn artha for it) in the same session that they imitated the trait. One trait per adventure.

This is essentially an enforced trait vote. The players and GM vote for the appropriate trait if multiple traits are eligible. The character must add this to his sheet unless he opts to resist the imprint.

Struggling to resist imprinting takes a heavy toll on the Imago. Refusing an imprint requires setting one of his Will dice aside until the trait is expunged by an Ameliorator. If he imprints again before returning to the Fog and again chooses to resist he must set aside another die. These dice may be regained by succumbing to imprinting and accepting the traits. This may be performed at any time. If this suppressive effort ever reduces his Will dice to zero he permanently loses one die of Will and becomes unbound from whatever world he's currently in, *immediately* returning to the Fog to face the consequences of his weakness.

A Call-On or Die Trait may imprint in acquisition of a Deeds point.

To Be Popular, One Must Be A Mediocrity

Imprinting is not only shameful. In fact, it's downright punishable. Other Imago scorn any noticeable trace of the habit in others and regular check-up visits to the Ameliorator are a routine part of being an Interloper.

If an Imago invokes a trait in the presence of another she earns a 1D infamous reputation (assuming the other one lives to gossip about it) as a "Degenerate in need of cleansing." Balor, the Imago inquisitors, will seek her for expunging: forcefully purging the traits, risking permanent loss of Will dice in the process.

An Imago may only acquire as many traits equal to his Will exponent before he's forced to start setting aside Will dice to prevent himself from succumbing to Degeneracy. Character traits always apply. Imprinted call-ons and die traits only count towards the limit if they're related to personality, performance, intellect, or passion. This is subjective and to be worked out between the player and GM.

The Banality of Evil

Note that several lifepaths do include trait points and character traits. These are almost all Primarch or Outcast lifepaths where it is safely assumed the Imago has either learned when and how to conceal their degenerate behavior, or that they dwell outside of society. The more powerful an Imago becomes, the more likely it is they've strategically retained fragments of personality to use as concealed weapons or as sentimental tokens of their past lives. And how many of the Primarchs are, themselves, degenerates?

Intimacy

Imago society forbids affection, but changelings can form intense bonds through sharing their imprinting. These bonds can be stronger, and burn hotter, than human love and hatred. Rarely does such a thing end well, in either case.

If an Imago invokes a trait during a versus or linked test involving another Imago the rules of imprinting apply *as if the witness had also used that trait*. Fight!, Duel of Wits, Range & Cover, and medical treatment all apply. Both characters write down the other as a romantic and/or hateful relationship. The individual idioms used to describe these relationships are up to the group. It's definitely grounds for writing new Beliefs and Instincts related to the experience.

The epitome of trust between Imago is the deliberate exposure of imprinting between each other. In a society where imprinting represents succumbing to forbidden lust, the results of accidental imprinting between two changeling can cause all kinds of unexpected drama and conflict. Their shared traits are their secret love-children.

(Author's note: these rules are a bit fudgy, needs overhaul)

Imago who interact with living, breathing, expressive mortals for too long will inevitably succumb to degeneracy. This is the Imago term for when passion overcomes Will. This trait removes the ability to set aside Will dice to resist imprinting.

An Imago may choose degeneracy as a lifepath trait, or can acquire degeneracy through their character trait count exceeding their Will exponent (add a buffer of two for Grey shade, four for White shade).

My Prison Of Passion

The player chooses what arena of human drama their hapless degenerate prefers most, ideally one they've indulged in roleplaying during the adventure or which relates to their beliefs. Choose from the Human Condition list in the Religion section of the Magic Burner or have the player propose one.

Within this arena of drama, if the player encounters an opportunity to invoke any of their (many) character traits which would cause them hassle, trouble or expose them in some way, they *must* do so or set aside one die of Will until they find another opportunity to express that trait. Hitting zero Will forces a choice: express yourself, or suffer - either return to the Fog to face your fate or permanently lose a Will die and, in the process, pass out and wake up in a compromising situation.

Degeneracy counts as an Emotional Attribute which starts at B1 plus one for each character trait which relates to their preferred arena. Each time the player succumbs to degeneracy mark it as the next required test for advancement.

A Fate point may be spent to have Degeneracy help any skill rolled in the course of imitating a mortal personality, as long as the Imago carries out their play-act in the pursuit of their obsessed-over arena. This counts as a routine test. A Persona point allows the substitution of Degeneracy for a skill exponent, and a Deeds point allows the player to add their Degeneracy exponent to their skill exponent.

A 2D infamy as an "indulger of passions" is gained if his degeneracy is discovered by other Imago.

The player is encouraged to enforce the rules of Degeneracy themselves. The GM or group may intervene to enforce it if needed, but the goal is to create drama. Fighting the urge to become more human is a valiant, if doomed, effort. Submitting to Imago authority and having traits routinely expunged is one method of managing the emotional trait, although it comes at a potentially high cost.

To Define Is To Limit

An Imago character who fully succumbs to degeneracy (Exponent 10) becomes an unplayable lunatic wandering the borders between worlds as a puddle of shapes, colors and impressions, or worse. Degeneracy may not be removed as a trait nor its exponent reduced in dice via expunging, although the traits acquired through imprinting may be.

IMAGO LIFEPATHS

(Note: certain setting lifepaths do not include trait points. This is intentional by design.)

FOG SETTING

Setting Leads

Stolen From The Crib

Outcast, Ruins

3 pts: gen

Common Imago traits
(born lifepath)

Window-Licker

Outcast

3 pts: Inconspicuous, Begging, Abuse-wise

Note: Bottommost level of Imago society.

Fire-Keeper

Outcast, Interloper

5 pts: Firebuilding, Foraging, Bonfire-Wise, Death-Wise, Ugly Truth

1 pt: Firekeeper, Unhinged, Knows A Little Too Much

Requires: Guide, Fog-Bottler, Wisp-Keeper, Pyre-Keeper, Signaller, or at least one Interloper lifepath.

Note: Keeps fires burning around the Imago realm so that the black fog at the margins of their world doesn't smother everything. Maintain borders, act as watchmen.

Guide _____ Outcast, Ruins

4 pts: Orienteering, Fork In The Road-Wise, Fog-Wise, Tracking

Note: leads others through the Fog

Dirt-Sniffer _____ Outcast

3 pts: Scavenging, Shovel (weapon skill), Treasure-Wise

Note: digs in the forest for buried trinkets

Twig-Picker _____ Outcast

4 pts: Foraging, Knots, Herbalism, Forests-Wise

Note: gathers wood for the hungry fires

Fog-Bottler _____ Outcast, Ruins

4 pts: Survival, Orienteering, Observation, Bleakland-Wise

Requires: Fire-Keeper, Twig-Picker, Distiller or Wisp-Keeper

Note: risks lonely journeys into the Fog to gather potent wisps

Distiller _____ Outcast, Ruins

5 pts: Vapors-Wise, Alchemy, Brewer, Cooper, Vapor Appraisal

Requires: Fog-Bottler or Reliquary

Note: distills vapors from wisps

Wisp-Keeper _____ Outcast, Ruins

5 pts: Wisp-Wise, Soothing Platitudes, Falsehood, Sorrow-Wise, Haggling

1 tpt: Wisp-Talker

Requires: Firekeeper, Fog-Bottler, Distiller or Nursery

Note: nurtures captive wisps much like an apiarist manages bees

Hack _____ Outcast, Ruins

6 pts: Ditch-Digging, Hauling, Carpentry, Mason, Mending, Glamours

1 tpt: Voiceless

Note: A severe (permanently scarring) punishment - maintains the constantly crumbling fog-eroded citadels.

CRUMBLING RUINS SETTING

Cobble-Hob

Fog, Outcast

3 pts: Ruins-Wise, Streetwise, Brawling

1 pt: Hobbery

Requires: may be PC's second lifepath only

Note: hoodlums

Candelabrum

Fog

3 pts: Corner of (pick two streets)-Wise, Glamours, Observation

1 pt: Ennui

Notes: A punishment. Streetlamps.

Pyre-Tender

Fog, Outcast

4 pts: Firebuilding, Hungry Fires-Wise, Almanac, Climbing

Requires: Firekeeper, Twig-Picker, or Hack

Note: maintains the citadel-fires

Signaller

Fog, Outcast, Interloper

4 pts: Signalling, Ruins-Wise, Observation, Cryptography

Requires: Fire-Keeper, Pyre-Tender, Mouth, or Hack

Notes: communicates between citadels using coded light-shows

Analogue

Fog, Interloper

3 pts: Acting, Mimicry, Meditation

1 pt: Analogue

Notes: a punishment. "Backup file" of an individual.

Nursery

Fog, Outcast

3 pts: 'Ling-Swacking, Cooking, Intimidation, Ugly Truth

Notes: takes care of growing Imago

Archivist

Outcast, Interloper, Primarchy

5 pts: Research, Library-Wise, Appropriate Histories, Appropriate Languages, Cryptography

Requires: Catalogue or Familiar

Notes: Library-keepers

Reliquary

Fog, Primarchy

4 pts: Relics-Wise, Observation, Relic Appraisal, Symbology

Requires: Catalogue

Notes: Relic keepers

Gopher Fog, Outcast

3 pts: Scavenging, Shortcuts-Wise, Inconspicuous

1 pt: Fleet of Foot

Notes: Gopher this, gopher that.

Recitations None

2 pts: Conspicuous, Memorization Training*

Requirements: May not be the character's second lifepath

Note: A punishment. Recites coded fragments of secret songs, phrases and documents which, when sung in chorus, reveal their true shape.

Portrait Interloper

3 pts: Glamours, Crushing Boredom-Wise, Gossip-Wise

Notes: Punishment lifepath. Potted plants, decor, etc.

Catalogue Fog, Interloper

4 pts: Bureaucracy, Parcel-Wise, Appraisal, Forgery

Note: Organize and fetch from impressive stock warehouses/libraries of boxed artefacts and things.

Requires: Guide, Signaller, Mouth, Wisp-Keeper, or Gopher

Stoic Fog, Interloper

4 pts: Stoicist Doctrine, Stoic Diatribe, Philosophy, Imprinting-Wise

1 pt: Dead Inside

Notes: Cultists dedicated to eliminating all traces of personality

Advocate Interloper, Outcast

5 pts: Rule of Law, Rhetoric, Punishment-Wise, Obscure History, Falsehood

Requires: Mouth, Dorian, or Sweet Nothings

Notes: "lawyers"

Broker Fog, Outcast

8 pts: Haggling, Relic Appraisal, Information Appraisal, Administration, Observation, Secrets-Wise, Lost Treasures-Wise, Bullshit-Wise, Adventurer-Wise

Requires: Archivist or Reliquary

Notes: Merchants of secrets and relics

INTERLOPER SETTING

Bogey Fog, Outcast, Ruins

4 pts: Stealthy, Intimidation, Brawling, Podunk Village-Wise

Notes: baby-stealers

Pretender Fog, Outcast, Ruins

8 pts: Glamours, Acting, Mimicry, Inconspicuous, Falsehood, Stealthy, Sleight of Hand, Appropriate Artist Skills

1 pt: Indentured

Requires: At least two Ruins lifepaths or Analogue, Bogey, or Mouth

Notes: outworld infiltrators and task-hands

Enemite Fog, Outcast, Ruins

5 pts: Appropriate Weapons, Oratory, Appropriate Training Skills, Hero-Wise, Etiquette

1 pt: Tempered

Requires: Pretender

Notes: mortal heroes on demand

Songthief Fog, Outcast

4 pts: Sing, Acting, Elf Song-Wise, Inconspicuous

1 tpt: Songtheft

Requires: Pretender

Notes: steals elf songs

Sweet Nothings Fog, Outcast, Ruins

3 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Seduction, Desire-Wise

1 tpt: Indentured

Requires: Portrait or Pretender

Notes: seductors

Dorian Fog, Outcast, Primarch

6 pts: Etiquette, Observation, Persuasion, Noble-Wise, Poisons, Art Appraisal

Requires: Portrait and either Sweet Nothings or Songthief

Notes: royalty on demand

Inferni Fog, Outcast, Ruins

5 pts: Demon-Wise, Soothing Platitudes, Falsehood, Hagglng, Demonology

1 pt: Bound

Requires: Mouth or Dorian

Notes: pets of demons

Familiar Fog, Outcast

4 pts: Wizard-Wise, Falsehood, Persuasion, Sorcery

1 pt: Bound

Notes: wizard pets

Muse Fog, Outcast, Ruins

4 pts: Passionate Artist-Wise, Illustration, Painting, Sculpture

1 pt: Indentured

Requires: Portrait, Candelabrum or Dorian

Notes: pretty literal

PRIMARCHY SETTING

Inductee Outcast, Interloper, Ruins

3 pts: Primarchy, Imago-Wise, Betrayal-Wise

2 pts: Liminal Aura, Nervous, Desperate

Requires: At least 3 lifepaths in the Interloper setting.

Notes: entry into the Primarchy

Balor Outcast, Interloper, Ruins

7 pts: Observation, Intimidation, Interrogation, Tracking, Aura Reading, Brawling, Lies-Wise

1 pt: The Eye

Requires: Bogey, Enemite, Stoic, or Inferti, and Liminal Aura

Notes: thought police

Ameliorator None

6 pts: Interrogation, Torture, Alchemy, Expunger, Personality-Wise, Degeneracy-Wise

1 pt: Rites of Purging, Genial

Requires: Balor or Stoic and Liminal Aura

Notes: very scary Imago who forcibly remove traits

Hollow Outcast

5 pts: (to be drafted)

1 pt: Scrubbed, Dreaded (no trait entries yet)
Requires: Stoic and Balor or Ameliorator
Notes: Grim bishop-inquisitors of the Stoic way

Mastermind Outcast

3 pts: Cryptography, Useful Idiot-Wise, Multiverse-Wise / 3 pts: gen
3 pts: Extreme Irrevocable Paranoia, Xanatos, Affinity for Schemes
Requires: Liminal Aura and at least six Primarchy/Interloper/Ruins lifepaths
Notes: when a Imago hits a certain plateau of power

Demarch Outcast

2 pts: Oligarchy-Wise, Primarch-Wise / 4 pts: gen
2 pts: Ruthless Ambition
Requires: Liminal Aura and either Mastermind or at least eight
Primarchy/Interloper/Ruins lifepaths
Notes: an even broader and harder to escape plateau of power

Primarch None

3 pts: Dominion-Wise, Conspiracy-Wise, Revenge-Wise / 5 pts: gen
1 pt: Inscrutable Aura
Requires: Liminal Aura, Extreme Irrevocable Paranoia and Demarch
Notes: top of the pyramid

OUTCAST SETTING

Lost Fog

3 pts: Foraging, Survival, Borders-Wise
1 pt: Sleepless Nights
Requires: May not be the character's second lifepath
Notes: Imago who get lost in the Fog

Cacophanie Fog, Interloper

3 pts: Appropriate Song (one only to start), Entropy-Wise, Musical Composition
2 pts: Robber's Tongue, Incessant Off-key Humming
Requires: Songthief
Notes: Imago who learn how to sing Elf songs . . . horribly

Burnout Fog

2 pts: Inconspicuous, Burnout-Wise

1pt: Burnout

Requires: At least one Interloper lifepath

Notes: willpower destroyed by expunging

Libertine Fog, Ruins

4 pts: Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Emotions-Wise

2 pts: Degeneracy, Emotional

Requires: At least one Interloper lifepath

Notes: foul personality-loving degenerates!

Relic Thief Fog, Interloper

4 pts: Stealthy, Sleight of Hand, Falsehood, Haggling

Requires: Catalogue or Reliquary

Notes: stole something of value from a Fog reliquary

Anathema None

3 pts: Inconspicuous, Guilt-Wise, Murder-Wise

1 pt: Hunted

Notes: proven guilty of murder of their own kind

Ideologue Fog

4 pts: Emotional Doctrine, Philosophy, Suasion, Oratory

3 pts: Cult of Personality, Melting Down The Self, Passionate

Requires: Degeneracy trait

Notes: heretical believers in embracing degeneracy, counterpoint to the Stoicists

Bleak None

6 pts: Stealthy, Intimidation, Tracking, Brawling, Butchery, Prey-Wise, Unspeakable Horrors-Wise

3 pts: Bleak, Feral, Loathsome To Behold, Teeth Like Rusty Nails

Requires: Lost, Anathema, or Fog-Bottler

Notes: Imago who walked too far out into the lightless depths of the Fog... and came back

Cradle Fawn Fog, Interloper

4 pts: Acting, Mimicry, Jealousy-Wise, Human Family-Wise

1 pt: Homesick, Wistful, Accepted

Requires: At least one lifepath from Interloper

Notes: wants its old human life back

NEW SKILLS

Expunger Will

The dreaded skill which allows an Ameliorator to strip away traits from other Imago. It's a very unpleasant combination of applying Interrogation, wicked magic, and specially processed wisp-vapors upon an imprinted victim.

A versus test is rolled between the expunger and the victim's Will. Successes in favor of the Expunger mean a trait is removed for each success over the obstacle. The victim's Will is taxed by one die for each trait removed. Traits removed should be the most recently acquired during the player's adventures (a good reason to mark down imprinted traits in order), or the needs of the narrative may point to the proper traits. If stuck, the GM may roll the DoF for each trait in sequence down the list until a 1 comes up - that trait is removed, and the rolling begins from the top until the necessary number of traits have been scratched off.

A player may forfeit the roll if they wish to cleanse their character's palate of traits, but they still suffer the tax.

Taxed dice are only lost temporarily and recovered through downtime or at the GM's discretion. Exponent loss if Will is taxed below zero (into the negatives) is *permanent*: in other words, that Imago character forever loses one die of Will for each die taxed in excess of their *current* Will at the time of Amelioration. If the Imago has a Grey shade will, count their Will as being 2 dice higher. If White, count it as four higher. If their Will is reduced to exactly zero, no less, they do not lose any dice but all of their imprinted traits are written off.

If this permanent reduction reduces the Imago's unmodified Will to 2 or less, they acquire the Burnout trait. If it reduces their unmodified Will to zero permanently, they wither away into a wisp.

Example: an Imago with B6 Will is scrubbed of 5 imprinted traits. They roll to resist and lose the test by 4 successes. Their Will is taxed by 4 dice, which they can recover as per normal, and they write off 4 traits. If that Imago had B4 will, they would have had their Will reduced to zero and lost all of their adventure-acquired imprinted traits. If they had only B1

Will available (likely due to repressing a little pile of imprinted traits), they would go into the negatives and lose 3 dice of Will forever, putting their new Will exponent at B3 - a freshly-baked burnout for the pile.

A versus test in the victim's favor mean that they have successfully held on. Will is taxed by one die only and only a single trait is removed due to the nastiness of the experience. Player's choice of trait. Ties go to the defender - the victim.

Expunger always rides - the Ameliorator lets the victim go once the process is over, believing them to be cured.

FoRKS: Torture, Interrogation, Poisoner

Glamours Will/Perception

Allows Imago to form patterns from the Fog, including their own bodies. Used in conjunction with the Riddleskin common trait this allows them to assume visages and improvise appearances. The skill's primary use is to create faces but it may also be used in other creative ways such as cantrip effects. Also allows the voiceless Hacks to communicate with one another. Glamours counts as a magical skill and is open-ended.

FoRKS: Any creative skills and Memory Training

Information Appraisal Perception

The economy of gossip. Used by Imago to determine the worth of secrets and information in both material trade, information-for-information trade, and grander contextual matters.

'Ling-Swacking Will/Perception

Child rearing for Imago - same rules as the Human skill.

Memorization Training Will

Recitations requires remembering a string of seemingly unrelated utterances simply through rote repetition. This training skill acts as per the Eidetic Memory trait (?). It may also be FoRKeD into Glamours when recalling a face from memory.

Primarchy Will/Perception

Functions as both Etiquette and Bureaucracy for trying to deal with the maddeningly complicated and shrouded expectations of the Primarchy.

FoRKS: mostly appropriate Wises

Relic Appraisal Perception

A specialized form of Appraisal used by Imago to determine not only the material value of an object, in various currencies and bartering markets, but also its broader contextual value in the grander scheme of All Things.

Stoic Doctrine _____ Will

Good lord, do they ever shut up? The stoics are those who take the Imago obsession with kismet and self-oblivion to the extreme, forming it into a harsh belief system. Functions identically to the Doctrine skill.

Vapor Appraisal _____ Perception

Allows a distiller to judge the quality and potential of distilled vapors, including the sorts of knowledge a flask might grant.

NEW TRAITS

Accepted _____ Dt

The human family of this Imago has (cautiously) accepted them back as their birth child in spite of them being a monster from beyond. Grants a 1D Affiliation with a human family or community of humble origins and a 3D infamous reputation amongst their own kind. Yes, the entire species.

Affinity for Schemes _____ Dt

Adds 2D advantage to any non-Martial skill when coming up with or putting into motion some diabolically complicated plot. Plot must be sufficiently audacious: it must be in the pursuit of resolving a belief, involve at least one persona/deeds point spent on carrying it out, and involve multiple circles acquaintances (two or three), PCs and/or PC relationships for the dice to be added. Best invoked during linked tests.

Analogue _____ Dt

Retaining traits is forbidden, but the Primarchs find it useful to program suitable chattel as carbon-copy imitations of notable individuals. This trait grants the Analogue up to three free character traits upon burning which match those of another PC or NPC in the campaign.

Bleak _____ Dt

Imago who wander out past the light of the citadel fires and into the inky outer reaches of

the Fog risk coming back... wrong. This trait indicates that they have become a creature of living nightmare. The Bleak seek to devour the hearts of living creatures, including other Imago, so that they may acquire their intoxicating traits.

Imprinting works differently for the Bleak. Instead of acquiring traits through witnessing them in use, they roll Butchery (vs Ob 5) to rip a perfectly intact heart from a creature and roll Forte (vs Forte of the creature) to successfully gobble it down raw on the spot. Freshly-butchered, still-pumping hearts only: this is a ravenous act of gluttony.

If both are successful this allows the Bleak to acquire one trait from that creature's sheet, player's choice. Failing Butchery results in a useless lump of bloody tissue. Failing Forte results in taxed Will by the margin of failure or the acquisition of a different trait of the GM's choice (probably something unpleasant).

Bleak works as per Degeneracy. The Imago can, and inevitably will, gain more traits than their Will exponent. Use the Bleak trait in place of Degeneracy. Their Emotional Attribute becomes "Bleak" at B1 plus any previously imprinted character traits associated with the magical Corruption rules in the Magic Burner (P.00). Routine tests always count for advancement.

If an Imago already succumbed to Degeneracy prior to becoming Bleak they transfer over their exponent and shade to the new title and rules.

When a Bleak character witnesses a character trait used in play (PC or NPC) they must make a Steel test. Failing this Steel test is a routine test for advancing Bleak. Hesitation results in one of the following, player choice: Run Screaming while loudly voicing their foul desires for all to hear, or they must find a way, and soon, to devour that creature's delicious potent heart. Failure to get that heart in its mouth, even if the Butchery or Forte rolls are failed, within the span of the current *adventure* (not session) causes the Bleak to suffer the permanent loss of either a Will or Forte die, player's choice. Acquiring a new trait through devouring a heart is a Difficult or Challenging test for advancement, whichever is needed.

Bleak works using the same rules as human Corruption (Magic Burner) but only for tests made in the pursuit of devouring more hearts. It may aid skills through artha expenditure in the same fashion.

When Bleak reaches exponent 10 the player describes their final, horrid, act of hunger before they change into... something else. Something unplayable, at any rate. The group must be left with a hint of the Bleak's new and horrifying silhouette. They may return later

at the GM's discretion as a villain NPC, big bad guy, monster-of-the-week, etc.

If it wasn't already clear, Bleak may not be expunged nor written off.

Bound Dt

As per Indentured, but with either a wizard or demonic master to whom the Imago must answer. This wizard or demon is named and counts as a free 5 point relationship, or 5 points credit towards a more expensive relationship. The Imago may not refuse a direct order from a Bound patron but may take the patron's phrasing as literally as they wish. This does not grant the 1D Affiliation that Indentured does. A character may be both Bound and Indentured.

Burnout Dt

This Imago has been ruined by the expunging process. Reduce hesitation for surprise or fear by four. Will is capped at B3.

Cobble-Hob Dt

Grants a 1D Affiliation in a ruins haze-gang along with a 1D infamous reputation as an uncouth punk. Also may act as a call-on for Streetwise rolls.

Cult of Personality Dt

Ideologues form their own (usually half-baked) cults of thought and self-expression. They attempt to spread seeds of change and rebellion among their own kind. Grants 1D fame amongst degenerate Imago and 1D Infamy amongst the Primarchy. Ideologues don't tend to last very long.

Dead Inside Dt

This Imago has had their passions scoured to the bone by endless recitation of droning, nihilistic mantras. Their glammers are always dull, unimaginative and lack creativity - add +5 Ob to improvisations. They can no longer imitate the traits of other beings using the Acting skill and will never imprint again. Remove all character traits besides Dead Inside, unless the trait explicitly mentions otherwise. Dead Inside cannot be expunged.

Emotional Char. Trait

Extreme Irrevocable Paranoia Dt

PCs or NPCs seeking this character with Circles will always invoke the Enmity Clause. Even on a successful roll they are still, secretly, put on the scheming and disturbed Mastermind's blacklist. This trait may not be written off during play, expunged, or extinguished via stoic

mantras: deep down in the untouchable depths of their immortal being this character will never, ever trust *anyone* ever again.

The Eye Dt

Balor are thought police amongst Imago, sniffing out emotional taint and dragging the degenerates back kicking and screaming to the Fog where they may be cured of their disease. The Eye grants the Balor a Second Sight, allowing them to easily peer through the glammers of other Imago when not in the Fog, rolling their Perception as Observation. It allows them to test Observation to see through the deceptions of other Primarchs with Liminal Aura as well. It may also be used as a Call-On for Intimidation or Interrogation when pressing other Imago to reveal the presence of acquired character traits. In addition The Eye grants them all of the powers that the Magesense spell does, including use of the Aura Reading skill (BWG P.00).

Feral Char. Trait

Tempered Dt

The odd particularly robust Imago are often chosen to be Enemites, who are thrust into mortal affairs as falsely-planted prophesied ones or to covertly replace influential heroes. This trait raises the Power and Forte cap of an Enemite to 8 when outside of the Fog.

Firekeeper Dt

These Imago tend the precious bonfires of the Fog. The roaming Fog wisps fuel the flames. Without their light the black depths of the Fog would encroach and swallow the citadels up. Firekeepers are also tasked with building new forest pathways and clearings, pushing further into the Fog to uncover more ruins and secrets. The Primarchy, hungry for knowledge and storage space, demands it.

Firekeepers fill a strange mix of roles in society: border watch, gravedigger and explorer. The job is extremely dangerous. The Bleak roam in the black depths of the forests while strange eddies and currents in the Fog constantly threaten to blow the fires out, especially the farther the Primarchy pushes into the mysterious reaches of their own exile-world. The job is also desirable: it keeps the firekeepers at a comfortable distance from the insufferable machinations of the citadel ruins.

Firekeepers are respected. They have a 1D reputation amongst any Imago in the Fog lifepath setting. This trait also grants the Firekeeper a 1D Affiliation with other Firekeepers.

With this trait comes responsibility. Failure to tend to the fires properly risks losing the

trait and reputations/affiliations not only granted by the trait but earned in the course of firekeeping during play. A firekeeper who loses their station will never again be allowed to regain this trait, so important is the immaculate upkeep of the fires. If the fires die, the Imago die.

Hunted _____ Dt

This trait behaves like the Mannish trait Outlaw except that it applies only to other Imago. Also guarantees that the Balor know this one's unique inner aura and are out looking for him.

Homesick _____ Char Trait

Incessant Off-Key Humming _____ Char Trait

Indentured _____ Dt

Interlopers are allowed out of the Fog only to serve their masters. This grants the Pretender a free 5 point relationship with a master who will call upon him to perform tasks. If a more expensive relationship with his master is desired this trait reduces the RP cost by 5. It also grants the Interloper a free 1D Affiliation amongst other Interlopers, the details of which may be tailored to the needs of the PC and the campaign.

Inscrutable Aura _____ Dt

The unknowable, the unseen. This trait adds +5 Ob to any Observation test vs the trait-holder's Glamours.

Liminal Aura _____ Dt

When an Imago successfully topples their master from their post, another more powerful changeling may induct them into the Primarchy as a replacement. After this process is complete they may use the Riddleskin rules to deceive their kin even within the Fog. This also grants them a 1D reputation amongst Primarchs and 1D infamy amongst their former Interloper "friends."

Loathsome To Behold _____ Dt

The glammers of the Bleak are the stuff of nightmares. +3 Ob to all Glamours tests for the Loathsome character. Any glaring faults due to failed rolls will manifest as uncannily disgusting and weird features: inside-out eyes, flesh that moves on its own, impossible anatomy, etc. A Loathsome changeling may use Glamours in place of the Intimidation skill so long as the player describes each disturbing detail as the successes pile up. Even if the player does not test Intimidation, mortal witnesses to Loathsome flaws should probably be

rolling Steel tests. Double obstacle penalty for other Imago to imitate an improvisation by the Loathsome (and maybe even a Steel test for trying!).

Melting Down The Self Dt

Ideologues, in the Imago sense, are painfully aware of the consequences of the society they've suffered for so long. They seek to dissolve the barriers between individual Imago through the sharing of traits. This trait earns the Ideologue a persona point whenever another changeling successfully acquires a trait through imprinting in the same scene that the Ideologue made use of that trait.

Rites of Purging Dt

The Ameliorator scrubs the tainted soul of an imprinted Imago clean, often leaving behind little more than a dull and docile shell of a being. The more degenerate they've become the worse this process is. This trait allows the use of the Expunger skill to remove traits from other changeling.

Robber's Tongue Dt

This Imago has accomplished the unthinkable: it actually learned how to sing an Elf song. *Horribly*. One Elf Song may be chosen as a skill at burning. This trait opens the character up to learning others without instruction, via eavesdropping. Aptitude to learn any new songs is increased by five.

There is, of course, a twist: any magic woven by the Robber's Tongue will eventually turn sour, go foul, or come undone in a miserable fashion. Whatever intent the Imago wishes to accomplish with their obscene and silted version of the spell song will, at some point, turn against the changeling and those nearby, or fail spectacularly at the worst possible moment.

Examples: a successful Chant of the Offering will later fill the victim with bloodthirsty buyer's remorse (Enmity Clause). A Song of the Sword will cause the robber's steel to shatter spectacularly, as per the Shards spell, inflicted on both wielder and foe (and any other applicable targets), on a DoF 1 per Strike or 1-2 on a Great Strike. Any wonderment caused by the Robber's Tongue inspires a Steel test at +1 Ob: it disgusts, outrages, nauseates.

Possession of the Robber's Tongue is beyond blasphemous and strictly forbidden by anyone and everyone who would ever have a reason to care, Imago and Elf alike.

Songthief Dt

This trait allows the Songthief to learn, but not sing, Elf songs and repeat them verbatim in

a monotone. They may learn any Elf Song in the character burner by hearing it sung in full an equal number of times to their aptitude. Once learned this song may be recited, but may not be tested, by the Imago. It's effectively stuck at B0 forever unless they possess the Robber's Tongue trait. Songthieves cannot learn songs "sung" by Imago who possess the Robber's Tongue and any attempt to do so will frustrate and sadden them to tears.

Teeth Like Rusty Nails Dt

As per the Orcish common trait "Fanged and Clawed" minus the claws. Also adds 1D to Forte rolls when devouring a heart.

Unhinged Char. Trait

Voiceless Dt

The downtrodden Hacks have had the ability to speak out loud expunged from their minds so that they may focus on their labor without indulging in distracting chit-chat. They communicate concepts to one another using their glammers only.

A Voiceless character talks via symbolic flutterings of color, like a cuttlefish. Only other Hacks and their Primarch taskmasters understand these concept-strings intuitively and on sight - the Voiceless trait or Liminal Aura trait grants fluency in this language. Others must roll Cryptography, or Perception at double Ob, to interpret.

Wistful Char Trait

Wisp-Talker Dt

The tender caretaker of the fallen. Acts as a combination of Low Speech and Aura Reading for interpreting the behaviors and qualities of wisps: mood, potency, and any retained skills or traits.

Xanatos C-O

Call-On for any skill used to Dismiss in a Duel of Wits where the Mastermind has successfully trapped his opponent in a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation.

IMAGO GEAR

Material possessions are funny when it comes to the Imago - what's valuable in the Fog is much different from what's valuable elsewhere. Interloper lifepathers are free to purchase any gear from any appropriate lists needed to fulfill their roles among mortals. These

otherworldly goods may be useless or incredibly valuable within the Fog.

The list below describes Imago-only items that may be purchased which are likely to have value in the Fog.

Artifact, var. - Cost is dependant on quality, GM's discretion. Use the Enchanting rules (Magic Burner, P.00)

Keepsake, 6rps - Same as Human personal effect, but allows an Imago to retain one (and only one) trait so long as the keepsake is carried upon their person and has significance in relation to at least one belief or instinct. If the keepsake is lost or destroyed, or if the belief or instinct is resolved, write the trait off. Expunging does *not* work on the keepsake trait unless the item itself is destroyed or otherwise desecrated by the Ameliorator, in full view of the victim, as part of the expunging process.

Sprawling array of handwritten notes, 3rps - All the loose paper and black ink you could ever need to plan someone's downfall. Counts as an inexhaustible skill toolkit for Write and Composition, or for any Ob 1-2 Illustration test (Specific tools for artist skills are required for Ob 3+ tests).

Expunging tools, 10rps - Exhaustible

Wisp-bottling equipment, 10rps - Exhaustible

Art supplies, 6rps - Counts as exhaustible tools for any artist skill

Hack stone-mending kit, 6rps - Exhaustible

Twig cutter, 5rps - Equiv. run-of-the-mill hatchet

Walking stick, 5rps - Equiv. run-of-the-mill shillelagh

Wrought-iron fire poker, 5rps - Firekeeper/Pyre-Tender only weapon. A symbol of station. Pow 2, Add 1, WS 3, VA 2

Vapors, var. - Fog distillations which can grant 1D advantage die for all skills within a category for a scene. Purchases one exhaustible flask of vapors (1 on DoF means you've exhausted the draught). Costs as many RPs as the number of hours the category takes to earn a Challenging test when practicing (Academic costs 8rps, Artisan costs 12rps, Sorcerous costs 15rps, etc). Brewing vapors uses the Enchantment rules with wisps as the antecedent. Draw out skills as one would enchantment effects for potions.

Vapors may also contain memories, which when consumed operate similarly to successful use of Wisps - they impart GM-vetted information relevant to the scene, adventure,

campaign, world, etc. The cost for these should be 3rps per “success” on a Wise. A Wise may be chosen upon purchase, or these vapors may contain more detailed specific information at the GM’s discretion (plot revelations and the like).

Certain distillations of vapors may contain traits due to intentional or unintentional mishandling during the brewing process - “trait taint” may be used as a consequence of a failed Enchanting roll if the intent is to brew pure vapors. Likewise, traits may be purposefully kept in the brew by the distiller if desired. Consuming these trait-tainted vapors immediately causes imprinting of the trait(s) contained within. These vapors, once identified as tainted, are treated as contraband and disposed of (or confiscated) and the brewer immediately sought out for questioning.

Vapors are normally toxic to non-Imago (Forte test at Ob 4 to not have stat drained by margin of failure, or by 1 on a success - mortals gain the benefits of fog vapors only on a success). Brewing vapors into liquid potions and tinctures that can be safely consumed by mortals adds +1 Ob to the distillation process as per the Enchanting rules.

IMAGO PROPERTY

Property from the lists of other species in other worlds may also be purchased, but the following are unique to the Fog (and may only be located within it). Blackmail and secrets count as property.

Hammock in a crowded warrens, 1rp

Foggy shack, 2rps

Damp cave with an entry like a yawning mouth, 3rps

Crumbling and exposed parapet, 10rps

A sound-insulated room with a lockable door, 25 rps

A citadel library, 50rps

Ominous manor, 100rps

Distillery, 16rps - Counts as a workshop for tests involving vapor-distilling

Wispery, 20rps - Counts as a workshop for tests involving wisp caretaking

Portrait gallery, var - Allows PCs to buy living art (NPCs) wholesale to decorate their spooky lair. Costs 10rps per Glamours exponent. Doesn’t come with anyone to make sure it stays in place.

Gopher pack, var - Allows PCs to buy servile Imago to run errands. As an alternative to buying a relationship with a single servant, the PC may spend 15rps for a gang of underlings who can scavenge, run errands, and deliver messages for them. Loyalty not guaranteed. Counts as a special sort of relationship. The appropriate Affiliations or Reputations required to help you boss them around must be purchased separately.

Hiding spaces, var - To stash the things you value. Purchase individually and describe the location on your character sheet in a sentence. Costs 5rps per +Ob vs Observation. 5rps buys an Ob 1 hidey hole and it goes up from there.

A trove of treasures, 100rps - May be tapped for gear, secrets, and other handy things just how like a mortal fund can be tapped for cash. It is taxed using the same rules. Counts as a 5D fund. May be rebuilt through testing Resources or through meeting conditions in play. Comes with an Ob 5 hiding place. Pay 10 per +1Ob as per "Hiding Spaces" above.

Embarrassing Secret, 3rps, 7 rps, 12rps - Can be revealed during a Duel of Wits to add 1-3D advantage dice to a Point, Incite, Obfuscate, Rebuttal or Dismiss. It is then written off your sheet. Also functions as a fund (BWG. 00), but may not be divided up into individual dice: you spill the beans for what it's worth in full.

Blackmail Material, 5, 10, 15rps - Grants 1-3D advantage dice if revealed at an opportune time on an appropriate Social skill (particularly Extortion, Intimidation, Interrogation, Persuasion, or Haggle). Write it off your sheet once you show your hand. Also functions as a fund (BWG. 00), but may not be divided up into individual dice.

AUTHOR'S FINAL WORDS

Changeling were conceived as a twist on various mythological and pop-cultural beings - primarily the changeling of pre-industrial Europe and the D&D doppelganger. My goal was to create a playable shapeshifting species that fit with the core Burning Wheel mechanics and sphere of influences which was not alien and obscure, as the D&D creatures are, but instead all too human. Pitiable, tragic, imprisoned by their nature and dark history, but also capable of undergoing dramatic change as any good Burning Wheel character should. Hurt them, bend them, break them, rebuild them.

These rules have been built with the implications of a multiverse (in the vein of the Planescape setting for D&D) with their own unique realm playing heavily into their gameplay mechanics. However, the rules can and should be adapted to your worlds.

Lifepaths can be altered or removed if the Fog doesn't fit your world's concept, or it could be used as a stylistic basis for a binary afterlife (as part of Hell or Purgatory, with Imago being a form of demon). It could be part of an expanded fey world, with its own court and politics between other fair folk. Take what works, leave the rest behind.

Some of the world-building details of the setting have been left purposefully vague, particularly the stoicist and libertine cults of thought. These ideologies are open to GM interpretation as to their purposes in Imago society. I included them to provide room to expand possible realms of religion, conversionism, and ideological battle. I encourage you to flesh them out yourself or, if desired, ignore them completely.

Likewise the mysteries of the Fog, this gloomy world that even the Imago do not understand fully, are there for your imagination to build upon. Who constructed the citadels, and why were they abandoned? Who are the Primarchs? What lies beyond the black borders of the fog, and what unknown dreadfulness transforms wayward Imago into slaving horrors? It's my hope that these questions might drive your own world building and create interesting adventures for your players.

Thank you for reading.

*"Knowledge would be fatal.
It is the uncertainty that charms one.
A mist makes things wonderful."*