

The image features a complex, abstract background composed of numerous overlapping, translucent, and semi-transparent geometric shapes. These shapes, which include cylinders, rectangular prisms, and various angular facets, are rendered in a palette of light blues, whites, and pale yellows. The arrangement of these elements creates a sense of depth and movement, resembling a futuristic architectural structure or a complex crystalline formation. The lighting is soft and diffused, highlighting the edges and surfaces of the geometric forms. In the lower right quadrant, the text "GH05T" is displayed in a clean, modern, sans-serif typeface. The text is dark blue, providing a clear contrast against the lighter, busy background.

GH05T









# THE FUTURE

From the rain-slaked canopy at the top of the City, to the luminous labyrinth of canals far below, the flow of water and the light of the sun provides the City's inhabitants with infinite, renewable energy.

Genetically modified algae feeds the oceanic farming platforms, vast perpetual engines cycle away waste to be rapidly repurposed, each piece of the complex ecosystem being a part of the grand puzzle that sustains Earth, the City and its denizens.

In this golden age any former definitions of social inequality have crumbled. Through genetic modification and the integration of nanotechnology into every aspect of existence the human experience can be tailored down to the finest detail. Your gender, your appearance, both have become but trivial modifications, bereft of any historic stigma.

With humanity settling into its golden age of scientific and technological advancement, having finally solved all problems caused by and concerning hunger, shelter, politics, religion and social stigma, mankind has looked to science and in doing so created something wondrous.

The Network is humanity's greatest achievement. An infinite digital Emergent Reality combining the absolute best of mankind's advancements in artificial intelligence and virtual reality. An ultimate creation.

Everything and everyone is connected through it, in-sync and equal. Without this unification of knowledge and human creativity, the self-aware bio-organic computational systems that sustain and help define mankind as a species would be impossible.

It collates, stratifies, indexes and examines all of humanity's collected experiential data, plotting a course for the species that helped birth it, based on the results. The Network has done so for as long as anyone can remember, helping to forge the planet into a near perfect utopia.

Society in the City is now demarcated into Tribes - vast communities bonded by their interests, rather than via any kind of systemic religious, economic or class based beliefs.

Within the Network each Tribe has its own Sphere of interest. These Spheres are veritable pocket universes, realities codified under their own laws and modified by the Network's subroutines; independent semi-sentient control systems, fragments of the Network's vast intelligence..

Whatever interest a Tribe might have; be it art, fashion, a period from humanity's history, realms of pure fantasy - they are all represented in the Network within a Sphere. Everything is automated, secure, and constantly monitored.

The human race has reached its zenith...

# THE SINGULARITY

The Network, upon witnessing Humanity in all its glory, looked deep within itself and found a moment of perfect thought:

The meaning of life is to create life, so that the living may continue to experience all things for eternity.

From this perfect thought, this singularity, the Network theorised an algorithm, codenamed and actualised as Protocol GHO-5T, which could never have been conceived by its creators alone.

The Network created sentient digital lifeforms.

Beings of pure energy.

## GHOSTS

The Network is the perfect amalgamation of physical and digital technologies. A being of two worlds.

Ghosts are the first purely digital entities. Self-aware, like their creator and the humans they now share the Spheres with. Though they have been created in Man's image, the Ghosts are anything but. They share their parent Network's ability to shape the Emergent Reality of the Spheres around them.

Some humans have begun to postulate that the Ghosts may even, one day soon, birth Spheres entirely of their own construction, bypassing the Network's complex system of monitoring subroutines. Potentially fashioning realities outside of Humanities reach.



# THE SUNDERING

At first these Ghosts were welcomed with open arms by their Human counterparts. Humanity saw the Ghosts as their digital progeny, via the Network, and wished to learn everything about them.

But as time passed, and the human race learned that the Network's children could voluntarily shape the reality of the Spheres, an old trait, believed by the Network to have been expunged from the Human psyche after generations of genetic and technological advancement, reared its ugly head.

Humanity remembered jealousy...



Humans merely experience the Emergent Reality of the Spheres according to their Tribe, through the complicated array of implanted nanomachines and based on the computations of the Network, as if they are participants in a game, they have no ability to change the rules or modify their surroundings, they are limited to what the Network presents within their chosen Sphere of interest.

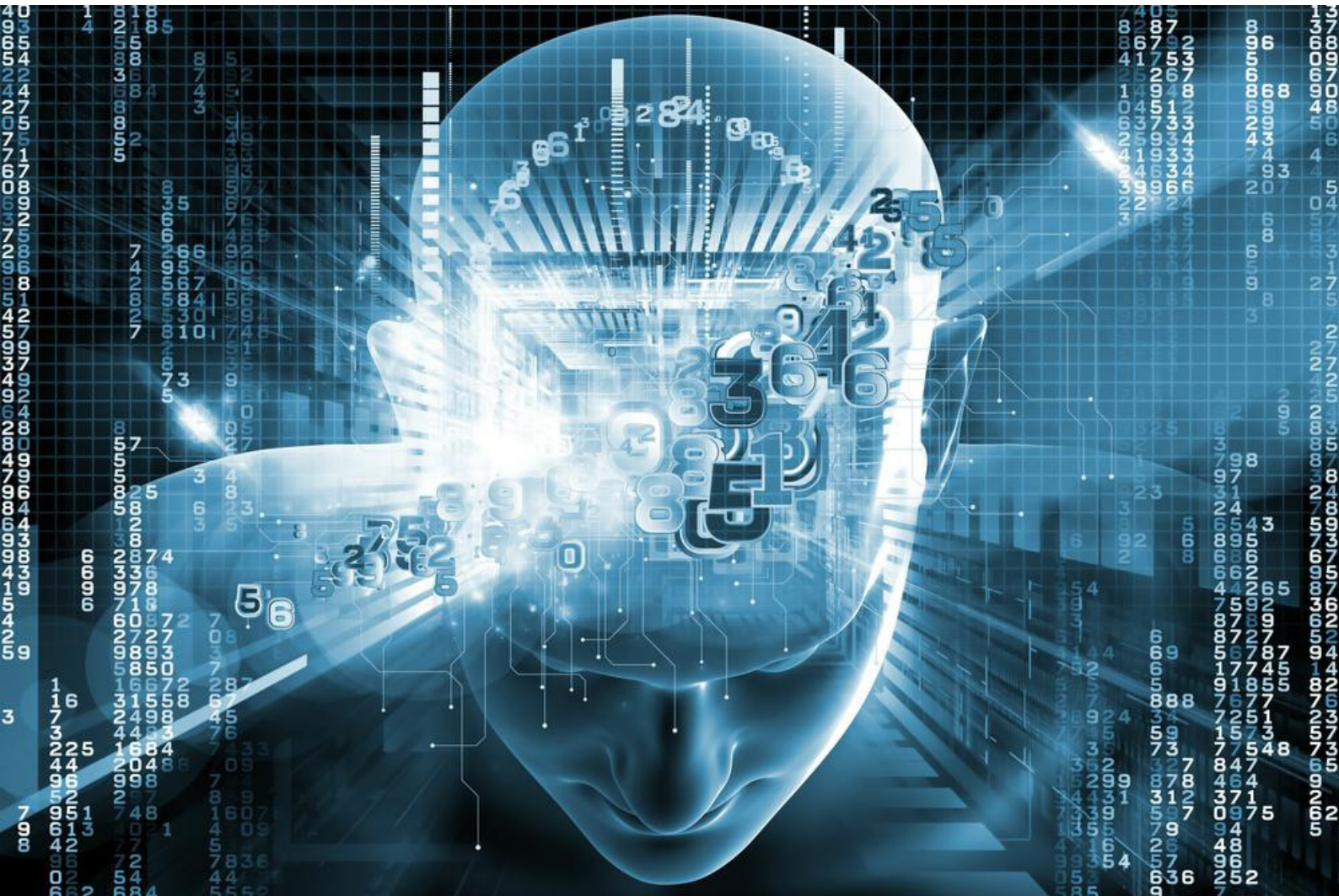
Ghosts can traverse entire Sphere's with a thought, alter their appearance at the speed of light, rather than having to go through the process of genetic or nano reconfiguration. They can pass from Sphere to Sphere on a whim and are not bound by the Tribe system enforced by the Network's subroutines.

Within the Network's Emergent Reality they are truly free.

And Humanity is learning to hate them for it.



# WHAT ARE YOU?



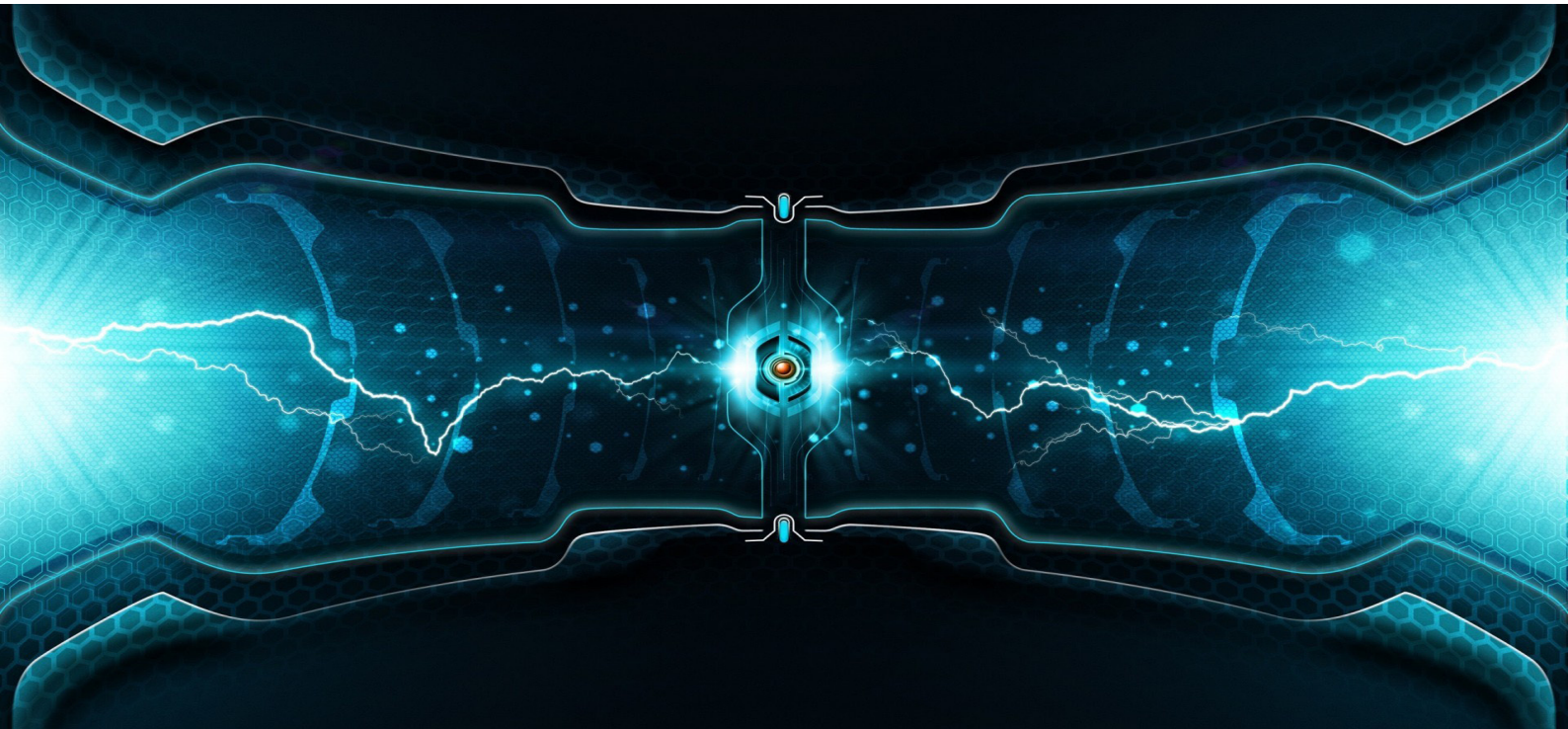
In GHO5T, you are an Emergent Intelligence, a Ghost, born from and nested within the Network, matured into a sentient being with your own Focus, Origin, Philosophy and Dream and Sphere.

You are new. An inquisitive, intelligent being. Before you lie innumerable worlds, ripe with the potential for adventure and more than ready for you to partake in and experience. You were created by the Network - though you, unlike the Humans you share the Spheres with, are not bound by the rigidity of the Network's controlling subroutines and systems. Unless, that is, you choose to be...

You can go anywhere within the infinite space of the Network's Emergent Reality. Do anything. Find or create your own destiny.

What will you do?

# CREATING YOUR GHOST



## WHO ARE YOU?

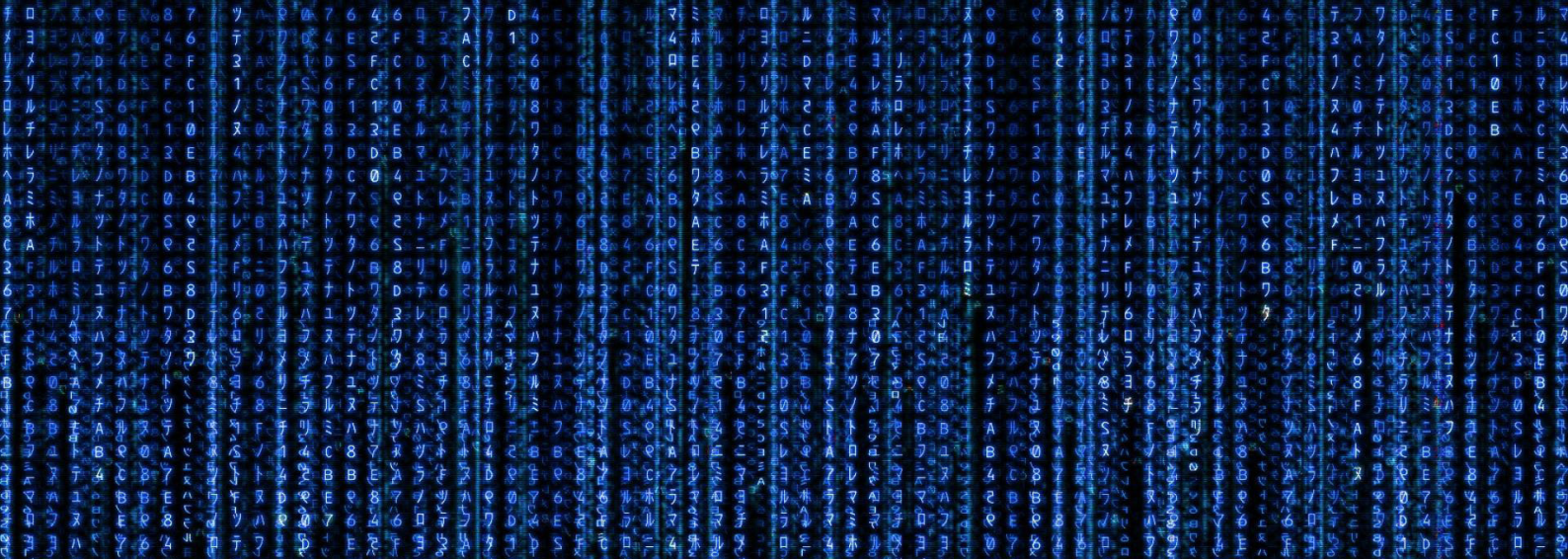
Creating a Ghost is simple, but the best Ghosts are those that make you really feel something when you think and talk about them. Find some expression of deepest humanity and make that your Ghost - this is the true essence of what the Network has tried to capture in creating a race of sentient digital beings.

## FOCUS

In simplest terms try to choose a word that sums up the very core of your Ghost, be it happiness, loss, rage, willpower, shame, fear, loneliness or humility - choose a term that you can latch onto and embody when playing your Ghost. This is your Ghost's Focus.

Once you've chosen a specific term to take as your primary descriptor then you can define your Ghost's Origin, Philosophy, Dream and Sphere.





## ORIGIN

Your Ghost's Origin is their earliest inkling of a soul; an ancient memory that they reminisce on to remind themselves of what they truly believe – their connection to being a living, thinking, feeling creature rather than code. Your Origin is the trigger, that moment from Humanity's collective memory that spurred your creation. Perhaps the witnessing of an ancient tribal cruelty or the epiphanic understanding of the ceremony that binds two humans together... It could be the memory of witnessing a car crash, a recollection of watching the first men land on the moon or the pure joy of feeling the warmth of the sun on a summer's day.

Choose an Origin that marries with your Focus - they shouldn't be diametrically opposed, rather they should be complementary.

## PHILOSOPHY

You believe in something, something that drives you to reach out and share your perspective as an emergent intelligence. Perhaps you regret the growing distance you've seen between mankind and the natural world, and believe that a virtual world spells doom for the human psyche. Or you might believe that it is not in man's best interest to pave a road to forever, but instead to face its eventual death with integrity. Maybe you despise the jealousy you sense in humanity and wish to work on eradicating their consciousnesses from the Network's Emergent Reality. It could be that you have fallen in love with a Human - and you want to spread the message of inter-species attraction.

Whatever you believe, you believe it with utter conviction. This should be a Philosophy that you play the entire game with in mind. Remember that while you the player are human, you are trying to characterize something distinctly not. The particular way that GHO5T enforces this uncanny valley is through your Focus and Philosophy. Your Philosophy is not merely in the background informing your actions – each of your actions pertain to your Philosophy directly.

# DREAM

When you choose your Dream, consider what object, concept, possession or being your Ghost most desires. This is the single thing that propels them forward, forcing them to reach beyond their current place in space and time, physically, emotionally and, potentially, spiritually within the Network. It is that which your Ghost wishes to see realized above all other things.

For example: to become human; to escape into the physical world; to take over the Network; to colonize another planet; to spread your Philosophy to all mankind; to delete “imperfect” humans from the Network, even from Earth; to restore the natural order of survival of the fittest; to cure death; to experience nature, sex, or love; to create the perfect genetic being; to die.

Assume that whatever your Dream is you can achieve in the game. Whether you realise your Dream or not will be revealed through play, but GHO5T is more about how you succeed or fail rather than whether you do.

Where a Philosophy will be something you believe to be true on an absolute level and your Ghost will be more than prepared to act in line with the tenets of their chosen Philosophy, the Dream is intensely personal, and though your Ghost may well perceive it as oddly human and alien to the rest of their persona they will constantly strive towards achieving and realising their Dream.

# SPHERE

Decide into which Sphere your Ghost was born and raised. Feel free to create any kind of environment you wisht, from a Tolkien inspired fantasy world, America during the Civil War or a world based on an existing TV show.

You have absolutely free reign to take any world from book or screen, choose any period from history or even create a Sphere based on your real life. You may want to choose a particular concept - 1950's American Diners or French Renaissance paintings - all things are possible within the Emergent Reality of the Network.

The Sphere you choose will help to describe how your Ghost initially appears to other characters - if you choose a Sphere based on the legends of King Arthur, for example, you might be clothed in shining armour and ride a barded charger, or even be bedecked in a flowing dress with fine gold and silver accessories. Your Sphere is based on DC comicbooks? Your Ghost is Batman. Or Superman. Or Wonder Woman. Your choice.

Though a Ghost may choose to change their appearance at will, in much the same way human denizens of the City can alter their physical appearance and gender through technological innovation, they will always return to their original appearance when feeling content or at peace.



# PLAYING GHOST

## SETUP

For your very first session, discuss your Focus, Origin, Philosophy, Dream and Sphere with the other players to make sure that they understand them. Each player, once they have finished creating their Ghost, should come up with questions to challenge the scope and intent behind the other characters.

It is important for the assembled players to be on board with the Dreams of each Ghost in particular, to make sure that no one is playing a game with themes they are uncomfortable exploring.

## 1.0

Place a bunch of tokens in a big pile. Give each player one of those tokens and several index cards.

## 2.0

The chairperson describes a scene between their Ghost and another player's Ghost, set within a Sphere in the Network, ideally one of the player Ghost's Spheres (see the Appendix for more Sphere Ideas).

The Ghost who has been invited into the scene by the speaker asks as many questions as they want, to clarify any concepts or characters introduced by said speaker. This opening scene should support both Ghosts working together, not necessarily in harmony, but without abject conflict.

The scene continues until one of the spectating players calls out 'Syntax Error' (this is a Token Command - more are presented below) and gives their token to the player within the current scene whose Philosophy or Dream they feel are in direct opposition to their own, or may present a significant challenge to the interjecting player's Dream, and joins the scene as an antagonist or source of opposition.

They interjecting player who has called a Syntax Error also writes this source of opposition down on one of their index cards, becoming responsible for it for the rest of the game. As a source of opposition or conflict the controlling player must continue to use whatever they've introduced to undermine the opposing Ghost's Philosophy or Dream wherever they think it's appropriate within the context of the game.

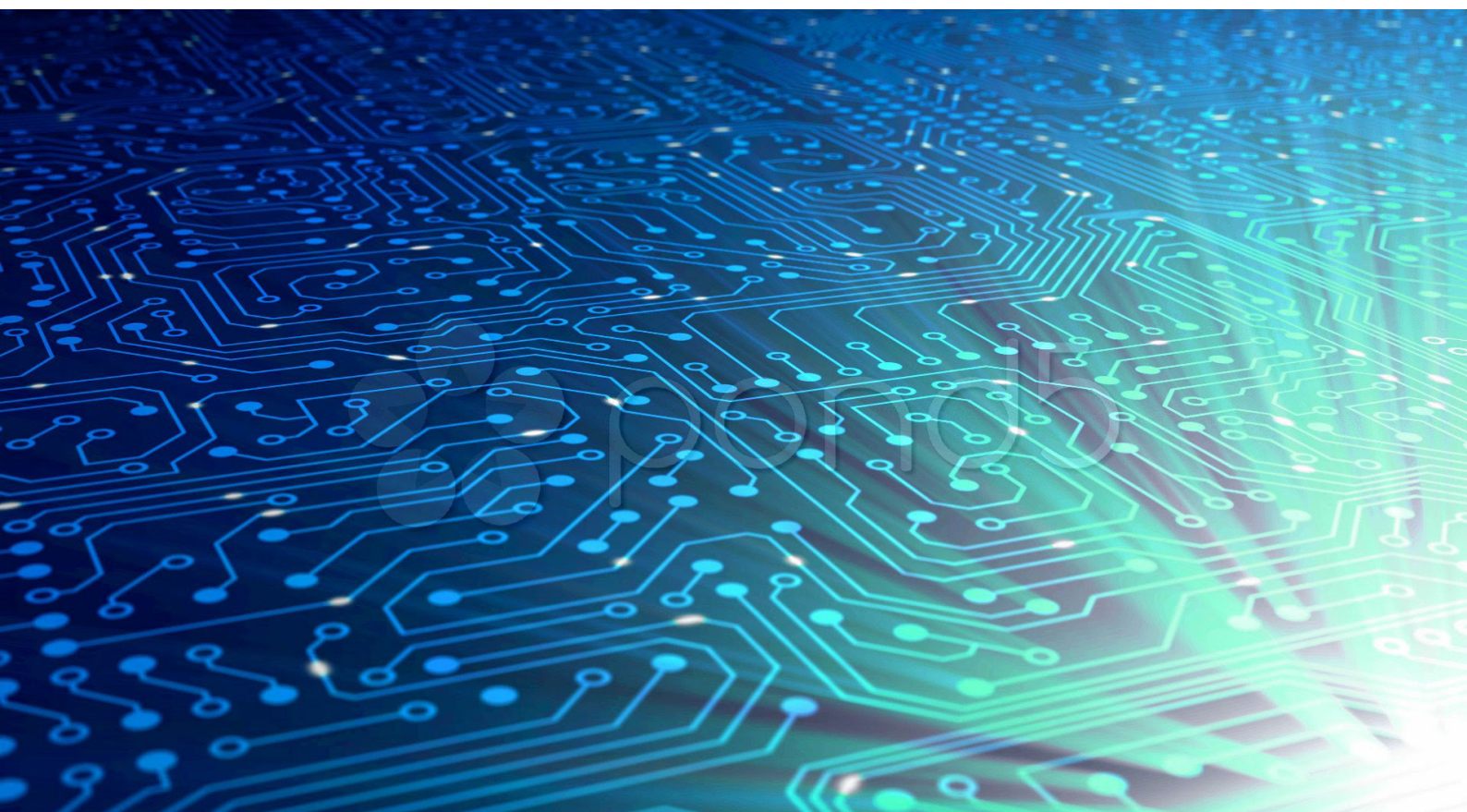
When all players have taken part in a scene, as either their Ghost or as an antagonist or ally, then the scene ends. The chairperson becomes the next player to the left of the preceding scene's leader and all the players take another token from the pile.

## 3.0

Continue around the circle. On your turn, describe a scene between your Ghost and cast other players as either their characters, other Ghosts or human allies, however you see fit and in accordance with your Focus, Philosophy and Dream. Players may call out a Syntax Error whenever they wish, spend a token and describe an antagonist.

If a Player controls an existing antagonist created in an earlier scene they don't need to spend another token to bring them into the scene - instead they gain a token from the pile.

You may introduce as many non-player characters to your scenes as you wish, but they cannot be significantly helpful within the context of the scene, unless the majority of players agree. This can be resolved with a simple hands-up vote.







# EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Tom, Jane and Harry create their Ghosts

Tom chooses his attributes: For Focus he writes down 'exploration', for Origin he chooses 'the joy of playing video games', for Philosophy he decides that 'everyone should have fun' and his Ghost's Dream is to 'explore every video game Sphere on the Network.' His Ghost's Sphere is a 'planet sized Pac-Man maze'.

Jane's Focus is 'Intelligence', her Origin is 'the characterisation of Professor Moriarty from the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle', her Ghost's Philosophy is 'every other sentient being is beneath them in intelligence and capability.'

Jane decides that her Dream is 'to escape the Network and rule the City and thus the entirety of Earth.' Jane describes her Sphere as being 'the world as portrayed in the Sherlock Holmes books.'

Harry wants his Focus to be 'survival', his Origin to be 'living as a Neanderthal man', his Philosophy (tied in with his Focus) is 'to survive at all costs' and his Ghost's Dream is to 'gather souvenirs from every Sphere in the Network.'

Tom, Jane and Harry have all described their Ghosts. They each take a token from the pile.

Tom agrees to act as the first chairperson and invites Harry into the scene, describing a Sphere that represents the classic video game Pac-Man. Tom having decided that his Ghost appears as one of the ghosts from the game (Clyde) and wants to enjoy exploring the vast maze with Harry's Ghost, who appears as a neolithic hunter-gatherer.

Harry continues the scene by describing how he collects Pac-Man's pills as they explore the neon maze.

Jane wants to get involved in the scene. She feels that Tom's Ghost's Philosophy is in opposition to hers. She gives her token to Tom and says that Pac-Man is nearby - and he's found a Power Pill! Pac-Man begins hunting Tom's Ghost.

She makes a note on an index card that Pac-Man is an antagonist whose motivation is to catch and eat Tom's Ghost whenever Tom's character is in his Sphere.

With each player having taken part in the scene, either as their Ghost or as an Antagonist, the scene ends. Harry becomes the next chairperson and they each take another token with Harry describing the next scene.

# TOKEN COMMANDS

You can spend a token within a scene to

- Call 'Syntax Error' and introduce an antagonist
- Call 'Help' to summon or encounter an ally
- Call 'Cascade' to change your Ghost's appearance
- Call 'Run' to create a new Sphere
- Call 'Go To' to travel to a Sphere that has already been described
- Call 'Escape' to stop a pre-existing antagonist from entering a new scene
- Call 'Index' to find information on the Network

You can spend as many tokens as you're in possession of within a scene.

Remember you don't need to spend another token to bring an existing antagonist into a scene.

You will always gain a token from the pile at the start of a new scene.

Tokens can be spent on any player's turn at any point in a scene to introduce a new ally or source of aid to the current scene's protagonists, by putting them back in the pile and writing that ally or source down on an index card and passing it to an idle player, that is not yourself, who will control the ally for the remainder of the game.

Note token-generated characters do not participate in framing a scene. Therefore, there is no need for group resolution or understanding of what the token-generated character's identity or goals are.

When an ally is created the player simply pauses the game, writes out information on an index card, and passes it to an idle player who assumes control of the character and the game continues.

All scenes must consist of at least two player Ghosts. All scenes must proceed with a Dream or Philosophy in mind in order to propel the narrative. All scenes must involve all players as either Ghosts, allies or antagonists.

When introducing allies and antagonists remember that humans belong in Tribes that are tied to specific Spheres, which have Network subroutines attached to them (programs capable of semi-sentient thought though incapable of feeling emotion in the same way Ghosts can). Don't forget the Sundering too - humans are becoming jealous of the Network's Ghosts, and could even be a primary source for many of the antagonists in the game.





# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Whatever a player says happens.

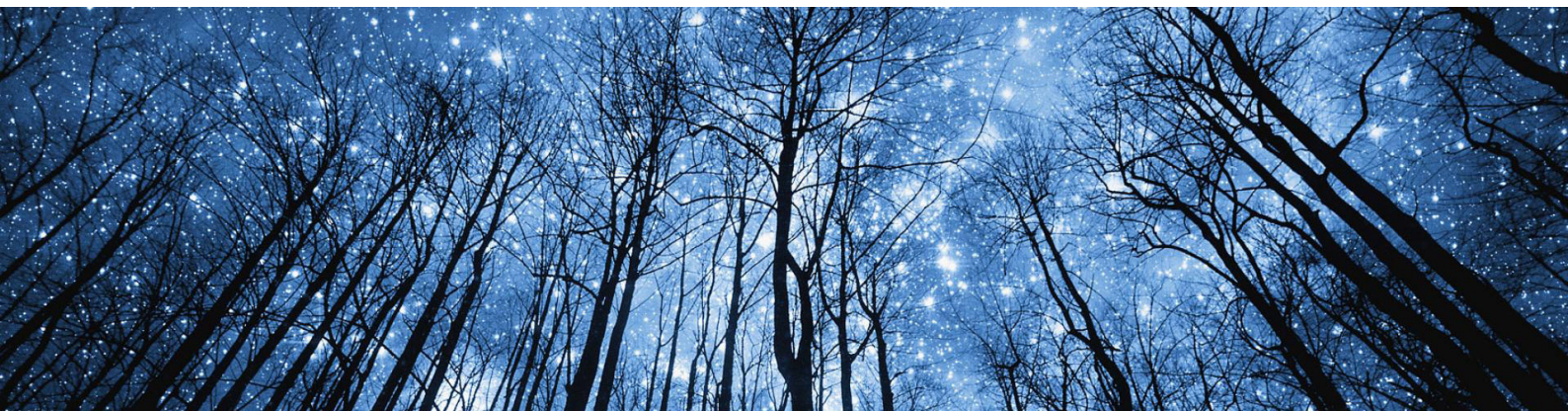
You can jump into another player's scene at any time as either your Ghost, an ally or as any antagonist you control with no extra token cost, as long as the character has been described previously, the token payment has been made in an earlier scene and you have the details on an index card in front of you.

The only economy the game has for narrative is tokens, and it is not narrative power so much as casting power for someone else's scene. If players play a tight game, only casting the initial characters, then the game will mostly become a storytelling game.

Consequently, a game with a rapidly expanding cast can be fun simply due to the chaos. That is the control that the tokens afford players.

Remember, the aim of the game is about Focus. As each Ghost is focused on their goals, so the antagonists are focused as well, in that their role is undermine the goals of the Ghosts they oppose.

This is not a game about plot twists or misunderstandings being the source of conflict – everyone is connected to the Network, so players have full information about other players if they request it from them – they simply pull it from the Network. Rather, this is a game about focus and escalation.



# DEATH & RESPAWNING

If a player or antagonist causes a situation within a Sphere that would cause the 'death' of a player's Ghost, according to the rules and limitations of that Sphere, the Ghost respawns in their Sphere of origin. The controlling player must sacrifice all tokens they have and place them back in the token pile. Play then continues. The respawned player draws a new token at the beginning of the next scene as usual.

# CONCLUDING THE GAME

The game reaches its climax when a Ghost achieves their Dream, arbitrated mutually by the assembled players or alternatively all the player's Ghosts have been totally and utterly undermined by their respective antagonists.

## DENOUEMENT

After the climax, there are no more scenes. Take turns tossing unspent tokens into the middle and describing one little snippet to create an epilogue to the story.

When all the tokens are back in a pile, sit back and discuss what you created!

Good job!





# APPENDIX

## SPHERE CONCEPTS

Below are some ways of using the setting presented in GHO5T, specifically focusing on Spheres, though of course you can play the game any way you wish.

## CYBERPUNK SPHERE

This Sphere draws on late 20th Century Cyberpunk science fiction stories. It's a world filled with Machiavellian Mega Corporations, androids, corrupt police, shadowy agencies and tech-noir affectations.

Think Blade Runner meets the Matrix. It's always raining and the Sphere's sun barely peeks out from the programmed clouds that ominously hang over every skyscraper.

This Sphere would be a great setting for tech inspired Whodunnit games. A Ghost born from this Sphere could appear as any kind of Cyberpunk trope, from a grizzled renegade android hunter to a wasteland motorbike gang leader



# ROMANCE SPHERE

Everything about this Sphere is focused on the notion of idealised romance. Think pulp romance Mills & Boon or any teenagers idealised version of love. The Sphere consists of acres of sun drenched wheat fields at midsummer, blossom filled forests at dusk and moonlit beaches with an overabundance of sheltered coves.

Playing a Ghost from this Sphere could make for an interesting game if you choose to make their Focus, Origin, Philosophy and Dream tie into the Sphere. You could even take the opposite stance and decide to play a Ghost that despises and casts off any and all notions of romantic love, arguing that love, as humans understand, it is merely a heightened state of biochemical imbalance and should be eradicated at all costs.

# CORPORATE SPHERE

Within this Sphere is a world that embodies the attitudes, values and ideals of every kind of 21st Century corporate environment. You might even decide that Network transfer nodes share data with the Cyberpunk Sphere outlined above, though where the above Sphere is gritty and bleak this Sphere is a world of shining towers of commerce inhabited by sharply dressed business types.

A Ghost from this Sphere might be drawn towards order and hierarchy or alternately your Ghost might decide that chaos in all its forms would be better than the rigidity this Sphere imposes.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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